

BLYTHSWOOD NEWS

WHO IS MY NEIGHBOUR?



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Gifts for brick factory families in Pakistan



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Simple gifts are luxuries for people like Emil



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Boxes address reality behind the postcards

Shoebbox gifts show care for those on the edges of society

In the summer Gabriel lives under a bridge in Timisoara, the biggest city in western Romania. In the winter he and his family return to the Roma colony in a far-flung village, to a dwelling without doors, windows, ceilings, running water or electricity.

This is what it means to live on the margins of society in Europe today. Gabriel, aged five, is one of six children. His father was recently released from prison. His mother is registered as having a learning disability. His sister was taken away by social services and is now in foster care. Some of the family don't even have birth certificates and so lack any official identity. None has ever been to school.

Presented with a shoebbox from Blythswood Care, which gift did Gabriel like best? "He liked everything," says Flavia, a social worker employed by the council and by Blythswood Banat. "The family barely has anything to eat. Sometimes the children can go without food for a whole day. They love sweets and toys."

Last year, Blythswood's Shoe Box Appeal resulted in 116,576 gift-filled boxes going to children and adults in eight East



Gabriel liked everything in his box

European countries and in Pakistan. Hundreds more – including the one received by Gabriel – were produced by donors within Romania, inspired to show care towards the poorest in their own country. We do not have to pass by on the other side.

Will you fill a box for Blythswood's 2016 Shoe Box Appeal? A bar of soap, a pair of socks, a packet of sweets – these are practical gifts that bring joy, comfort and dignity to people in need. And not just practical but personal, too. Your box shows that someone

cares. Phone 01349 830777 for an instruction leaflet now or register online at www.shoebboxappeal.org



Give hope to someone in need this Christmas! Order your leaflets with full instructions now – call 01349 830777 or go to shoebboxappeal.org

Box of surprises for teenage street-dweller in Kosovo



Very happy with his shoebox: Fatmir survives by searching through other people's rubbish

Fatmir is 17. He lives on the streets of Gjakova, a town in Kosovo near the Albanian border. Those who know him reckon he has learning disabilities. "We often see him in the same place" says Faton Berisha, pastor of a local Baptist congregation. "When we stopped to give him a shoebox he was searching through rubbish bins to see if he could find something for himself."

"He opened it and was so happy to find a warm hat, gloves and shampoo. He though the deodorant was perfume and we had to explain to him what it was. He had never seen one before."

"He went away very happy."



Sweets can be a rare treat for hungry children in Serbia

SWEETS ARE SPECIAL FOR HUNGRY BOY IN SERBIA

Leonardo is eight years old. There are seven people in his family, sharing one small room. There may be a television but frequently there is no food. Sometimes he is seen on the street of Vranjska Banja, Serbia, begging in order to survive.

No surprise then that of all the good things that his Blythwood shoebox contained, his favourite gift was the sweets.

David Armus helped distribute boxes in December. He reported: "Leonardo's mum and dad cannot buy candy for their children, so he appreciated that gift especially."



Blythwood shoeboxes were delivered to the homes of people with disability for whom it is not so easy to travel around the town

HOME DELIVERY OF GIFTS FOR WHEELCHAIR USERS IN MOLDOVA

Ana and Vica live in Cahul, southern Moldova. Both depend on wheelchairs to get around and are members of an invalids' association in their town. Gift boxes from Blythwood's Shoe Box Appeal were delivered to them at home.

"The gifts were all useful to them," reported Andrei Groza. "They especially appreciated the toiletries and were pleased to get calendars too."

Serxho, only 18 months old, was a patient in the Mother Theresa University Hospital in Tirana when visitors went round the wards to give out boxes from Blythwood's 2015 Shoe Box Appeal. Although suffering from an extreme form of anaemia he looked well pleased to discover a bright yellow toy tractor in his box.

"His mother is just 19 and she couldn't hold back her tears," says Gjergji, who works for Mission Possible Albania, helping children and young people in a deprived district of the capital city.

"Clearly she felt a lot of pain. But in her little boy's eyes we could see hope, we could see light. He didn't stop staring at us with his curious eyes."

The team from Mission Possible delivered over 500 boxes to the hospital, taking time to pray with many young patients and their anxious parents. Gjergji says: "The time we spent with each child and mother would break for them the monotony of long hours, of days and weeks, with the same exhausting routine."

