

Newsletter

AMURTEL Romania

March 2011

Interview with Elena - Panatau

My name is Elena Gheorghe, I am 16 years old and live at family AmurTel. I am living here since 11 years. I am happy and I have many friends.

There are many things which I like to do, for instance: sports, to listen to music, to watch movies. I do not like very much to read.

At the moment I am in the 9th grade at the high school in Nehoiu. I like to go to school, but if the school would be nearer by, it would be much better. The school is 20 km away from here. I have to take the train or the bus which leaves at Patirlagele at 6. 10 a.m, therefore I have to leave from our house at 5. 10 a. m. In winter it is very hard and cold to go to school, in summer it is easier.

When I finish the high school, I

would like to work in tourism. This summer I was working at a guest house (Valea Mare, Arges county) The people there appreciated me.



I like very much to go out with friends and do different activi-

ties. I can prepare different recipes, like cheese pastries, rice with vegetables and many others. My favorite dishes are fried cauliflower and pizza.

I glad that I am healthy and that I like to work. In this way I feel good and also the people around me feel good.

What do I not like: People without integrity, people who do not know how to behave. If I could change the world, I would eliminate the wickedness and jealousy. This is how I am, but maybe I am too soft.

With love, Elena

Romania news Ricember 2010

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Project "Ready to Fly "

This summer AMURTEL organized an exciting outdoor adventures as part of its Vistara program to prepare at risk youth for life, in a fun, challenging and memorable way.

The first project, "Ready to Fly" was a project financed by the Local Council of Buzau, with 10 participants ages 10-13. Five of the participants were our smaller children from Familia AMURTEL,

and the other 5 were selected from our Fountain of Hope after school center. The aim of the project was to help foster life skills needed for independent living, such as communication, coopera-

Project “Ready to Fly”

tion, teamwork, cooking, cleaning, and money management. The camp lasted 7 days, and was held in the AMURTEL summer vacation house in the countryside of Poieni, ”Casa Iedera”. A trainer named Loti from “Outward Bound Romania” was involved in setting up a variety of fun, challenging games and problem solving exercises for the kids, as well as our AMURTEL team who set up creative activities, daily exercises, and involving the children in menu planning, cooking, cleaning and shopping throughout the event.

A special highlight was a trip to the nearby city of Buzau. Each child was given a small sum of money to spend as they wished on school supplies, according to a simple budget plan that they made. The children were delighted to choose their own supplies, and very proud of themselves. They also went to a restaurant together and enjoyed the train ride! For some of the Fountain of Hope children it was the first time they had the opportunity to travel on a train and they had never had the chance to spend money on their

own! It was a wonderful enriching experience, and they appreciated it very much..



Continuing contact with our independent young adults

Iosif who in 2008 was the first young man to become independent spent the summer of 2010 successfully working in hotels both in Switzerland and Budapest, Hungary. Recently he returned to Romania to work for his previous employer but he had some health problems that required an operation, and so he temporarily returned to Panatau and helped in Familia AMURTEL until he felt well again. He is now living in a room in a house in the city, and is quite independent.

Magdalena left Familia AMURTEL in 2008 after obtaining her “Baccalaureat”. Since then she has had various jobs in Bucharest and has managed to live independently. She travelled to Hungary in June this year to visit her birthmother and work there. She is very happy there, and maybe settling there permanently.

Florentina also obtained her “Baccalaureat” in the summer of 2008 and continues to live in Bucharest with her boyfriend Mihai. She has a new job there as a cleaner in one of the large malls.

