



Health Action News



January 2007

Health Action Overseas Annual Newsletter

Partnerships in Disability

www.hao.ie

News from Romania

Our partner organisation in Romania, FVB, marked another milestone in its development as an autonomous agency by becoming a recognised service and training provider by the Romanian authorities. Besides successful partnerships with governmental agencies, FVB is now working on a number of new initiatives with Romanian non-governmental agencies who need specialised training on disability issues.

The young adults in the Group Home in Constanta continue to develop their independent living skills. Six of them are now employed and in October they hosted an Autumn celebration with many friends and neighbours.

In May the residential cen-

tre at Negru Voda closed down and the young adults moved to a new centre with more appropriate facilities in Techirghiol. HAO/FVB were involved in preparations for the move as well as the implementation of a staff training programme for Techirghiol.

Construction of the new Group Home in Galati was completed in 2006 and furniture and equipment was installed just before Christmas. Eight young adults from Placement Centres in Galati will move into their new home in February 2007.

In August Dinu Tenovici was appointed General Manager of FVB. Dinu brings a wealth of experience to the agency and has set up a new FVB office in Bucharest.



The young adults in Negru Voda prepare to move to their new home in Techirghiol.

In November FVB organised a fundraising concert in Constanta which featured well-known opera singer Bianca Ionescu. This was the first fundraising event organised within Romania on behalf of FVB programmes. Many thanks to all who helped to make this possible.

Irish Minister of State for Health and Children, Brian Lenihan, visited two HAO/FVB projects in Romania in May.

FVB's board of management continued to develop in 2006 with the addition of Stefan Rosu, Legal Advisor.

A look back at 2006

Updates:

- *News from Romania*
- *Irish tradesmen build new Group Home in Romania*
- *Celebrating volunteerism*
- *Irish-Romanian training partnership*
- *Minister Brian Lenihan visits HAO projects in Romania*

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Paul Traynor and friends build a Home...

In April Paul Traynor led a group of construction workers from Ireland to Galati in Romania to complete the construction of the new Group Home for eight young adults. This was the first of several visits throughout the year.

Uniquely, two of the volun-

teers; Ovidiu Sauciuc and Jaen Dan Hegyi, are originally from Romania and have settled in Ireland. "It was hard but very interesting work. It is good to know that at least 8 young adults will have a better life through this project." Terry Kelly, Carpenter.

"Thank you Ireland. You have built a house in our hearts..." Viata Libera newspaper, Galati.

Many thanks also to Project Mustard Seed, UK, for their ongoing support for this project.



Ovidiu Sauciuc, Paul Traynor and Jaen Dan Hegyi,



Celebrating Volunteerism

To celebrate five years of partnership between HAO in Ireland and FVB in Romania, we acknowledge the unique contributions made over the years by various people who have volunteered their time and expertise on behalf of HAO/FVB.

In 2006 the following people gave up their free time to travel to Romania to share their skills:

FVB Mentoring Programme: Pat Vaughan, Michael Gleeson, Gerard Byrne, Hilary Casey, Audrey Cranston.

Galati Construction Project: Paul Traynor, Matthew Gormley, Kevin Brennan, Karl Hautz, Terry Kelly,

Stephen Coyle, Ovidiu Sauciuc, Anthony Browne, Colm Dooley, Jaen Dan Hegyi, Gavin Slattery, Robert Coogan.

Oracle employees Eva Heffernan and Clodagh O'Neill took on the challenge of a fundraising trek through Transylvania.

Gerard Byrne and Stuart Lawler also volunteered their time to conduct a needs assessment in Macedonia, and Mike O'Keeffe and Noel Brennan gave up their Summer holidays to provide teacher training in China.

The following staff from the Open Training College Dublin also shared

their expertise in Romania: Raymond Watson, Claire Hopkins, Tracy Watson, Ray Lynch, Brendan Collins, and Jenny Costello.

We also wish to acknowledge the efforts of HAO/FVB staff, boards and friends of both agencies, who work tirelessly to improve the standard of care for young people with disabilities.



Irish-Romanian Training Partnership

In April 2006 another unique partnership commenced with the arrival in Romania of Raymond Watson and Claire Hopkins from the Open Training College Dublin. After many months of preparation they delivered the first module of training to key trainers for the Community Services Centre in Techirghiol.

In May and June four more trainers from the Open Training College traveled out to complete the core training modules. Meanwhile trainers from the Ratiu Foundation in Romania provided supplementary training and an

agreement was drawn up with ProVocatie training centre in Bucharest to provide training of trainers so that the trainees could then pass on their skills to all personnel in the new centre.



Trainees busy at work during OTC training, April 2006.

This project marks a unique achievement for HAO and FVB in providing the highest level of training expertise from Ireland and Romania for community service development for people with disabilities.

On April 29th FVB Training Coordinator Alina Dobrescu traveled to Dublin to report to the HAO AGM on the Techirghiol training project. The meeting was also attended by Ray Watson from the Open Training College. We were honoured to have the Romanian ambassador to Ireland, HE Sylvia Davidiou, in attendance.

Linking with Macedonia

In September Gerard Byrne and Stuart Lawler traveled to the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) to discuss training needs with two organizations for the visually impaired: the National Union for the Blind and the School for the Blind in Skopje.

They identified a range of areas for staff training including daily living skills, technology, alternative formats for learning, detection and diagnosis of visual impairment, and advocacy.

Gerard and Stuart met with EU ambassador to Macedonia Erwan

Fouere to brief him on the proposal.

They also met with local NGO Polio Plus to discuss partnership on advocacy programmes for the visually impaired.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in Macedonia has welcomed HAO's proposed programme, particularly during the European Year of Equal Opportunities, as a key activity to raise awareness on disability issues within the community.