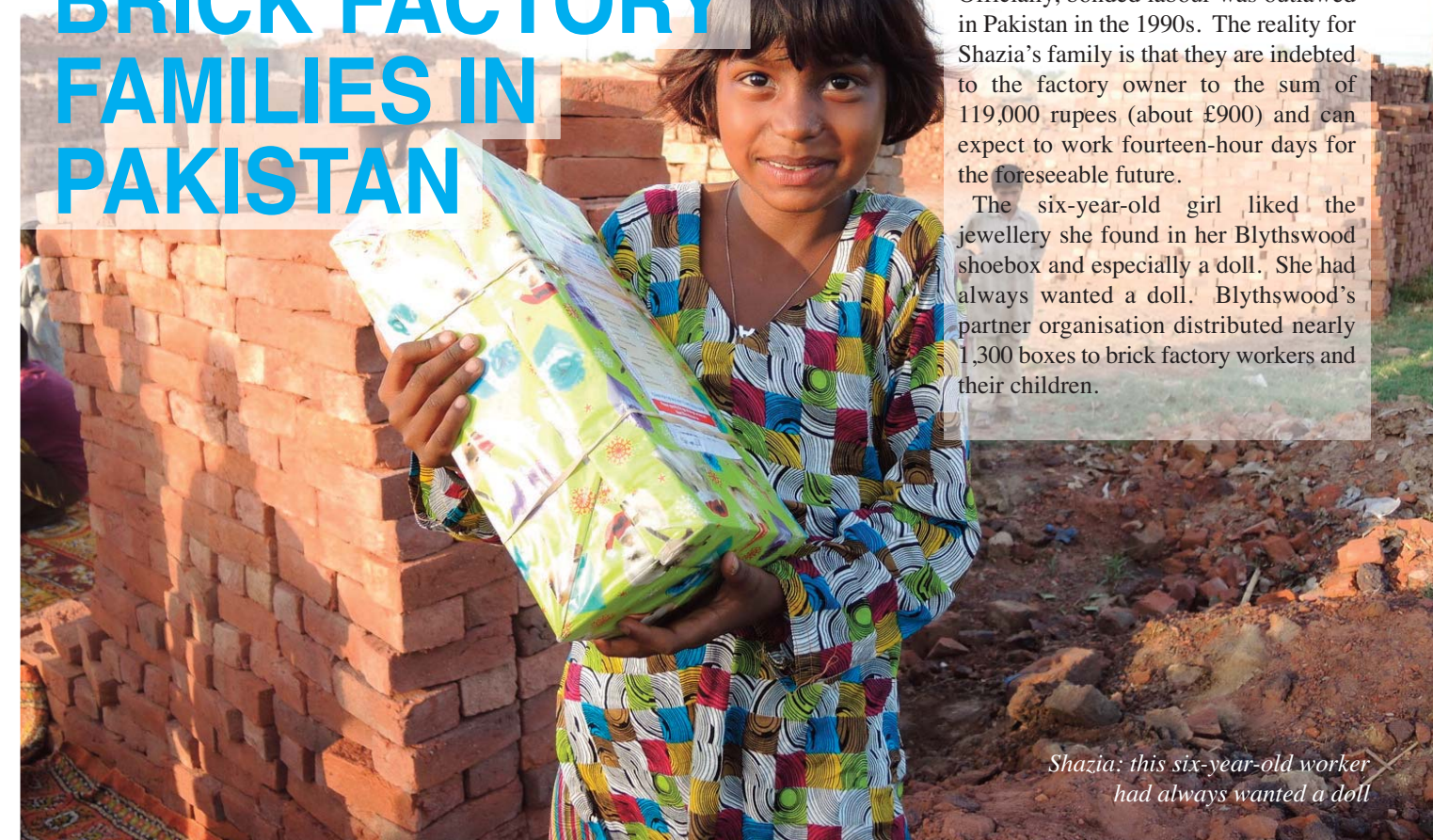
"We thanked the Lord for these Christmas boxes which brought joy to the little ones and to their mothers."



