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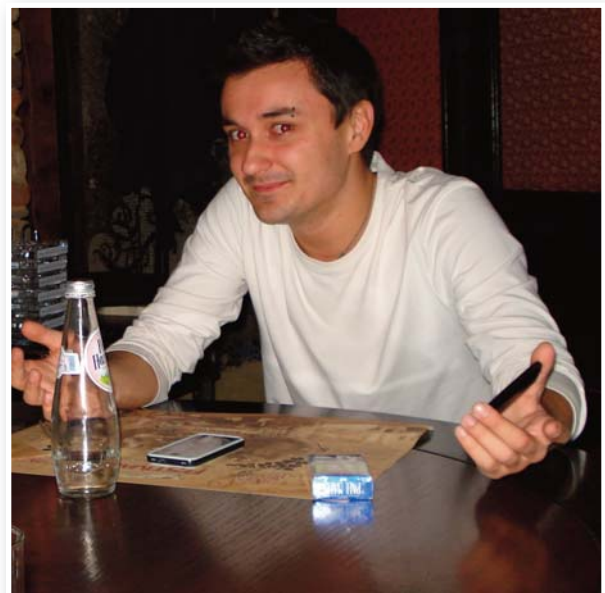
Hello everyone and nice to see me again on your desktop, this time in different weather conditions; let's say on +10 degrees Celsius and not on minus 10.

As you probably know by now spring is coming, slowly but surely and with it more volunteers are also on their way. Li Min, for example, our first and only Malaysian volunteer, will share some of her experiences with us here. In her article, which opens this edition of our newsletter, you can read about food, her travels and work. Since it was a month of drama we have some drama updates for those of you interested in this. Thanks to Rachael Morrison we have some inside info about the last drama show which took place at the foster homes; a show called "The Human Stupidity".

Of course, after such a performance you may be hungry so I have come with something prepared. Chicken Lasagne with spring vegetables is waiting for you to cook at the Cookery Corner. Let me know how it is! After a meal like that I can only promise to you that in the next issue I will add a dessert, another dessert actually. Later in the newsletter, Sally, one of the few volunteers that actually managed to learn how to speak and understand Romanian, will describe her experiences in Romania, of course, in English.

Overall, under a warm ray of sunshine, I hope you all enjoy this edition of our newsletter and I will see you next time with warmer temperatures, hopefully, and some green grass and leaves everywhere.

*Alex Parasca – Desk Officer*



## Romanian Encounters

By Li Min Teng – Current Care Volunteer, Malaysia

Trudging out of the plane into the cold snowy weather of Romania had left me feeling lost, lonely and nervous.

I mentally prepared myself for the worse, with little knowledge of the culture I was about to face and the people I was about to meet. It is only my second week in Romania and I cannot believe how unjust my speculations were.

The warmth and helpful gestures of the Projects Abroad staff and other volunteers I have bonded with in the last couple of weeks have made my transition so much easier, coupled with heaps of fun. My first weekend here, we travelled to Prejmer village to experience a traditional Prejmerian Pancake festival.



The amount of food we indulged ourselves in was sinful, but it was hard to resist the temptation of simply scrumptious sausages, steaks, meat, Kurtos, pancakes and cotton candy. As if the pampering of good food wasn't enough, we were lucky to witness one of the most bizarre parades I have ever seen in my life. Men dressed in baby costumes, dancing to Gummy bear songs, on horses wearing masks while enthusiastically banging on tongs left us confused! Despite its bizarreness we really enjoyed the performance.

My second weekend was spent in Sibiu. Exploring the churches, city and museum with the girls was certainly a fun adventure. We set out early on a Saturday morning and spent the day embarking on a discovery adventure, sightseeing this designated European Capital of Culture.

Getting to know the children at my placement has left me with priceless life lessons in the short time I have spent with them. Their simplicity and kindness, despite their backgrounds, are overwhelming and respectable. They taught me to look at the positive side of everything and make the best out of any situation we are caught in, good or bad. Every morning I get up, get two buses to reach the shelter which teaches and cares for them, but I feel that it's the other way round most of the time! I always come back with something to ponder or a valuable realisation that helps stimulate my self-growth that I want to develop before entering the corporate arena.

The language barrier is definitely challenging but we get along with each other tremendously somehow. To sum it all up, it has been an incredible journey so far and I am looking forward to learning more about this beautiful country in the next four months.

## *'The Human Stupidity' Pantomime - Drama Mini-Project*

By Rachael Morrison, Current drama volunteer, UK



*I*n addition to the projects we are undertaking as volunteers we were asked if we would like to perform a short pantomime that would be performed at some local foster homes.

The other volunteers and I were excited to have this opportunity because it gave us a chance to all work together and have some fun performing.

We began the process by being given a traditional story called The Human Stupidity which has been translated into English for us by Alexandra, our Projects Abroad Supervisor. Our objective was to turn this story into a performance in the style of a pantomime where by we would mime the story as Alexandra narrated in Romanian.

Our main focus was making the story clear through what we were doing, because we wouldn't be talking. We set to work rehearsing the piece, taking it in turns to read the narration whilst the rest acted out the mime. It was important that we made our actions big and clear and, of course, being a pantomime, it was all about making it funny for the audience.

For example there is a part in the pantomime which involves a cow so we had one volunteer playing the cow and mooing, which we knew the kids would find funny.

