

NOROC NEWS

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Editor: Carol Schempp (You are encouraged to reproduce and distribute this newsletter.)

From Mary's Desk by Mary Ferris, Mission Co-Worker in Tulcea, Romania

BRRRR!

The only good thing I can think of about the -30 degrees Celsius temperatures (-22 Fahrenheit) we have had here in Romania is that the cold will kill the bird flu virus that has devastated the tourist economy of this area. We feel so blessed at NOROC because we have heat in all our properties and the money to pay for it, thanks to all of you. Because of our advance planning, we have not suffered broken pipes at any of our three properties: 1. the apartment which is home to Christina and her twins, a gathering place for kids from the children's home, and emergency housing for young women; 2. the NOROC headquarters where I live and where we have our offices and staff meetings; 3. Casa Noastra where we have our club and

emergency housing for young men. The preparations we made for winter included burying pipes underground, repairing leaking windows, and purchasing fuel in advance. So far, all preparations have proved to be well worth the money spent.

However, as I count my blessings, I am saddened because there are so many others who are suffering. Many people have no money to pay for the heat. Several children have died by falling through the ice on the Danube River. There are frost-bitten fingers and ears frozen off because they have no hats and mittens. Because of our many supporters the children we know all have hats and mittens for the winter. The Danube River froze completely over. For people who live in the Delta, the river is their only route of

transportation in or out of their villages. Let us pray for a short winter.



The warmest thing in our lives right now is our incredible Bible Study taking place every Thursday night at Casa Noastra. Between 10 -15 young adults have been gathering faithfully for six weeks now. We are studying the book of Genesis, new stories for these students. What a joy for me to study the Bible with

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Tales from Tulcea County: The "Club" Gets Decorated

New at Casa Noastra is the painting of a mural by the youth and other adult leaders on the long wall in the club. It is a panorama of the Bible from Adam and Eve to the vision in Isaiah of the lions and lambs lying down together on God's Holy Mountain. Jesus is the central focus of the quite spectacular mural. It was designed and is being supervised by a gifted local painter, Mi-hai David. He confessed the other day that this was his first mural of this size. Mary says "I have had many God moments watching him paint. He transforms the efforts of



others into something beautiful, sometimes erasing and starting over, but more often with just a few touches here and there. What a child has drawn becomes recognizable and fits right into the mural. He transforms with a graceful hand, and so does Jesus."

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Concern:

- Thanks to ALL supporters of NOROC whose generous donations allowed us to end 2005 in the BLACK!
- Thanks to Hillary Ferris for maintaining the NOROC website: visit it at www.NOROC.org
- For an end to the cold winter weather, but only after killing the bird flu virus.
- For the healing of Ana Maria O. who will have back surgery.
- For a return to work for the 15,000 employees at a plant in Tulcea that is facing bankruptcy...many of our young men work there.

From Mary's Desk

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people for their first time. The best thing for these young adults is to study the Bible word for word, not just to study about the Bible. It has been a joy and comfort for these young people to discover that all the patriarchs are humans with different personalities and foibles. Their relationship with God, flawed as it was, is what made them unique. "Abraham believed in God and God counted it as righteousness." Exodus 12:9. I cancelled the class one week because of the dangerous cold and they were all angry with me, so we are back to our schedule! These kids walk from all over the city after working 12 hour shifts at work. Most of them have not had any supper before they come to Bible Study.

We are an eclectic group ranging in age from 14 -58 (me). We are Orthodox, Catholic, Presbyterian and Baptist. The class could not exist without the faithful support of Adriana Senciuc who works with the music and helps me translate. Thanks to a gift from Blue Ridge Presbyterian Church in Missouri last year we have song books and

Bibles for the group. Our Communion set came from Messiah Presbyterian Church in Lubbock, Texas after they closed their doors.

Our format is flexible, half worship and half Bible study. We pray together and sing a lot. My lack of musical talent is legendary but Alex Sandu and Adriana shoulder this for me. We sing the few songs we all know over and over: *Amazing Grace, Jesus Loves Me, Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee, and Angels We Have Heard on High*. I feel the birth of this group is the first fruits of our labors.

This is not our only faith based program, It is just the most recent. All of our small groups have religious instruction as part of the format: prayer, Bible study, and/or lessons in morality. We have an excellent Christian education teacher working with the small groups, but this new weekly group is our first in-depth Bible study and worship experience. I will begin a confirmation program before Easter. Only God knows where the Spirit is leading us.

The best thing for me about the

group is that they ask me questions, many of which I have to research and many to which I have no answers. Here are some from the last three weeks:

Where did the wives come from for Cain and Abel and Eve's other children?

When did humans first begin to eat meat and when did animals first begin to eat humans?

In the Old Testament God made God's very own self known in different forms. In the New Testament, aside from Jesus, did God appear in any other form?

If we have free will, why do we say God is in control?

When Jesus returns, where will he come to first? Israel?

All of you are welcome to weigh in with your answers! I am never afraid to say, I don't know.

Please pray for this fledging group!

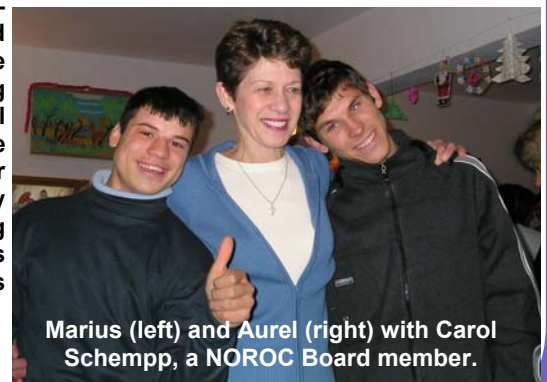
Peace, Mary

Tales from Tulcea County...The Transformation Continues

Marius and Aurel are two young men who grew up in the worst of the worst handicapped orphanage. When they were transferred to Tulcea at age 14 neither could sign their name or knew any of the alphabet. Nina, our social worker, fought to get them tutors, and NOROC paid for it. Last year at age 18 Aurel was reintegrated into his birth family in his home village. This was his first time to live outside of an institution and no one had much hope for it to work out. However his family, who had thought he was dead, has banded together to embrace Aurel! His sister took him into her tiny house and makes him behave and work. Aurel loves to wash things so his presence helps the family a lot. He is the only one in his family who can read or write, and he sees to it that his niece and nephew go to

school. He still has many of the retarded behaviors he learned growing up, but these are quickly fading. He receives a small stipend from his village to help him with food and firewood because he has a mentally handicapped certificate. It must be renewed every year, so this was the occasion for him to be in Tulcea when he (and friend Marius) made a surprise visit to Mary at the Baptist Church. As Mary sat nestled between these two young men she noticed that Aurel was singing the songs projected on the wall with gusto. Wondering how he knew the words she looked over and saw that he was effortlessly reading the words of every song they sang. Fortunately Aurel has an excellent voice as he was singing the songs for everyone around him to hear. The last song that day was *Up From the*

Grave He Arose. This song speaks of the resurrection of Jesus, but Aurel and Marius and many others are truly modern resurrection stories. NOROC has brought resurrection miracles to these children. Up from their graves they arose...literally. Praise be to God and thanks to all of you for your support of NOROC!



Marius (left) and Aurel (right) with Carol Schempp, a NOROC Board member.