

# Heart of a Child Newsletter

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2008



*Dear Friends,*

*We are glad to share with you the latest news about Inima de Copil and to inform you that, starting with this issue, we will try to publish our newsletter every two months! We hope you are enjoying a beautiful autumn!*

**Heart of a Child Team**

## **Heart of a Child honored with national award at the 5<sup>th</sup> annual Romanian Mental Health Gala.**

In recognition of Global Mental Health Day, public authorities and representatives from the Estuar Foundation held their annual awards gala to honor public authorities, specialists, employers and volunteers who helped improve the understanding of mental health issues in Romania during 2007-2008. The honorees included those who provide support to individuals with disabilities or with psychological problems. The gala took place on Thursday, 9th October 2008, at the Marriott Hotel in Bucharest, and the hosts of the event were Mihaela Radulescu and Dr. Cristian Andrei. The gifts provided with this year's awards were paintings made pro bono by the well-known artist Popa Popa's. There were 14 categories of awards this year, and recipients included Bianca Brad, Liana Stanciu, and Mayor of Bucharest's Sector 6 - Cristian Constantin Poteras. We are glad to let you know that one of our long-time staff also received an award at this celebration: Mrs. Maricica Duda, a founding member of Inima de Copil. Currently she is both the administrator and a "Mother" in our apartment for youth with severe disabilities. After more than 12 years of working with children and young people with special needs, she has remained a dedicate caregiver to help provide care, support and love to our children. No one better represents the core missions and values that drive and guide Inima de Copil by ensuring the right to life and social integration for any young child, providing support for children and young people at risk to help them achieve their full potential, and to work as a change agent to alter attitude and mentality of those around them. We need more people like Maricica, to serve as role models on how to support each other, and build a community that is caring, supportive, open and truly European. Anna Burtea – Executive Director



**Support from the City Hall in Galati.** Ensuring all children have access to education is one of the most important objectives of our organization. To help work towards this goal, at the beginning of September we distributed 88 backpacks equipped with everything one needs to start the new school year like pens, pencils and notebooks. Our dear children, we only wish you good luck and a good start to the school year! The funds required for this action have come from Galati City Hall on the basis of Law 34/1998.

Madalina Lescai – Project Coordinator

## **A summer camp for 79 children and youth!**

This summer we managed to organize 5 series of camps with 79 children and teenagers who are part of our projects and services. Three series of camps were in Naruja in Vrancea, one in Bisoca in Buzau County, and an art camp was held in Harghita County. Our colleagues, coordinators and participants at the camp wrote about their experiences this summer:



o **Art Camp 2008, as part of the Heart of a Child project "Together for Equal Opportunities"**. The purpose of the camp was to increase the degree of mutual knowledge between the two participant countries, Romania and Moldova, through conduction of art-therapy sessions for 19 youngsters with special needs (including HIV +/disabled), during the few days spent in a mountain area of Harghita County. Here young people have made various products: photo frames, wooden flower pots painted in acrylic colors, candleholders with paint for stained glass, necklaces and bracelets from beads, and dolls created from textiles. Young people got very involved and were open to activities, especially those from the Republic of Moldova, many of whom were having a unique and new experience. It was a beneficial exchange of experience, both for the young beneficiaries of the project, as well as the accompanying-instructors. At the end of the camp the participants received gifts, representing objects that they made over the course of the camp. Some of the young participants took their time to write down some of their impressions. Here is one of them: "Hi, my name is Alex M., I'm a simple boy from Moldova, who one day was offered a wonderful opportunity to make a trip to Romania, Harghita county, municipality Frumoasa. I had this chance due to the joint effort of my friends from the Foundation "Dor" and The "Casa Mea" Foundation in Moldova.. For three days I was in an incredibly beautiful place, I was impressed by the picturesque landscapes of the unusual nature and great mountains. I felt like I was in a story that should never end. Here I had the opportunity to make many friends, from whom I learned to look at life with more courage, I was treated with much respect, love and warmth of mind; I just learned to look ahead, making dreams, desires and aims to achieve. I thank you with all my heart and I want you all to know that this trip will always remain in my heart. I wish you good health and Good luck! Of all my heart, your Moldovan friend, Alex M.". Cristiana Toma – Project Coordinator

