

# NOROC NEWS OCTOBER 2006

Publication of NOROC (New Opportunities for Romanian Orphaned Children), Inc., Abilene, Texas

Editor: Carol Schempp

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

Dear friends,

The end of September marked back-to-school time here in Tulcea. It brought to my mind the following scripture from Romans 12:1-2: "...*present your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God. This is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.*"

Our Big Hearted Teacher's Program is all about transforming the lives of our young people through helping them transform their minds. Our program is headed by Marilena Solca. Marilena has organized 24 tutors for the children living in the children's homes and apartments under the Department of Protection. They tutor all first and second graders and all seventh and eighth graders so the students will make it through the educational system. Then, in the higher grades, the tutors specialize in tutoring for the high school and vocational school exit exams in subjects in which the students are weak.

Jesus said, "*This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourself to be my disciples.*" John 15: 8. Our Big Hearted Teachers program has begun to bear much fruit, and to bear it abundantly. We now have 10 university students, including two who will be our first University graduates this year. Importantly, starting with last year, we now have four and maybe five young women attending a university.

Last week at our weekly Bible study with the youth at Casa Noastra, our lesson was the above scripture from Romans. We invited all the recent high school graduates and had a meeting with them to try and find out their schedules for departure etc. As long as I have been here, I still do not fully understand their university system. In Romania, nothing happens regarding university applications until after high school graduation in May. After graduation, the students who are university bound cram in June for their baccalaureate exams (high school exit exams) which are in July. They receive their results within a few days. If they do not pass, or wish to improve their grades, they get a second chance at the exam in August. The exams are graded by hand by teams of experts in the various subjects. Petru and Marilena Solca both sit for the reading of these exams, Petru in English and Marilena in French. It is amazing to me how all this happens without computer grading or recording.

After receiving their grades from the

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baccalaureate, the next step for the student is to submit their file into competition at the university they wish to attend. They must do this in person. This happens during the same three-day period all over the country for all universities. A file consists of the student's diploma, transcript from high school, results from the baccalaureate exam, photos, and at some universities, the results from special entrance exams or essays in their chosen major or "profile". They are in competition against all other students who submit their folders for the same profile at a given university. For instance, psychology students compete against other psychology students at the University of Bucuresti, etc.

At each university, the top 100 students in each profile attend university without tuition, including free room and board. This is a very good part of the university system here. If you do not get a free spot you can then be considered for a place with tuition. In the past, very few students from the orphanage system ever made it to a free spot. Even the very capable youth must compete against youth from homes with every educational advantage. Therefore, without NOROC, Tulcea County would have very few students from the orphanage system attend a university. The tuition is relatively inexpensive compared to our system in America. It costs 600-750 dollars per year for students in most universities. The law says that if a student from the orphanage system

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### Prayers of Thanksgiving and Concern:

- Big Hearted Teachers.
- Our university students.
- Our wonderful team here in Romania and in the United States.
- All teachers and students everywhere.

## From Mary's Desk

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gains admission to university, with or without taxes, they have the chance to stay in the system with free room and board provided by the Department of Protection for as long as they are in school, or until they are 26. Our providing for ten university students means that the Department of Protection must also accept their end of the responsibility for these students. Students can apply to as many profiles and as many universities as they want. However, all applications have to be made in person within the same three-day period all over the country. This creates great limitations and is a real source of frenzy during this three-day period. The first round happens in late July. When the results are announced, if they are accepted at more than one university, the student has to make a choice, leaving empty spaces. The vacant seats that are left after the first round are put up for competition again in September. All this makes for a nerve racking summer for these students. It is also nerve wracking for those of us trying to coach and monitor these students.

A few weeks ago, I accompanied two students who were going to put their files in competition for the second round at the University of Galati. This was my first time as well as theirs for this part of their educational journey. We were helped in our adventure in Galati by Nelu Ivanov, a NOROC employee who lives part time in Galati. He knows the university and the city very well. This was a true blessing to have this kind man help navigate us through this beautiful ancient city.

## Sowing Seeds of Hope...

The Big Hearted Teachers have indeed been sowing seeds of hope in the lives of many young people who have grown up in the orphanages of Tulcea County. The success stories of our university students have close, personal meaning for Rich and me. Four years ago we made a commitment to help our Romanian son, Costica, reach for his dream of a university education and a teaching li-

First, we had to find the correct building. There is a central administration building and this is where we started. We were sent across the city to another building. Each area of study has its own building. Fortunately, both students were competing in the same building. One can imagine how difficult it is to go from campus to campus. The good news is that every profile has all their classes together in the same building all four years. This means that once admitted into a certain profile, you spend all four years in the same building. The bad news is for the professors who teach general subjects and have to travel from campus to campus. Psychology for teachers will be taught in one building, psychology for journalists will be taught on another campus. This makes for many cancelled classes and perpetually late professors. If you decide to change your major, you must start all over again, from the beginning. You cannot transfer courses or credits from one profile to another.

When we entered the correct building the students immediately took their files from the first competition where they had not been chosen and made a new file for this competition. The application is a very short form. After it was filled out, we made our way to another room to submit the file. Upon entering this room they are assigned a file checker who makes certain they filled out everything correctly. This angel answers all questions, runs to make copies of things the students needed but had forgotten, and escorts them to the next line where they actually submit their folder. There are no computers in sight so everything is done by

hand and consequently everything goes much more quickly, if you ask me. Then they wait for three weeks for the results. I have a greater appreciation of how stressful this time is for these young people and how important it is that we support them. The students we were with went on their own for the first round, and both had disappointing results because they did not know all their options. If you are accepted in school, you are automatically assigned room and board. While there is a cost for this, it is very inexpensive compared to the US. However, the conditions in the state run dorms are not very desirable. Here our students will have an advantage because they are used to communal living without good conditions. While we were there, our students met up with some other students and they selected their roommates. They only have ten days after they get the results before they begin school. If they are not accepted this time, then they have to find a job and move out on their own. Again, NOROC helps the young people who want to be helped make this transition.

For NOROC, all scholarship help comes with strings attached. They must work for NOROC when we ask them to, mostly in the summer. Some volunteer with the young babies, some with the handicapped children, some do work around our properties, some help new students get adjusted in their new environments. God is Good!

Mary Ferris

(If you would like to help sponsor one of these university students, your help is greatly appreciated. Contact Carolyn White, 200 Hedges, Abilene Texas, 79605)

by Carol Schempp

cense. Costica's dream will become a reality in June when he graduates from Hyperion University in Bucuresti and takes his licensing exam. We will be there to celebrate with him! In our upcoming fundraising campaign, Sowing Seeds of Hope, I invite you to consider sponsoring a university student. We can personally testify that the reward has far outweighed the sacrifice.



If you wish to make a tax deductible donation to NOROC, please mail it to: NOROC, INC, 200 Hedges, Abilene, TX