

Noreen's Kids



The Christmas Newsletter from Romania November 2017



Crăciun fericit și an nou prosper

It seems hardly last week that we were sitting down to write the newsletter for Christmas 2016, and now Christmas 2017 is upon us. As always there have been ups and downs, but in many ways there have been considerable achievements with our wonderful staff coping exceptionally well, with the challenges we have faced.

In February Noreen, as some of you may know, had an accident in the unit and sustained a fracture of her pelvis. The recovery involved pretty strict bed rest. The staff couldn't have done more for her - caring for her whilst she was stuck in bed and keeping the residential unit running, whilst she was unable to help physically.

Eventually Noreen came back to London to begin her physiotherapy and the staff continued to manage our charity's work, until she returned. I am happy to say she has made a complete recovery and is now very much back in the driving seat!

Government Inspection

Whilst Noreen was away we passed our government inspection with full marks, something that was handled at the time, by our Romanian management team and our staff. Thank you all very much.

We had all been preparing for this much more rigorous inspection for some time. The inspection is a result of new legislation, partly focussing on the fabric of the building – this is a challenge for us, because we don't own the building and long overdue improvements have had to be negotiated with Child Protection. The inspection has had some good results for instance, the showers upstairs that used to leak through our ceiling have been repaired.

Partly funded by some very generous donors and a grant from LDS charities (Bucharest) we have also improved the bathrooms and toilet facilities, converted a very damp store room into another dry comfortable bedroom and provided proper lockers for the staff for their belongings. The leaky central heating has been repaired and we are now sporting some very smart new doors. A lot of the work has been done by our own staff.

This expensive exercise has been necessary to comply with a myriad of new regulations – the inspection has already led to the closure of some institutions in nearby towns.

Residential Unit

So how have our little family been? I am happy to say that on the whole they have made good progress through the year, and although there remain real challenges with all our children we have as always tried to provide a life that is as good as it possibly can be given their disabilities and their circumstances.

Jackie Adcock has just been to visit Noreen, in fact we almost crossed at the airport. You may remember that she wrote about our “family” last year. She and I have written this year’s update.

Doinița

She is now 9 years old and has suddenly decided that it is time to walk independently without hanging onto the wall. Yesterday she ran down the passage all on her own! She loves to go out in the park and heads directly for the playground.



She seems to have grown about 6 inches every time I see her but remains such an affectionate child who is simply a delight to be with. This is the child who, we were assured, would never be able to walk and would probably not get out of her bed - Doinița had other ideas!! She is very happy jumping up and down on the metal ramp making lots of noise. She loves dancing with the staff and volunteers ensuring a lot of laughter. When the weather is OK she enjoys pushing the roundabout in the park but is not so keen of being pushed in it! She flops to the ground if you try to walk her in the way she doesn't want to go! Mostly she seems happy and well settled here.

Andana and Claudia

Andana and Claudia have moved rooms to what used to be the very damp store room at the end of the corridor. They seem very well settled there in a warm dry room which has been redecorated, as well as completely refurbished from a grant from LDS charities.

As she has always done, Andana responds to the affection she receives from the staff, she eats well, although feeding still needs patience and expert handling. She is one of our family for whom the shower trolley has been a great boon. She and Claudia are 22 years old now. They are happiest in familiar surroundings with the staff they know. Claudia particularly is a very happy soul these days smiles a lot, and can be quite vocal in a happy mood.



Claudia

Cristina

She is now 10 years old – she continues to go to the special school where she has made slow but steady progress. She is growing fast and has been very well physically. Cristina is more aware of what is going on and not so sparkly. She loves playing with various types and colour of balls and she plays very well although catching the balls can be more of a challenge!



Marinica

He is now 12, and has been developing well, but feeding him is still a big challenge and he has from time to time had chest infections because he doesn't have the normal reflexes which protect his lungs from food "going down the wrong way". Despite this he is often quite smiley and seems happy in the unit.

He may need to have a tube inserted into his stomach for feeding to avoid these infections which could be dangerous for him.



Luicica has suffered more set backs than any of the other children. She remains a really poorly child who has many seizures most days. Medically she is very well supported by her Consultant in

Bucharest but choice of treatment is limited by the side effects. She is quite sleepy but seems not to be in any pain

Adrian celebrated his 18th birthday in early November. He loves any activity going on around him even though he is confined to bed. His room has been the focal point for staff for many years much to Adi's enjoyment, he has a lovely smile which we see a lot of these days.

Matilda now living independently in a rented flat, visits most days to play with the little ones and often collects Cristina from school. She also helps out when we are short of staff. As always, she is a bright spark, always playing jokes on us!

Monica: Our oldest resident had many happy hours out of doors during our long hot summer. Now, she is not happy to be indoors most of the time, although she does go for a walk in the park most days with her carer. Most of all, she misses not having hours of enjoyment on her very own swing, which can make her a bit grumpy on occasions. She has a good appetite though and like many of us needs to watch her waistline in the winter months, when exercise is more difficult to take!

Staff Changes

New government policy has meant this year has been more than usually challenging. Romania has had some political upheavals with elections etc. the centre left party PSD won an outright majority with promises of rises in basic wages. Unusually political aspirations have become reality, which has meant that our wage bill has gone up by at least 25% and although applauding the desire to bring wages more in line with the rest of Europe it has made life very difficult for us, and indeed all charities operating in Romania – if we are not to lose valuable staff we have to compete with Public sector pay. Indeed Viorica, our lovely nurse, has gone to work in a local government run facility, although thankfully continues to help us out when we are short of staff. She has completed her course in palliative care and is now qualified to be involved in community palliative care work. However at the moment sadly we are not in a financial position to retain her full time, and indeed keeping our financial head above water is a constant challenge.