o In the week of 11-16 August, **18 children that attend our Day Center from Galati**, had the chance to go to the mountains, swim in the river and take some trips. Thrilled by the beauty of Vrancea Mountains, the children loved the trips, outdoor games, and arts and crafts, and spent time exploring the hills and assembling bouquets of wild flowers. On every day of camp there were awards given to children of different abilities to encourage and motivate the children, and acknowledge and celebrate them for doing what they do best: whether it was about sports skills, artistic or social. It was a very good opportunity to make friends and learn to communicate better with other children and adults who attended. Certainly we can say it was an experience that the children will never forget and a beautiful memory will remain in their hearts. The camp was generously supported by the Macon Association of France. Diana Stoicu – Day Center Coordinator from Galati



o **Funded by AVSI, through the project "Support from a Distance"**, 23 children and young people from our programs, 5 from Pechea, 5 from our homes, and 13 families from Galati, spent a week in Bisoca, Buzau County (18-23 August). The children enjoyed the beauty of hills and mountains and they treated themselves to the fruits of nature: mulberries, plums, and apples. Contests and games were organized. In the last days all the children received diplomas and prizes, and in evening they ate boiled corn at the campfire. They were unique experiences, that most of the children had never enjoyed until this camp, and we are confident they will remember this experience for a long time. We are grateful that, thanks to our supporters, we are able to offer such unforgettable summers to our children and youth. Veronica Udres – Social Worker

## Fundraiser show offered by “Baobabii” troupe.

This autumn we received a generous offer: a group of young students, passionate about theater acting from Galati, arranged to put on "The Little Prince" and we were offered the opportunity to be their partners by offering to donate the proceeds of the play to the children of Heart of a Child. Our foundation promoted and encouraged them, they worked on the script, made the reservations (thanks to the leadership of the Gulliver Theatre!), posters, invitations, and the roles were played with passion and ... resulted in a great show, surpassing all expectations, especially given that rehearsals for the show lasted only for two weeks. It's not like you can meet young students blessed with enthusiasm and energy with strong passions for things that are as beautiful as acting and social responsibility as they are every day. For all those involved, the event was a lesson. The message that they have chosen to give to the public was deeply human and clearly reflected their hearts and soul. In the end 700 lei was raised from the tickets which will be used by Heart of a Child to buy books, dictionaries, encyclopedias and CD-ROMs with stories for more than 35 children in our day centers in Pecha and Galati.



Thanks and congratulations for exemplary involvement of these young people: Oana Mocanu, Diana Dima, Madalin-Valentin Huzum, George Bercaru, Andrei Hutuleac and Adriana Danaila. Also thanks to the local media who gave us precious support in promoting the show: "Viata libera", "Galati Monitor" and Television Galati-Braila!

**“Galatians” living abroad support “Inima de Copil”!** Besides a real and effective cooperation with local authorities, gaining the support of Romanians settled abroad is one of the steps that we consider extremely important in terms of ensuring sustainable support for social services. Thus, this summer we had two very valuable initiatives in this regard.



o First, chronologically speaking, support came from the **Organization "FOR Children"** from Holland, that is working with their volunteer staff who are involved and responsible for doing outreach. Some members of the organization are even from Galati! Knowing the conditions back in Romania, they decided to gather and donate computers to provide to at-risk and needy children in Galati.. We have received 15 computers that we have distributed to children whom we assist. They went to little children from Pechea where we have a support center for education, at the kindergarten at the Andiana Day Center in Cudalbi, at the "Ana Maria" House, the apartments of Youth and VIVA Community

Center, and at the Day Center for children at the Sendreni Hall. We have to say thank you to our Danish “Galatians” who also took care of shipping the items to Romania. We thank them for their involvement and desire to do sustainable projects for at-risk members of their home community.