SMILES AND TEARS IN CHILDREN'S WARD

Although seriously ill, Serxho enjoyed playing with his new tractor

GIFTS FOR BRICK FACTORY FAMILIES IN PAKISTAN



Shazia and her older brother and sister work with their parents in a brick factory in the Punjab Province of Pakistan. Officially, bonded labour was outlawed in Pakistan in the 1990s. The reality for Shazia's family is that they are indebted to the factory owner to the sum of 119,000 rupees (about £900) and can expect to work fourteen-hour days for the foreseeable future.

The six-year-old girl liked the jewellery she found in her Blythwood shoebox and especially a doll. She had always wanted a doll. Blythwood's partner organisation distributed nearly 1,300 boxes to brick factory workers and their children.

Shazia: this six-year-old worker had always wanted a doll



Social work student Aizerek knows what it is to be an orphanage child

Winter warmers for student in Moldova

Aizerek was in her first year at college in Chisinau, Moldova, when she was presented with a box full of gifts from Blythwood's 2015 Shoe Box Appeal. Brought up in an orphanage in Kirgizstan, she knows nothing about her parents. But when Christian neighbours invited her to go with them to church she gladly accepted and is now a follower of Jesus. Now she is training to be a social worker as she wants to help orphanage children.

In her shoebox she was pleased to find gloves and earmuffs to help her through the winter in landlocked Moldova.



SHOEBOX GIFTS FOR FOOD-BANK FAMILIES IN HUNGARY

Petra is one of a family of five children living in eastern Hungary. Their mother suffers from panic attacks and depression and sometimes can't face getting out of bed. On those occasions, Petra goes to a local food bank, hoping to return with a kilo of bread to keep the family from going hungry.

One day in December she received not only bread but also boxes from Blythwood's Shoe Box Appeal.

"Since September we've got to know 74 families who live in extreme poverty," says Aniko Somlyai. "Many of them have young children. We have seen how much that kilo of bread means to them."

"This time they received not only food but also presents which made the children extremely happy. Petra was very pleased with her gift."



Gifts of shampoo and other toiletries are important to teenagers like Elisa

Gifts of shampoo and toothpaste are highly valued by 16-year-old Elisa who lives in Tirana, Albania. She is a member of the community library set up by Blythwood's partner organisation Mission Possible Albania

HELPING TEENS FROM POOR HOMES TO KEEP CLEAN

which runs programmes to help women and children in one of the city's poorest districts.

"Elisa comes from a very poor family," says Mission Possible director Besa Shaplo. "She had taken her brother's little girl to our children's day centre programme for kids from low income homes."

"These young people like to be clean but sometimes extreme poverty can make that seem like a luxury. In our routine check-up that day we found lice in the hair of her little niece. Gifts of soap and shampoo are a big help for these families."



SIMPLE GIFTS ARE LUXURIES FOR PEOPLE LIKE EMIL

Emil has no job and therefore no income. While some of his neighbours raid the rubbish bins of nearby apartments to feed their pigs, he does so in order to feed himself – and the cats that keep him company.

For a man in his situation, the simple gifts which Emil received in a Blythwood shoebox are luxuries he would otherwise be without: a pair of socks, a bar of soap, a packet of razors. One hundred and five boxes were distributed to children and adults in the gypsy community where he lives, in western Romania.

By filling a box for Blythwood's 2016 Shoe Box Appeal you can give practical aid and show kindness to some of the poorest people in Europe.

BOXES ADDRESS REALITY BEHIND THE POSTCARD PICTURES



Two hundred shoeboxes were distributed amongst low-income families in Bistrita, northern Romania. With many historical buildings, the quaint town is attractive to tourists. It is also home to an impoverished Roma community whose standard of living would be unimaginable in most of Europe. Blythwood worker Sandel Svitas was involved in the allocation of boxes. He says: "You can be quite sure your gifts were the only Christmas presents these children received."





STOP PRESS: SHOES DISCOVERED IN SHOEBOX

A pair of black dress shoes, European size 42. What's the chance of finding that in a Blythwood shoebox?

Practically nil as one thing that the gift-filled boxes don't usually contain is shoes.

Imagine then the amazement of shoebox distributor Patricia Varga when she discovered exactly what a young man had set his heart on amongst the relatively small number of boxes allocated to her in Budapest.

"We were taking boxes to a school for children with special needs," she explained. "It includes a dormitory for children who are orphans and for those who live too far away or who are too poor to travel each day.

