



NOROC NEWSLETTER
WINTER-SPRING 2016
Editor: Anca Dincă

Christmas and Easter in Romania

With Romanians, the winter feasts are full cry from 24 December to 7 January. Their central events occur during the Christmas Day, New Year and Epiphany, with their respective events. The most important feature of these feasts is their incomparably rich repertoire of customs, traditions, and beliefs, of artistic, literary, musical, choreographic and other folklore events, which make the winter holidays be some of the most original and spectacular spiritual manifestations of the Romanian people.



Children go from house to house singing Christmas carols, or through the streets on New Year's Eve reciting congratulatory verse.

Another custom practised by children individually on New Year's Day is a 'sorcova'. This is a small branch or stick adorned with differently coloured artificial flowers, called sorcova with which they touch rhythmically and gently their elders, while congratulating them on the occasion and wishing them a long life and a Happy New Year.

Easter is the most important event in the Orthodox Christian calendar. Traditionally, celebrations in Romania begin on the Saturday evening. Dressed in all their finest clothes and holding candles, people gather round the churches. At the Easter Resurrection Mass, just before midnight, the priest comes out to give a blessing, distribute holy bread and provide the flame from which everyone will light



their candles. Suddenly the darkness is lit up and thousands of candles take to the streets.

One of the most beautiful Romanian Easter traditions is painted eggs. The shells of hard-boiled eggs are dyed in colourful patterns, with a rich red the prevailing colour. They are often decorated with folk motifs: the cross, the star, the sun, the wave, the zigzags, and stylised flowers. On Sunday Easter morning the painted eggs are tapped together with the words "Hristos a Inviat - Adevarat a Inviat" - "Christ is Risen - He is Risen, indeed." For forty days people greet each other with these words.

You can find out more about the way "NOROC" and the kids in the orphanages celebrate Christmas and Easter by visiting our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/noroctulcea/>

Letter from Mary Ferris, former mission co-worker

Our mission co-worker, Liz Searles has honorably completed her designated term in January as PCUSA Mission Co-Worker for NOROC. She is now back in the U.S. serving in a local mission in Colorado Springs. This is a reminder that we are all called to different missions at different times in our lives. God shuffles us around wherever God thinks we can best fulfill God's plans for spreading the Good News. Liz's service in Romania was marked by many, many contributions to our foundation. I will name just a few.

Liz also inspired changes to our granny program, provided innovative summer camps as well as initiating a wonderful partnership with Stephen F. Austin University. Their students raised money for our Christmas Cottage outreach.

In addition, Liz organized a number of professional development programs for our staff and other professionals working with the abandoned and abused children in Tulcea.

This is not an exhaustive

First, she brought us the AFLATOUN program, which teaches life skills to the institutional children



and youth. I witnessed first hand this remarkable program in action!

Aflatoun classes are being held in the Louise Covington Learning Center, an apartment owned by NOROC. It has been transformed from a run down two bedroom apart-

ment into an exciting, active learning center. The center is literally next door to Speranta, the largest children's center in Tulcea county. The funds to purchase the property were originally provided by the Women of PCUSA. The money for the first renovation was provided by our Danish partners, and most recently by First Presbyterian Church of Lubbock and Palo Duro Presbytery. The vision and driving force behind the most recent renovation definitely came from Liz.



list of Liz's contributions but each of these programs have left a lasting, positive impact on our work in Tulcea County. God Bless You in your new ministry, Liz

With Liz's call to a new ministry, NOROC is now ac-



tively reevaluating our needs in Tulcea and seeking our next missionary. Is it you? Or someone you know?

I traveled to Romania under the helpful protection of Costica Adamita, one of our first college graduates. While visiting, I was able to visit quite a few of our young adults whom we have helped give a leg-up along the way. It is encouraging to see how well most of them are doing. Fact: NOROC has helped over 25 youth from the centers in Tulcea obtain university and higher education...not to mention the scores and scores of vocational classes, training programs and other financial assistance for establishing careers.

All of this was possible because of partnerships with friends in America and our on-

going Big Hearted Teachers program which begins in kindergarten. Thank you Marilena Solca for overseeing this wonderful ministry.



This program includes academic tutoring and support as well as cooking, painting, tailoring, photography, computer classes and our sports program.

Plus, she helps

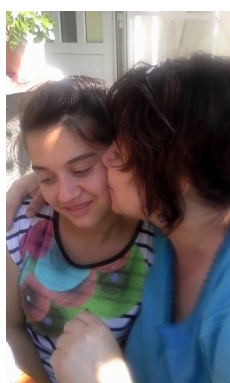


keep track of our university students, and she assists in our office administration. I not only visited almost every class, but also had an open house where I met our current and retired teachers. When we began our Big Hearted Teachers branch, there were no first graders passing. This was because none attended kindergarten and none had any help with reading, writing and math. Now our first graders all pass, some at the top of their classes. Thank you Marilena and all our

By law, all children under 2 have to be in a foster home. This is good news. However, after the age of two, the toddlers are often returned to the system so the foster mother can have another infant. This emotional disruption seems like déjà vu of the old system with a heartbreaking new twist. However, our grannies are still there in these small group homes, providing love, nurture and training.

I was present in Tulcea during the March 1st- Marti-

sor celebration and Women's Day, March 8th. I visited all our small groups under the Big Hearted Friends division and many of the groups were preparing small cards for Martisor. To witness the love and bonding the students have for each



other and for their small group leaders is extremely heartwarming. Many of The students in middle school and high school were only babies

when I came in 2001. They have grown up under the watchful eyes of our grannies, teachers and friends.