o Another initiative belonged to Angelica and Titi Stanciu, members of the **"Nazdravanii" band**, whom, together with **actor Paul Buta and Mr. Stefan Ambrozie** bought clothes, backpacks filled with supplies, sweets and a refrigerator for 58 children assisted by the foundation through the Day Center in Galati and the education service from Pechea. They also offered a professional laundry machine for the 2 apartments with young people with disabilities. The money required for the acquisition of all of these things came from the sale of 1,000 copies of a CD with folk music launched by the band in Italy. The value of these charities is not just a material one: beyond the significant amount of 8500 lei donated for children, for the Stanciu family this was also a spiritual matter. We are grateful that they chose to support our children and young people and we wish that we can continue our collaboration together in the future as well.



## Ten representatives from local authorities and the NGO sector from the Republic of Moldova visit Galati.

The visit and exchange of experience were organized within the project "Together for Equal Opportunities" in the Romania-Moldova 2004-2006 Program, funded by the Ministry of European Integration, PHARE Cross Border Cooperation Directorate. Our guests visited the family-style homes of our foundation, centers of DGASPC Galati, as well as other NGOs and were familiarized with the services available in Galati for children and young people with disabilities. On September 18th they participated in a seminar that we organized together with local authorities in Galati, courtesy of our hosts, the Galati County Council. The aim of the exchange of experience was the accumulation of new knowledge and practical improvement of methodology for integration / social and professional reintegration of young people with special needs (HIV + / disabled). The participants realized the importance of cross-border cooperation for the dissemination of good practices already implemented in Romania, and the importance of effective collaboration between local authorities and nongovernmental organizations.



o Among the main components of the Project "Together for Equal Opportunities" is the art therapy program. Products made by the youth in the **Occupational Center** were marketed on Marine Day (Aug. 15) on the Danube River walkway in Galati. The marketed objects included candle holders, beads and bracelets, necklaces, photo frames and paintings skillfully made by our youth over recent months. The activity was a success: the youth did a great job and realized that valuable things can be made with their hands, which helped them to become more confident about their capabilities and strengths. Some of those who participated in the art-therapy projects were present at the exhibition, and seeing their products sold to others helped motivate them to continue their hard work. Also, **the products made by the youth are available at our headquarters as well, where we are waiting for you to come and choose gifts for you and your loved ones. Recently our youth began creating hand-made Christmas cards that you can purchase and thus make a valuable contribution to sustain the activity.**

**Latest News about our volunteers!** Heart of a Child takes pride in the selection and participation of two of our young volunteers at trainings organized by institutions specialized in training young people. George Plesa, a student in the 13th year in the Technical College "Traian Vuia" was selected by the National Authority for Youth to participate at the Summer School "Volunteering and Association" in Costinesti between August 20-27. Also, another volunteer of whom we are quite proud, George Braileanu, a student in 11th grade at National College "V. Alecsandri" who participated from Sept. 1-7 in Sulina, at the training "Promoting Volunteerism". Both volunteers have returned with great impressions about their experience, most of their experiences being linked to the network of young volunteers which became increasingly active and more interconnected. The impact of training was obvious in the light of their beliefs regarding the need for such service to the community. **We also remind you that, starting with October we resumed regular meetings at our headquarters where we gladly await both new and old volunteers alike, with their experiences and eagerness to engage in projects and services we offer to the community (for example, participation in the group of art-therapy, the activities at the Day Center, providing support to our homes for youth with disabilities).** Violeta Simion – Psychologist

**Space expansion at Pechea!** The center for counseling and support for parents and children through the working space from Pechea, provides daily support, lessons and recreational activities for 17 at-risk children. After a month, through the active involvement of the local City Hall, we have been offered a second room, larger, for a better development of activities. We are glad that the authorities from Pechea continue to support us and we hope for a successful collaboration in the future as well.

*Made by Anca-Aurora Chiosea with the support of the "Inima de Copil" team*



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