Elvira took a course as a pastry cook and obtained her diploma in September. She then went to Bucharest to look for a job but was unable to keep the jobs she found so returned

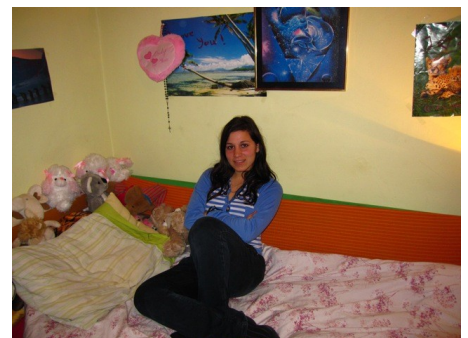
to Panatau. She also enjoyed a visit to the nuns at the Carnu monastery in the autumn where she loves to participate in their daily singing. She will do a practical apprenticeship in the springtime in a pastry shop, and may sign up for further professional training. However, in her heart she continues to dream of finding a “Prince Charming” who will always take care of her and never make her work!

Timea passed her “Baccalaureat” exams last summer. In September she went to Slobozia, a town 3 hours away, to look for a job as her boyfriend was already working and living independently there. However this did not work out and so she returned to Panatau where she is now working in the Fountain of Hope center, helping the children with their lessons and activities. She is also taking driving lessons with some of the money she is earning, and attended a course as a “socio-animator” in Bucharest,

Together with Diipani, Geani and Razvan – Timea also had the opportunity to participate in the “Young Voices of Europe” project in Greece. There they were trained in PR techniques to promote volunteer projects and to speak out against injustices.



Mircea is more settled now living in Bucur Obor, in the company of Timea and Catalin. During the summer he participated in the Outward Bound Camp and loved the kayaking and the mountain bike excursions.



Extensive renovations successfully completed.

On September 1st the “Gradinita Rasarit Nr 2” Neohumanist kindergarten in Bucharest, reopened its doors after an extensive renovation project, financed by the “Cooperation in Development” program of the Autonomous Region of Bolzano Italy, Amici Nel Mondo, Lanesra Foundation and the generous contributions of several private sponsors. The kindergarten now has a new roof, thermopane windows and doors, insulation, a new sewage pipes, tiling in the kitchen, bathrooms, hallways, and office, a new office annex, a repaved courtyard, water and air filters, and replastered and painted walls in the classrooms.

There were surprises along the way, such a mysterious animal tunnel that led to the discovery of gaping holes in the sewage pipes, and also the blackened wooden subroofing, that needed to be entirely replaced. Apparently the subroofing had been only minutes away from catching

fire before the ceramic stove heating system was replaced with a gas furnace and radiators a few winters ago. The wood was already charred near to the chimneys, and all of the subroofing was blackened from smoke and rot. When the workers began to tear it off, it crumbled in their bare hands without the need for tools. These unexpected discoveries led to unexpected expenses that surpassed

the original grant from the Bolzano region, but luckily Amici Nel Mondo, Lanesra Foundation and private sponsors stepped in and provided the funds needed to complete the entire project as it had been originally planned. The kindergarten has been completely transformed from a dilapidated and deteriorating building into a new, beautiful and welcoming atmosphere for small children.

Enrollments have doubled in the newly renovated kg!

middle income parents, who were the first to feel the pressure of the economic crisis. Many lost their jobs or had their salaries reduced, and could no longer afford private child care. Last September, the kindergarten opened with only 5 children as several had withdrawn during the summer, and it reached a maximum of 10 children in the springtime – less than half its capacity.

By contrast, in October, we already have 18 children in attendance, with a total of 20 enrolled, and a maximum capacity of 25.



Our smaller kindergarten, in a more economically depressed part of Bucharest continues to have low enrollments, however, it has also increased in comparison to last year. Last September the school opened with only 3 children enrolled and reached a maximum of 10 children in the springtime. This year, there are already 10 children enrolled paying fees. Due to the impact of the crisis, which has

increased the number of children not attending kindergarten this year, the school will be accepting beneficiaries selected from some of the most vulnerable socio-economically disadvantaged families. Already one such child is attending, and we are expecting 2 more, as well as one child with special needs, for a total of 4 beneficiaries. Please consider donating to sponsor the costs of these children to attend.

