



# Noreen's Kids

Supporting the work of FCP in Romania



***Christmas Newsletter from Romania 2022***  
***Crăciun fericit și an nou prosper***  
***Happy Christmas to all our wonderful supporters***

It seems no time since the last newsletter before Christmas last year.

At the time we had recently moved into what we hoped was temporary accommodation in Slobozia Noua - a village about four miles to the north of Slobozia.



***Improved Bathroom***

We are still in the same building and sadly have not managed to get ground floor accommodation. Although there are rooms on the ground floor these are currently being used as storage for furniture by the Child Protection Department. It would in any case require extensive renovation at considerable cost to convert for a residential use in a building which we do not own.

We have been able to improve the children's unit with a lot of work by George, Sergiu and Nicu.

We have also recently been given a grant by LDS to improve the toilets and washing area.

The work on the original building in Slobozia which we had to vacate is still continuing. It is well overdue and we understand that it may not be completed for some time yet. Once this is finished there may be more space available here - in particular a large room which could be used as a playroom.

There are several drawbacks that makes this accommodation unsuitable for our children/young adults all of whom are challenged mentally and physically. Only two of them are able to walk and even these two need help climbing the stairs. Being on the first floor restricts access to the small garden for the severely disabled young adults and none of the wheelchair dependent children or young adults have much space to move around when they are in their bedrooms. All the children are confined to their rooms during the winter months, because there is currently no playroom where they could enjoy each other's company and play with their carers.

**During our first year in this building we have had no security of tenure. Recently however we have managed to negotiate at least a short-term accommodation contract which gives us security for a year. Importantly this means we can renew our license to operate.**

Once again, we owe a lot to the staff who worked on through some very challenging conditions and continue to do so every day - especially during the winter months when the children become upset and frustrated. They simply don't understand why their living space is so limited.

Above all, our staff have helped us navigate through the twists and turns of constantly changing regulations.

## Community Programmes

Although far from a full service we have succeeded in operating in the community - Anna and Robin visited many families during their stay in May of this year. During the Pandemic our social worker and the nurse who helped in the community resigned. We have not been able to replace them since moving to Slobozia Noua because we do not have an office or storage space - something which is essential for community work. The families are still being visited from time to time by a member of the charity but our regular monthly visits have had to be suspended. During these visits food, nappies, clothing, toys and other supplies are distributed. Firewood is being delivered at the present time to families who would otherwise not be able to afford to heat their homes – a very serious issue which can be life threatening if you are caring for a disabled child or young adult.

Perhaps two of the visits give a flavour of why the community work is so important



*Ionut and his Mum*

This 25 year old lad lives in a nearby village. He has cerebral palsy is not able to walk and is cared for entirely by his wonderful Mum, who also looks after an elderly stepfather.

Unusually she has also made sure that she and her son have had all their Covid immunisation.

She raises ducklings for a living - and is doing everything she can to help herself and her son but life is far from easy.

Noreen has ensured that she gets the allowances she is entitled to and we will also be providing firewood for them this winter as well as providing nappies, an expense which she simply cannot afford.

Above all Geta, who has also had medical problems in the past, values the support she has from the charity.

We try to make sure she has someone to turn to!

We visited this family in a village about 30 miles from Slobozia.



Ten people live in this small house. Father died from TB, mother has had almost no schooling . They have a tiny income. The children range from 4 years old to 20. Originally we helped by paying for some new roofing. We will try again to help them make

improvements to their house and encourage the mother with her children's education. On this occasion we delivered food, toys and clothing for the children. Sadly many people in Romania including this family believe, mistakenly, that vaccines have severe side effects and refuse to be immunised against Covid. We have been involved with this family for a very long time (15 years) and gaining their trust has been vital. They are normally very suspicious of authority but we are in a good position to help.

Until the Pandemic struck we arranged what was often the high point of the community children's summer - an annual holiday in a beautiful holiday home in Cataloi (Casa Valentin ) which is run by the Sunflower Fellowship .

With the outbreak of the Ukrainian war this Home is being used for refugees. The Sunflower Fellowship charity is deeply involved in helping them. Volunteers from the charity meet them at the border and transport them back to Casa Valentin. The charity then coordinates their meetings with the immigration authorities. They accompany them to their appointments, provide translators for them and continue to house and support them as long as is necessary.

### Our residential Children and Young Adults



*David enjoying himself*



#### David

This lovely little boy has made progress during the year despite the limitations of the accommodation. He suffers from a complex medical condition that affects his ability to walk. He is small enough to carry down stairs, although he is growing!

He likes to be taken outside and just loves it when his carers play with him

there – sadly we don't have the space in the garden we enjoyed before, but he makes the best of his time in the open air.

