

Getting to Bucharest le hAmelia McComiskey

In order to go on this trip to Bucharest each of us had to raise €800. This sum of money covered the cost of the flights to and from Bucharest and the rest was used to buy food and clothes for the children. Throughout the year all the students that were going on the trip did different things to raise the money. Some of us decided to work together to get the money. A few examples of the things we did were church gate collections, bag packing, table quizzes and cake sales. I myself did church gate collections over four days with two other students, together we raised €2200. Between us all we raised around €9000. To us this didn't seem like a lot but it made a huge difference to them. It helps them keep the center running throughout the year and covers the cost of heating and electricity. It also helps provide food, water and clothes for the children. Without this money they wouldn't be able to help as many children as they do.

Céad Lá/Day 1 le hÁine Sinnott

On the 20th of April this year I set off on the best trip of my life. Myself and eleven other students along with two teachers met in Supervalu car park in Enniscorthy at 3.30 AM....Yes am.. and began our journey to Bucharest. The atmosphere was a mixture of nerves and excitement as we made our way to the airport I mBáile Átha Cliath to fly to a country in which the culture is completely foreign to us. We didn't know what the people were like or the way they lived. Another worry was the food! What if they didn't eat 'normal' food? These were the things playing on my mind during the four hour flight.

However, all these worries faded when we got there and saw Casa St.Joseph. We met the Irish man Colm Molloy who ran the centre and immediately felt at ease. It was clear how much Colm cared for the children and the centre when he asked us to be quiet while going to our rooms so the children wouldn't be disturbed from their naps. We were shown to our seomraí which were great. There were colours and pictures all through-out the house making it a really friendly and welcoming environment. There was a staff room for us and to our surprise they had even supplied is with some Barry's tea and digestive biscuits which made us feel a bit more at home.

After we had all settled into the house we went downstairs to the kitchen where there was a delicious dinner prepared for us. Tar éis dinner we all took a stroll to the local shopping centre where we got to look around. We didn't stay long though because the exhaustion had set in and we were beginning to act like zombies. I fell asleep that night oblivious to how eye opening the next week would be.

Day to Day i mBucaireist le Cameron Butler

The day to day in Bucharest consisted of a few things, here's how our schedule went. Gach maidin three students were chosen to wake up earlier than the rest. We would go down stairs to the room where all the children come in to get a change of clothes supplied by the daycare centre. The carers helped the children clean up and shower and then they were sent out to get dressed. A lot of the children didn't need help as they were very independent from a young age. The day care supplied everything from socks, shoes and trousers to t-shirts, jumpers, coats and even hats. It would start at 7:30 am and go on to about 8:30-8:40 am.

Then the children got their breakfast, also supplied by the day care. The food was made every day by the team of two chefs employed by the day care. We then went down to get breakfast as the children were coming upstairs at around 9:30 am. At the end of breakfast (10:00am) we would go back upstairs and would partake in activities with the children, for example the first day the sun was splitting the trees so Alene decided that we would go on a trip to one of the local parks. Here there were two football courts where the older students split up and went to one court with a football. Here we saw the amazing skills of one boy called Armani. Armani was an eight year old boy who spent his entire life playing football. He idolized Cristiano Ronaldo and will one day get to play on the same pitch as him no doubt. His skills were beyond any level I have ever seen from an eight year old. His father, who had recently served a sentence in prison for dealing heroin to care for his family, believes that one day young Armani will become a professional footballer and take him and his family out of the immense poverty they currently live in. After the trip to the park we walked back to the daycare centre and the children went to get their lunch and then take a nap. Three students were chosen to go and visit the house's in which these

children have to live. Whilst they did that we began working on our mural, Tús maith leath na hoibre. We had chosen two designs to do before we went abroad. Now the challenge of putting them on the wall had arrived. It took us 5 days to get the Mural done as we were away for the Saturday and Sunday and the weather was not in our favour for Monday and Tuesday so we had to improvise and build a tarp shelter to cover the wall at an angle so that the rain didn't wash the paint away. After the children woke up we went back inside to play with the kids to help them wake up before they went home. We then had about another hour (from 4:30pm-5:30pm) until dinner. We worked on the murals some more and then cleaned up. After dinner we went on a walk to the small shopping centre just to get out and get some air. We would be home at around 8:00 pm-9:00 pm every night. We would then do the same thing the next day with the morning activities varying. Different people were chosen each day for the different activities. Overall this experience has changed my view on life. Everything I used to take for granted I appreciate so much more. I would recommend to anyone who can help anyone, do it. I think we don't understand how lucky we are when it comes to certain things. If you see an elderly woman carrying shopping bags offer to help her. If someone drops something pick it up for them. If you see someone behind you heading for the door, hold it open for them. I've recently learned that it's the little things that make the difference.

Colm Molloy started doing voluntary work in Romania with Mother Theresa's Missionary of charity sisters in May 1991. They had 2 homes for children here in Bucharest and three more around the country and all of them were in a poor state of repair and we helped with the repairs to all the homes. In 1995 Colm and his colleagues were asked to look at the plight of the many thousands of children living in the streets and that was where they met Dr. Viorica Vasiliu. In 1998 it was decided that they would form their own charity and they rented a house for a daycare facility in which they worked until 2000 and by then they had built St. Joseph's house which was to become a home for 46 children from the streets. Along with his two colleagues John Nolan from Whitechurch, New Ross and Brian Geary from Rathkeale Co. Limerick, he formed the Street Children of Bucharest in 2000 and they continue to direct it today.

But the real success is the Daycare for impoverished children. These children would not get an education if it were not for the support of this charity. They would drop out of primary school after 1 or 2 years because they would not get the support they would require at that stage. They have 55 children attending the daycare at the moment and this will rise to over 60 in next school year. Daycentre is open from 7.30am to 6.00pm Mon To Friday.

Meánscoil Gharman has been going out to Bucharest since 2011. This has been our 6th year to visit the day care centre for the impoverished children of Bucharest who live in ghettos and in shacks on the outskirts of the city. It is a project which is undertaken by Transition Year students and they are totally responsible for raising €800 each, a sum of money which is donated to the charity. To date the students have brought out approximately €50,000 and we are told that the centre very much depends on this money. Apart from our school there is only one other school in the west of Ireland who visit this charity. It would be fantastic if some more schools came on board and took this on as a TY project. The benefit to the students is wonderful as they spend a week in a very safe environment and yet get the opportunity to see what real poverty is.

Norah Harpur

Príomhoide