HAO anticipates developing a training programme in 2007 with support from Irish Aid and experts in the area

of visual impairment in Ireland.



Nina Babushkovska, Djordji Mitreski, Stuart Lawler and Gerard Byrne at the Skopje School for the Blind.



Minister Lenihan visits HAO/FVB projects in Romania

Irish Minister of State for Health and Children, Brian Lenihan, was accompanied by the Irish ambassador to Romania, HE Pádraic Cradock, on a visit to the HAO/FVB Group Home (Casa James Dillon) in Constanta. The staff and young adults were delighted to have such distinguished guests and proudly showed off their home, including the self-contained flat which is now occupied by one of the residents who is preparing for fully independent living.

The Minister was impressed with the happy atmosphere and remarked "This is a real home!"

The minister and ambassador also attended the official opening of the new Community Service Centre in Techirghiol where HAO/FVB set up a staff training programme.

The opening ceremony was attended by a large number of representatives of local and national bodies. FVB staff, board members and Open Training College trainers from Dublin were in attendance.

After the opening the minister toured the buildings where 60 young adults had just been transferred from the old residential centre in Negru Voda. The multi-sensory room which was set up by HAO/FVB was up and running

for the minister's visit.

The closure of Negru Voda is a welcome relief for the 106 young adults who have spent many years housed in unsuitable conditions. HAO/FVB provided humanitarian relief and therapy programmes to ease the plight of the residents over the years, often in extremely difficult circumstances. As we look forward to a new life for the residents in their new home in Techirghiol, we acknowledge the work of all staff and volunteers who willingly gave their time and energy to alleviate the suffering in Negru Voda.

Mike and Noel Go to China

In August Mike O'Keeffe and Noel Brennan traveled to Anshun Teacher Training College in China to deliver Special Needs training. This was Mike's third visit to Anshun and Noel's first.

This year the project was visited by Julie O'Brien, Second Secretary in the Irish embassy, Beijing, and Mrs Lun, from the Education office of Guizhou province.

As usual, interpreter Lu Jun worked tirelessly to ensure the success of the project.

The Irish volunteers visited a local orphanage and donated resource materials and equipment purchased locally with funds raised through the Irish National Teacher's Organisation. This funding will also be used to build a new solar-powered shower unit for the orphanage, which currently cares for twenty children with special needs.

Mike and Noel also visited the family of a girl with hearing and speech impairment and donated funds to enable her to attend a special edu-

cation school.

Many thanks to the Irish Embassy in Beijing for supporting the Teacher Training project.



Children having fun in Anshun, China.

The Hills are Alive.....

In May a group of hardy souls set out to climb Lugnaquilla, Wicklow's highest mountain, to raise funds for the new Group Home in Galati.

It was a ferocious day, with wind, driving rain and very poor visibility. Thanks to the expert guidance of John O'Reilly, a core group made it to the top.

In June seventy five people made their way to the beautiful setting of Tulfarris House in the Wicklow hills to participate in a Golf Classic to raise funds for the Galati project.

In contrast to the Lug walkers, this lucky group had one of the best days of the Summer and played long into the evening.

Eva Heffernan and Clodagh O'Neill with Transylvanian guide Nicu.



In September, another Golf Classic was run in the South County Golf Club in the Dublin hills, and three intrepid walkers trekked

Through the Transylvanian mountains in Romania to raise money for Galati. Special thanks to Paul Traynor for organising the golf classics.

We are planning a number of fundraising activities in 2007, including golf classics, a Lug Walk and a Transylvania Trek. Please contact us if you want to get involved. Keep up to date on fundraising events through our website or by joining our mailing list. Forward email details to us if you wish to join this list. We are also always open to new fundraising ideas. Please contact us if you can help!



Partnerships in disability

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HAO is a registered Irish charity which has run training, therapy and special education programmes overseas since 1991. Registered charity No. 10503. HAO is also registered as a company limited by guarantee. Company No. 407808.

HAO is not affiliated to any religious or political organisations.

Many people include charities in their Wills. HAO would be honoured to be included in your Will.

This newsletter is also available in large print format

Acknowledgements

Thank you!

A big thank you to our regular "Sponsor a Project" donors, and to those who completed tax relief certificates which enabled HAO to reclaim tax on all donations over €250 in any given year. If you require further details on this scheme please contact us.

If you know anyone interested in becoming a sponsor just ask them to contact us for details. Special thanks to all who helped with fundraising and individual donations. Donations and "Sponsor a Project" standing orders can be made through our website or by contacting Siobhán O'Shea.

Fundraising can also be done through our new webpage:

www.mycharity.ie/charity/hao

Here you can create your own fundraising page, and get sponsored for events in aid of HAO. You can also donate online directly to HAO.

Either way, you are raising money for HAO in a safe, secure and easy way!



HAO Directors: Gerard Byrne, Hilary Casey, Audrey Cranston, James Dillon, Richard Lee, Gearoid O'Nolan, Norah Sweetman, Pat Vaughan

CEO: Derek O'Reilly

Administrator: Siobhán O'Shea

HAO's partners overseas:

Fundatia pentru o Viata mai Buna (FVB) Romania



Anshun Teacher Training College, China.

Project Mustard Seed, UK

Special thanks to the **Open Training College** Dublin which partnered HAO in the development and delivery of the pilot training of trainers programme in Romania for personnel working with people with disabilities.



We gratefully acknowledge Irish governmental support through Irish Aid and the Embassy of Ireland, Beijing.



Derek O'Reilly, Romanian Ambassador HE Sylvia Davidiou and FVB Training Coordinator Alina Dobrescu at the HAO AGM.

We cordially invite supporters and contributors to apply for membership of HAO. Please contact us for an application form. All members are invited to our Annual General Meeting in Dublin.