#### Juliana

This has been a more settled year for Juliana she has not had to be readmitted to hospital and she has gradually got more used to her new surroundings. Stability is what she needs and the move has not helped in this respect - she will need lots of encouragement and support if she is to achieve her potential. She is an adorable little child once she feels safe and is confident in her surroundings. More than anything she knows what she wants and she has her 'ways and means' to get it! She decides which member of staff is allowed to wheel her about ! Her parents still visit her as often as they can. It is more difficult for them since their new baby, a sister for Juliana, arrived also there is no direct transport from their village to Slobozia Noua.



## Doina



Poor Doina is still finding it hard. Her walking has improved somewhat and she can certainly walk if she needs to but she often lacks confidence. The move from Slobozia had a detrimental effect on Doina and she feels it more deeply than any of the other children. Because she cannot communicate it is sad to watch her frustration when one is unable to find the means to comfort her. When she was in Slobozia, she loved spending time in the beautiful park next door to us. She was so

happy dabbling her hands in the fountain and watching other children splashing water on each other. There were so many more opportunities there to help her feel happy and relaxed.

## Christina

We had hoped that our lovely Christina might be able to move, to be with more children of her own age and capabilities. Child Protection has had to make changes to implement new regulations from the EU and because of this the move has been delayed. Now we have a contract for the building we are hoping this will soon be resolved. In the meantime she continues to be cared for in our unit and would like our constant attention! She is, as always, a much loved member of our little family but we feel she is missing the company she needs to continue her development.



## Monica

Monica is more used to her new surroundings and considering that one of the features of her autism is a dislike of change she has coped really well. But then Monica is unusual in other ways for someone with autism - the fact that she has grown into such an affectionate person, who will give you a great hug when she recognises you, is a wonderful tribute to the love she has received from her carers, and which she reflects.



## Claudia



Claudia is another happy face who is always delighted to see you. She had a visit from her family this year, who have been living in the UK for many years. They would love to be able to get her back to England but they are already living in a multi-generational household with very little private space. It seems unlikely that she will ever be allowed by the immigration authorities to join her family especially in the present climate. The family are always as generous as they can be when they come over with large amounts of food for all the children and staff. They seem genuinely very fond of Claudia – she isn't difficult to love!

We arranged for her to be taken outside last year but there were lots of problems in getting her down the stairs to the garden – such a shame because she loved to go out in her wheelchair when we were living in Slobozia and we think it is just too risky, for Claudia and her carers. She is sad when she sees the little children going out because she is intelligent enough to know she is being left out of the fun. She is happy when she is allowed to sit in her wheelchair in the kitchen. Whoever is working there chats to her or takes her for a short ride in her wheel chair in the corridor while the others are out in the sunshine.

## Andana

Andana is another one who misses being able to get out in the garden. We used to be able to wheel her out on her trolley and she just loved to be amongst the other children enjoying themselves in the garden next to the cathedral. Sadly, it is completely impossible to get her downstairs. It is difficult to know what the future holds for this much cherished person. We hope to get more space for her when the refurbished unit opens again in Slobozia.



Because of the conditions of the EU grant which financed the refurbishment work we are not going to be allowed back into the new unit, but at least the hope is that we will inherit much more space in the large building where we now are. Andana is certainly one who would benefit from this.

Physically she has been well and her appetite is good although she does need to have her food liquidized.

## Adrian



Adrian's health has not been so good this year and he has had three admissions to hospital. Fortunately, despite the fact that he was quite unwell, they were able to cope with him in the local Slobozia hospital. Because he was not moved to Bucharest it was a lot easier to visit daily to feed him with food that had been prepared by our staff. They also attended to his personal hygiene and spent quality time with him. Like most hospitals, our local hospital is extremely short of staff and is only able to provide the necessary medical care but cannot cope with personal care for patients who aren't able to look after themselves. He seems better at the moment but is frail. His health continues to be a worry.

## Looking back and looking forward

Firstly, a big thank you once again to our wonderful supporters. Without your amazing support and encouragement, we could not have operated in what has been another eventful and challenging year. Looking for alternative accommodation has been made harder by the war in the Ukraine. Some of the buildings in Slobozia itself which had space and might have been suitable for us, have been occupied by Ukrainian refugees.

Romania is changing and, with this, go changes in the law affecting NGO's such as ourselves. We are no longer able to have more than 12 residential children and they must live in what they call a "family type home" This is partly to follow European directives, whose objective has been to close the large orphanages which were a legacy of Ceaucescu's time.

More worryingly the rules about who can live together in one building have changed and whereas we have always looked after the younger children in separate rooms from the older ones (who in turn have separate rooms for the boys and girls) it seems that the authorities could insist that the older ones – 4 of ours are over 18 - should not even be housed in the same building as the younger ones. It's not easy to predict how this regulation will be applied and for the time being they appear to be accepting the situation we are in.

Let's hope for a better new year, in the meanwhile wishing you and your families every blessing and a very special Christmas time together.

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