In the meantime, despite the deepening social, political and economic crisis in Romania, enrollments have more than doubled, compared to last year. Last year, the two Neohumanist kindergartens in Bucharest struggled to keep from closing, as they went into a heavy financial loss. They survived thanks only to the generous support of our sponsors. The kindergartens have tended to attract more modest,

Catamarans and Kayaks in Sovata

In September, the older young people from Panatau, and their friend Gabi from AMURT went to the Outward Bound center in Sovata for our annual adventure camp.

This year, we went by mountain bikes through forests and villages to a lake with an interesting history. The lake had originally been a village that was flooded during Ceaucescu's time in order to create a reservoir. Only the steeple of the church could still be seen above the water. We learned how to kayak, and then went by kayak to visit the church steeple.

We also constructed catamarans using surfboards, wood, ropes and a tarp. The wind wasn't very cooperative, blowing in the wrong direction for the first group and disappearing completely for the second group –

but both groups came up with creative and functional designs. It took another day of mountain biking to reach the camp, and on the final day we did more challenging exercises in the ropes course – including one particularly difficult one that required climb-



ing to the top of a pole, and then jumping to a trapeze bar. Everyone managed to make it through all of these challenges quite well, having become veteran Outward Bounders!

As many of our young people are over 18, this may have been the last Outward Bound experience for several of them, as they will be busy with jobs and work (we hope!) by next year. Already we were quite proud of several of them who had held summer jobs so that they could help cover part of their expenses. Gabi and Mircea worked in Budapest at a hostel, and Elena and Mircea worked in the Bucharest kindergartens. It was good to see their increasing sense of responsibility

Ray of Sunshine- Braila

Last weekend, August during some of the hottest days of a sweltering Romanian summer, AMURTEL Romania's newly formed volunteer relief team, set up its first "Ray of Sunshine" women and children's programs in a camp in Braila for families affected by the Danube flooding this summer. AMURTEL Romania had organized a Disaster Relief Management program in July, so it was a perfect opportunity to put the "Child Friendly Spaces" model presented in the training directly into action.

20 children came whose homes were destroyed in floods



Still the marks of water remain almost to the middle of the windows

Twenty children of a wide range of ages participated in the program. They were all from socio-economically disadvantaged families, that had been living in a state subsidized housing project when the banks of the Danube river across the street flooded into the apartment building one morning, filling up the ground floor with two meters of

water in a matter of a few hours. Families salvaged what they could as the waters rose, bringing a few precious items upstairs to neighbors, but the majority of their furniture and belongings were destroyed. It took days for the waters to recede, and the building to dry out so that it could begin to be repaired. In the meantime, the residents of the block were all evacuated to a somewhat run down state owned youth camp, where they are staying in cabins and receiving hot meals until their dwellings are ready to move back into.

AMURTEL organized a children's program with arts, story telling, dance and more

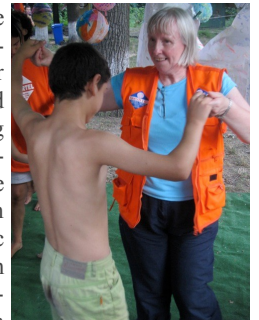


Thanks to our sponsors, AMURTEL was able to buy a pavilion tent, art supplies, toys and snacks for the children, as well as some camping supplies for the team. The children received special invitations to the program and were eagerly awaiting the team in the morning. Everyone pitched in to help set up the tent. The program included songs, story telling face-painting, paper mache, painting, games and dancing. At first, some of the parents were a bit suspicious, but the joyful laughter of the children attracted them closer, and soon mothers were found absorbed in

painting and paper mache alongside of their children, or leading festive Roma dances.

Women's program full of laughter

AMURTEL also organized an afternoon women's gathering....actually the women were already gathered in the shade under a tree, munching on sunflower seeds, and we joined them, introducing ourselves and learning more about the group. The women all were enthusiastic to present each other and everyone that they are a very united community that helps each other out and loves to laugh and joke. We discovered that most of them were interrelated by marriage or blood, truly an extended family. We introduced some cooperative games, and relaxation techniques – amidst a lot of delighted laughter and bantering, and then the mothers joined the children for dancing when we put on some traditional Roma music.