One of our worries was how we would know our queues when it was being read in Romanian. We rehearsed it a few times with Alexandra reading the Romanian so we could get used to how it would sound, and she also very helpfully gestured to us what we should be doing!

With a few nerves and a car full of props and cast members we set off to Tarlungeni to the two foster homes we would be performing at. The first foster home was the one I have been working at, so I was especially nervous as I wanted the performance to go well.

But I discovered there was no need to be nervous as they really enjoy the pantomime. Afterwards Alexandra spoke to them about the piece and then Greg, another volunteer, sang a lullaby to them. This was followed by us getting all the kids up and dancing to 'The Birdy song'. This was my favourite part because everyone was smiling and it was great to see them having fun.

After we finished performing the children performed for us. They showed us some dances that a previous volunteer had taught them last summer which was lovely to watch and they remembered it really well. We also got to talk and play with the kids after but the time came for us to leave and we set off to the other foster home.

The second foster home was a smaller group but they laughed a lot at the pantomime and also really enjoyed dancing at the end. Unfortunately we got there just before their bedtime so we had to leave straight after the performance.

Overall, the experience of the mini project was great. I really enjoyed having the opportunity to work with the volunteers on the drama project and the other volunteers working in Brasov in a fun and creative way.



## *Chicken Lasagne with spring vegetables*

### INGREDIENTS:

125g of lasagne sheets  
150g of chicken meat  
50g of carrots  
50g of zucchini  
50g of green onion  
100ml of milk  
40g of butter  
50ml of dry white wine  
10g of flour  
Olive oil  
Salt



### PREPARATION:

Boil a pan of water with some salt added. Slice the zucchini, green onion and carrots and cut the chicken meat in to small pieces.

Fry the onion and carrot in 10g of butter, add some wine and then cook until all the wine has evaporated. Add the chicken meat, cook for 10 minutes and then add the zucchini. Cook for another 5 minutes and after that add the salt.

Melt 10g of butter in a frying pan, add flour and mix very well. Add the milk, little by little. Leave the sauce on the heat to cook until it starts boiling, mixing for 5 minutes. Add salt and then remove from the heat.

When the water has started to boil, add some drops of olive oil and then add lasagne sheets, boiling them as long as the packaging indicates.

Heat up a lasagne dish and grease it with butter. As soon as the lasagne sheets are boiled, take one, drain the water and then stretch it on the dish. Pour some sauce over the sheet, then add the vegetable mix and chicken, and then more sauce, finishing with another sheet of lasagne.

The only thing left to do now is to eat it, so, enjoy your meal!

*Volunteers' Moments*





## Romania Care Project 2011

By Sally Polden – Current Care Volunteer

I am Sally from Adelaide, Australia and I have been dreaming of volunteering in Romania for years. I recently decided that now is the time and signed up for a Care Project in Brasov. There are a number of options for care volunteering in Romania and mine is working with infants and toddlers in a nearby hospital.

The hospital is situated in the next town over and is quite small.



The hospital has a paediatrics department and at any given time there are many children ranging from infant to late teens. Some of the smaller children and babies have a parent with them who looks after their needs and comforts the child while they get better. However, in a small room in the left wing lay the infants who are alone.

The infants and toddlers that spend their time alone in Sacele Hospital often suffer from a range of ailments, however they all have things in common; they don't have someone to comfort them when they are in pain, they don't have someone to love them while they battle an illness and they all learn that they can't depend on the adults in their lives to help them when they need it most.

Some of the children my colleagues and I have worked with this winter have stayed in the hospital from a few days up to a couple of months. The children often stay long enough to get well, catch something from another child and get better again before they go home.

For so many of the infants, the hospital staff have informed us, the families are notified when their child can go home, but it takes a few days/weeks for anyone to come. Occasionally, there is an unlucky child who remains in the hospital for too long and child protection removes the child to a residential home. Fortunately, this hasn't occurred during my time in Romania.

My role in the hospital is to spend some time each day giving these children what they need. Working with children of this age was a completely new experience for me and I was quite nervous changing nappies and giving a child a bath. I soon discovered though that not only are these tasks quick and easy enough to do, they provide an opportunity for the infants to get to know me, feel safe with me and develop a bond with me. The children certainly appreciate having the one on one attention and affection. Also, I have learned that I am surprisingly tolerant with all the fluids that babies excrete!

If the children are well enough, the babies and toddlers are taken to the toy room where they receive stimulation through play, music and unconditional positive regard from a volunteer. The infants enjoy being held, rocked and able to play with the large range of baby toys in the toy room. They listen to music and explore the room with the aid of the person carrying them around.

The toddlers have so many things to do to keep busy; walkers, puzzles, games, music, dance, books, building blocks and my favourite, the ball pit. With all of these things to entertain the children though, the biggest thing the children enjoy is having an adult care for them, provide them with security, enjoy time with them, and play with them.

I have one month left now of my Romanian experience and I will remember forever the lessons the children at the hospital have taught me. Like the value of a child having a healthy relationship with a parent, the external and internal effects of neglect and abuse, that playing with infants and toddlers involves a lot of repetition and infinite patience and that it's all worth it just to see them laugh.

Their faces, their smiles and their stories are imprinted in my memory and even though I know I will soon fade from theirs, it is so rewarding to help the children through their early years with the Projects Abroad Care Project.

