



YOUR  
**LOCAL**  
SHOEBOX  
CHARITY



# January 2018 Newsletter



E: [info@boxesofhopecumbria.co.uk](mailto:info@boxesofhopecumbria.co.uk)  
[www.boxesofhopecumbria.co.uk](http://www.boxesofhopecumbria.co.uk)

The shoebox distribution trip this year saw many new areas covered that we have never visited before. The area around the Black Sea coast is home to many Turkish Muslim members of the gypsy community, and it was these communities that we visited in the early part of the week. After flying to Bucharest the team (all self funded) were met by Nicu Gal, President of People to People Foundation and our partner in Romania. We drove for 3 hours towards Constanta to make our first stop in Medgidia, a large town just inland. The next couple of days were spent in villages around the area distributing in around 15 schools, and after school clubs.



The following day we travelled South towards the town of Mangalia which is almost on the Bulgarian border. This is an area also populated by Turkish Muslims, most of whom are of gypsy descent, but speak Turkish. This proved interesting for us as only Nicu's contact could speak Turkish, and many of the villagers did not speak Romanian! None of the children have had shoeboxes

before so it was wonderful to see the delight on their faces as they received their boxes and opened them up to discover what was inside. We returned to Medgidia and met with children in the Ali Baba district, again a Muslim area on the edge of the town before moving the next day toward the Ukraine border and the town of Babadag. Having distributed around 2500 boxes we then left the area and headed back towards Bucharest.

The team were delighted to have an invitation to join Paul Brummell, the British Ambassador, at the Embassy for tea. After meeting Mr Brummell last year on the trip he has been very supportive, so it was great to be able to update him on the events of the trip up to that point. We then continued to our overnight stop in Brasov ready for our visit to Hetea the next day. Hetea is a village with many needs, and in the past 12 months Boxes of Hope have supported the employment of a kindergarten teacher to support the younger children in the year before they go to the main primary school. Around 250

people live in this village with only one water pipe running into an open stream in the valley. After visiting last year we could see the great potential for future developments and to support People to People Foundation in the work they are doing here. Things were much the same despite 12 months going by, and there is so much to do to begin to make a difference to these families. We wait to hear of future plans so that we can consider how Boxes of Hope can support this project further in 2018.



We completed our visit over the final two days around Slobozia & Urziceni on the plains east of Bucharest, giving boxes to mainly gypsy children in schools and churches in those areas. Once again, the quality of the shoeboxes was excellent. Wooden games, dominoes, cars and musical instruments were very popular with the children. We experienced a great variation in the levels of poverty that we saw this year. Many of the children we met in schools may have been fairly well dressed, and following a good education, but nevertheless they still have many needs and you don't need to step very far from the school to see the types of houses that these children are living in. In some of the more rural villages there are many more basic needs that have to be addressed and many children we met did not attend school.

We were delighted this year to have a team member from Lancaster & Morecambe, Kelly teaches in a school for children with special educational needs. Her pupils have supported her in collecting more boxes than ever in the school, as well as following our progress throughout the trip. It's marvellous that children in our area can learn about how children in other parts of the world live on a day to day basis. In fact, the children even made a model of Hetea village from gingerbread for the school's Christmas Centrepiece competition (see picture).



Once again, the 2017 campaign has been a wonderful success and we would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our supporters for making it possible.

## Summary of Activities, January 2017 – December 2017

### **Boxes of Hope, Cumbria was registered as a humanitarian aid organisation in July, 2013, to**

- make the shoebox project more local and personal to Cumbria
- give us direct access to the children receiving the shoeboxes
- enable us to respond to the longer term needs of the children
- make better use of funds as, unlike larger charities, we have no staff to pay, thus enabling us to send all surplus funds to projects in Romania

Throughout 2017, groups and individuals continued to raise funds and support our ongoing projects in Romania.

### **In particular, we acknowledge the hard work and commitment of those involved in the**

- Kendal (and other) coffee mornings
- support of Boxes of Hope, Cumbria throughout the county and beyond
- all those who helped with our warehouses and collecting shoeboxes during the campaign

Again this year we took the decision not to have any presence at local shows. It may be that someone is attending already in another capacity and could add a Boxes of Hope stand alongside. If we have any volunteers that would be interested in taking these events up as a project we would be pleased to hear from them.

Surplus funds from the shoebox campaign, and from other very generous individuals and groups, have enabled us to support other efforts through the year. In particular, the continuation of the vegetable plot project and apprenticeship programme run by the Prince of Wales Foundation (now completed) and the support of the Kindergarten Teacher in Hetea with People to People Foundation.



We are delighted to be able to contribute to supporting this amazing work that is taking place in Romania.