[Videoclip of mother+children dancing to traditional Roma music](#)

Enthusiastic children

The next morning, already at 6.30 am the

Ray of Sunshine- Braila

children were up, busily sweeping the tent and lovingly wiping the tables about 6 times – eagerly asking the team members as they went to the showers or bathroom – what time will you come to play? It was evident that most of the children had had very limited access to opportunities for creative expression and so they responded hungrily.

The second day we read “Where the Wild Things Are” and then made playdough monsters and wild masks and for a party at the



end with more dancing and games. The program concluded with a drawing in which every child won a stuffed animal, koosh ball and some snacks to take home. It was a successful and enjoyable program for all.



[More Photos from “Ray of Sunshine” CFS program](#)



Familia Amurtel

In the Familia AMURTEL children’s home in Panatau there are still 10 children: Ionut, Elena, Priya, Ionut, Bogdan, Daniel, Andrei, Florin, Stefan and Ionut Zaharia.

This winter, Timea, Catalin and Mircea moved out to live in the Bucur Obor transitional house, and Elvira was in Bucharest for the Vistara program.

The children enjoyed the summer. The

smaller ones participated in the “Ready



to Fly” program, while the older ones went on an Outward Bound expedition in Sovata.

During their stay in Poieni, all were involved in gathering fruits and nuts and make jam. School is going well – with ups and downs, of course.

The Bucur Obor Transitional House

In the last two years, several of the young people from Familia AMURTEL who have finished their studies, have been leaving the children’s home to make their first steps into autonomous living.

It hasn’t been an easy process to leave the protection of the home, and venture out into the world. The big city can be overwhelming, and it is a challenge to awaken a sense of responsibility to take care of their own needs – it is much

more convenient to have sponsors!

The Bucharest Vistara project provides housing and job searching support for this transitional period. In the meantime, after an extensive renovation process, a small rustic country house about 15 minutes walk from Panatau called “Bucur Obor” has been converted into another transitional living. There the young people can make a less drastic first step towards autonomy while still receiving the support of Familia AMURTEL, and

staying within their network of friends.

It has been a great opportunity for them to learn many life-skills, such as cooking, cleaning and managing a budget. They have also enjoyed their freedom there!

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To improve the quality of life for those at risk of social exclusion, with a special focus on women and children, and to assist the victims of natural and man-made disasters. We believe that the best assistance is that which encourages and enables people to develop themselves, and therefore we emphasize educational programs, and programs that lead towards socio-economic independence, as well as shorter term relief distribution and aid.

The specific goal of AMURTEL Romania is to improve the social integration and quality of life for those at risk of social exclusion in Romania.

Fountain of Hope – Panatau



At the end of September our After School Center, “IZVORUL SPERANTII “ (the Fountain of Hope) opened its doors again after the summer holidays.

The Center, which provides hot lunches and help with homework during after school hours for the poor children of the village of

Panatau, started the school year under the able guide of Larissa Bratucu.

This year even more children have been enrolled than in past years reaching a total of 25 children so far, and for the moment the obstacles with the local council have been successfully resolved and this gives us hope for the future.

We hope the Mayor of Panatau will maintain his promise for financial support for the remainder of the school year and on our side we propose finding new sponsors in order to be able to increase the number of children participating in this program that in past years has given such good results.

The parents from the schools in Bucharest donated canned and dry foods for the Christmas season as well as warm winter clothing. A local business also donated backpacks and toys, so each child received a backpack full

of goodies from Santa Claus and they were truly delighted!

This autumn, we also had a volunteer from Mexico who offered creative workshops in painting and helped the children to design and paint their own mural on the wall of the center.



In January, just as the center was scheduled to reopen after winter holidays, the heating system broke and needed an emergency repair – thanks to our sponsors we were able to respond quickly.