Thank you Big Hearted Friends...Tori, Adriana, Lili I, Lili



P, Iulia, Marilena, Violeta, Dan, Aurora, Ana-Maria, Adina, Victoria, Ionuț, Dan, Ana.

One of the highlights of my visit was visiting and participating in the Thursday Night Bible Study. This worshipping community has met almost every single Thursday night, no vacations, for 14 years.

After I left in 2012, my friend and worship assistant, Adriana Senciuc began leading this service, without ever missing a single week. Adrianna is also one of our psychologists as well as a small

I also conducted a continuing educational program for the leaders of Big Hearted Friends and small group leaders.

The theme was : Love Is: incorporating I Corinthians 13 into Fundamentals of Small Groups. This was a meaningful time for everyone (I hope) as it is not often they have a chance to come together for learning and sharing. The workshop was followed by a traditional Romanian feast.

At our banquet, our wonderful sports coach, Ionut, told me that we are the only organization that is allowed to come and go with the children on a weekly basis. This is because they trust us," he said.

This trust has been hard



group leader. She also works full time as a kindergarten teacher. She is assisted on Thursday evenings by Niculita. This area of spiritual nurture

fought and is sacred. We are able to be a 7 day a week presence by always being respectful of all the rules and protocols of the Department of Protection. We have gained unprecedented access to the children's



institutions, more than any other foundation in Tulcea, only because we have earned the trust by our willingness to cooperate. When interventions need to be made on a child's behalf, we have the willing ears

and leadership is badly in need of our next mission co- worker. There are many opportunities for additional Christian Educational opportunities but the present staff does not have the time to develop. Adriana does not have another hour in the day so please pray for her strength. Thank You Adriana!

to at least listen. We are able to speak truth to power. We call out evil when we see it- through the proper channels? This does not mean we always are successful in our petitions , but at least there is a line of communication. We always persevere. The light ALWAYS overcomes darkness.

I left this whirlwind trip full of hope for the children we serve. It was a comfort and joy to see how the NOROC team functions on a regular ongoing basis .

We are not only about serving the children in groups, our psychologists Adriana and Anca and our social worker Mrs. Jivan and our speech therapist, Mirela, meet with each child individually as needed. Their focus is to help them make life plans and set career goals.



Tori s group



Palm Sunday trip – Bible study group



Dan s photo group



Cooking classes



The Danish donation



Spring break carnival



Christmas Cottage



Center in Somova



Icon painting



Takeover Day



Mary's visit
LCLC



Lili's group



Operation Christmas Child



Aflatoun



Maria
Răducanu
concert



Christmas
donation



NOROC, Inc., a Christ-based 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, nurtures orphaned and abandoned children in the state institutions of Tulcea County, Romania. The Romanian word "NOROC" means "God Bless." NOROC seeks to address the root causes of poverty by serving the spiritual, developmental, social, emotional, educational, medical and relationship needs of traumatized and at-risk children and youth. A disproportionate number of institutionalized children are ethnically Roma (Gypsies), a stigmatized ethnic (and migrant) group in Europe.

Over 50 Romanians minister through "Big-Hearted" programs that offer children daily ongoing relationships: Grannies, tutors, friends, small group leaders, psychologists-all share in NOROC's healing work.

Please support this ministry of critical presence and care: Contact Carolyn White:

NOROC, Inc. 200 Hedges Rd., Abilene, TX 79605 (325) 692-2143 <NOROC9@suddenlink.net> or donate online at <http://www.noroc.org/how-to-help.html>

You can also visit us at https://www.facebook.com/norocTulcea/?__mref=message_bubble

Joys and concerns

Obviously, the financial commitment to fund such an extensive array of services is always in need of ongoing support. We do not pay for financial consultants to help us fundraise. Instead, we rely on the prodding of the Holy Spirit to nudge those who will gain pure joy from supporting us. Thank You Donors!

Prayer support is also a great need of ours. Specifically, please pray for encouragement and nurture of our team in Tulcea. Please pray for God's calling of our next mission worker- this is of paramount concern now.

Pray for support and healing for a young man Alex who is recovering from cancer.



He graduated last year and received a scholarship to attend university but was unable to accept it at that time for personal and health reasons. This government scholarship is no longer available! But he wishes to attend this year in order to become a history professor, concentrating on Romanian's modern history. This is a God calling for certain for this young man. Thanks to his small group leader, Tori C. Who nurtured him through his cancers treatments and who continues as his advocate. We pray for funds to help Alex.

Pray for Ionut who is a young Roma man who received a scholarship to study drama at Stephen F. Austin University in Nacagdoches and came to Texas in January.

Pray for Lulu, he quit school when he turned 18 to seek his fortune in England. He was swindled by a friend of all his money. He returned to Tulcea, penniless, and NOROC is provid-

ing him housing and helping him take a course as a waiter. Costica Adamita has promised to help him get a job on the cruise ship where Costica is the day shift manager. He is a hard working, sweet, naive young man. May God protect and provide for him.

Please pray for upcoming work team from Palo Duro Presbytery and all NOROC summer programs.

I must close this letter now.



Thank you all for your support of our ministry.

Grace and Peace

Rev. Mary K. Ferris

Former PCUSA Mission Co-Worker to Foundation NOROC