Romanians face considerable changes in their complicated tax system, although the details are yet to be agreed and will involve another hike in the basic wages – a real worry for organisations such as our own.

Ionela is our latest addition to the care staff but soon after joining us she sustained an injury to her knee which has meant some time off sick. We are looking forward to having her back in harness once she has recovered. She is young and has plenty of energy, and resilience. Indeed since I started the newsletter, I understand she is now back at work and settling in well.

Geta has moved to Germany permanently we wish her well there but we will certainly miss her help over busy times.

Vali has joined us and settled well in her part time post.

Flori, our social worker, is back from bereavement leave. Dan, Sergiu and George are all in good form. George has just had a big birthday on Dec. 1st!



Robin and George



Anna and Florrie



Sergiu in the community



Aah - that's where I lost my hat!

Above all we owe a big debt of gratitude to **all** the staff for the way they have coped and supported Noreen through some difficult times, particularly our senior staff George Sergiu and Florrie.

Dan our driver has also been a great help in getting the unit ready for inspection and in refurbishments and decoration.

Surely next year will be a bit smoother!

Dan's Well for the garden



Visitors

Robin and Anna Dunn visited in May.

Anna writes:

We arrived with an enormous box of supplies donated by our generous supporters which had to be manhandled up 3 flights of stairs to Noreen's flat, thank goodness for Sergiu and Dan's muscle



power! We had heard that the food-mixer used to prepare the children's meals had broken so we had also brought out a smoothie machine which was a great success until the mixer was repaired. The children need to have their food liquidized so this machine is essential. Noreen greeted us with her usual cheerfulness although clearly very uncomfortable still and needing crutches, at that time. Our visit sped by with lots of visits to the community and helping with the children and young people in the unit. We visited Catalin, whom we have known since a small boy and is now 27. He is living with his mother.

He always gets so excited to see us especially when we promised him a trip to McDonalds, Bucharest when he has a check-up in hospital!

Catalin and His Mum

Other visits included seeing **Iuliana**, a lovely child who has been successfully treated for kidney cancer and looks really well. We are so grateful for all the generous donations from our supporters to enable these children to receive the necessary treatment. On another day we met up with a young man who had been adopted by English parents from Slobozia. He has met and married a lovely Romanian girl. He is so grateful for the start in life that his adoptive parents have given him that he has settled in Romania and helps those less fortunate than himself. A truly remarkable young man.



Juliana, Mum, Anna & Robin

As Robin has said we had several meetings with the staff and together with Noreen decided to raise their salary in the hope they will stay with us.

Robin was here again in November – Noreen and I spent some time on this newsletter and I did some staff training as well as the usual community visiting. Let me tell you about some of the families I visited, it gives a flavour of the work that Noreen does in the community.

On the first day in the community we went to visit a family in a small village about 20 miles from Slobozia. A 40 year old woman is being treated for cancer. She needed an operation but she has always refused to consider this. The main reason for this is that she has a daughter who has severe congenital learning difficulty and she and her husband care for this daughter and will not consider being away from her. The daughter needs constant care and will not sleep without her mother. There is no one else in the family who can cope with her. Noreen will be visiting regularly to dress a wound - she will try to make sure she gets adequate pain relief and we have already provided equipment for a special bed for her daughter.

So a mix of medical and practical help.



Sometimes the problems are mainly social. We are involved in trying to help a Granny in another village. She has 2 grandchildren whom she cares for – the children's father died and their mother is now living in another city. The authorities said they should live with their mother because Granny lives in the house in the picture. The state of repair is so poor, that they have to live in the 2 rooms of the house that are not

Granny's House

collapsing - the authorities said that it was a danger to the children.

The girls were very unhappy with their mother and ran away to go back to their granny . She in turn cannot access their entitlements because officially they shouldn't be living with her. At the moment they all live on granny's very small pension. Noreen feels strongly that if we can help with the housing to some extent and at least make it safe and habitable, the children will benefit hugely. If we are successful granny and her girls will receive their allowances , which will mean they can be self -sustaining. Noreen has already raised €6000 towards the cost of the refurbishment but needs to raise another €7000

A Christmas Thankyou from Noreen

Having been absent from the activities of FCP for more or less half of 2017, I am very happy once more to be involved in the lives of our children and the many community projects especially at this time of the year.

Robin has written about the difficulties of the past year especially coping with the ever increasing financial pressures both within our children's residential home and in the community where people are suffering even greater hardships physically and mentally.

We try to respond as best we can within our limited financial means but we have had to cut back on our community help this year and to give priority to the care of our residential children in the Slobozia unit.

Yes, we have made necessary improvements to our unit and garden and have watched with pleasure and gratitude the progress of our children.

It is you, our very generous supporters, who have made all this possible. Every day we remember with gratitude the sacrifices you make to help our charity. Without your help none of what we have achieved is possible and we thank God for each one of you.

Support from our local community especially with donations in kind has increased each year. This support comes from many sources, local businesses, churches, schools, groups and individuals. You all know who you are and we treasure your thoughtfulness and generosity.

We are very grateful for the many grants that we have been awarded both internationally and in Romania. We wish to thank especially the country directors of LDS charities, Bucharest, who have worked so hard to obtain grants for us year after year. Their interest in our work and their friendship is so much appreciated.

Thank you and God bless you all.

We send you our warmest wishes and prayers during this beautiful season. May you enjoy the celebrations with the love and support of your family and friends.

Happy New Year to all of you, our dear supporters and friends near and far away.
God bless each one of you.

Noreen, staff and children.

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