New shoes – this young man in Budapest received just what he needed to complete his rig-out

"The school never receives sufficient donated gifts to give one to each child but we made sure that each child received their own box.

"One young man about 13 years of age said all he really wanted was a pair of black shoes. Formal dress here is a white shirt, black trousers and black shoes – if you can afford them.

"In all our years of distributing Blythwood boxes, we have never seen shoes. Miracle of miracles, this box contained a pair of black shoes in his size. Both he and his carer and all of us were astounded. We serve a God who hears our heart's cry and is the Father to the fatherless!"



Jamshed (right) with his friends: they each promised to share their gifts with others

BOYS PROMISE TO SHARE THEIR SHOEBOX GIFTS

Jamshed looked thrilled to receive a fire engine. His dad drives a donkey cart, earning about £2.30 a day – barely enough to feed his family. They live near the city of Hafizabad in northern Pakistan.

"These gifts brought big smiles to the

faces of Jamshed and his friends," says shoebox distributor Sohail Batti. "They really liked the toys, the T-shirts and the coloured pens.

"They promised they would each share one item from their box with someone who did not receive a box."

Boxes appreciated by low-waged families in Bulgaria

Unemployment is a major problem in the villages of Sliven province, Bulgaria. Nedka's father is fortunate to have a job, working in a Japanese-owned factory that makes wiring for vehicles. But his pay is not sufficient to lift a family of five out of poverty. Neither her 19-year-old brother nor her mother can find work. Her other brother is still at school.

So the ten-year-old girl was really thrilled to be given a box full of gifts from Blythwood's Shoe Box Appeal. "She liked everything in her box but especially the sweets and a doll," says shoebox distributor Zhani Slavcheva. "All the children have shown great interest in the Bible story book, too."

Last winter more than 6,000 Blythwood shoeboxes were distributed in Bulgaria.



Nedka's dad has a job but life remains a struggle for the family of five

Shoebox gifts great treasure for young family in Ukraine



The children of Kolya and Larissa were beaming with happiness when presented with shoeboxes from Blythwood



Kolya and Larissa look incredibly young to be the parents of four children. But they are not unusual among the Roma community in Uzhhorod, the westernmost city of Ukraine, according to shoebox distributor Tanya Shpygunova. "Frequently they get married when they are just 15 or 16," she says. "The girls don't have much education and sometimes they even don't know how to read.

"Your presents were a great treasure for their children. They found colouring books and pencils, things that nobody will buy for them.

"The kids immediately put on everything that they found in the boxes – hats, scarfs and socks. Everybody was so happy and glad at this blessing."

Blythwood Care sent more than 7,000 gift-filled boxes from last year's Shoe Box Appeal to Ukraine, a country beset by political turmoil and economic hardship.

WHO SENT ME THIS GIFT?



With snow on the ground outside, Amanda was so pleased to receive a warm hat for her youngest child, called Sali Boy. But who sent it to her? That's what the mother of three – still a teenager herself – couldn't understand.

"She asked us several times who sent the gifts and we tried to explain to her about the shoeboxes and how they come," says Faton Berisha who distributes boxes in and around Gjakova, Kosovo.

Amanda belongs to a large extended family, living outside the town and poor even by the standards of Kosovo.

Faton says: "We gave boxes for everyone in the family but the things Amanda liked best were for her baby boy.

"These gifts are so helpful for poor families in our community."

Amanda was amazed that strangers would send gifts for her and to her children



GIVE HOPE TO SOMEONE IN NEED THIS CHRISTMAS



Uzhhorod, Ukraine: 'the kids immediately put on everything that they found in the boxes' (see page 7)

In a brick factory in Pakistan, a child labourer dreamed she was playing with a doll.

In a care home in Hungary a young man dreamed of new black shoes.

By filling a box for Blythwood's Shoe Box Appeal last year, you helped to make their dreams come true. Thank you very much indeed.

These are not trivial things. The new shoes brought dignity to a 13-year-old boy with special needs, who wanted to dress as a man (see page 6). The doll restored childhood, momentarily, to a six-year-old girl as she toiled alongside her debt-burdened parents (page 3).

New clothes, toiletries, jotters and felt-tipped pens – such practical gifts bring more than their own usefulness. To children, and especially to adults, they bring the message that somebody cares, that

somebody wants to show them kindness.

Each year, we include in the boxes a bible story book for children, a booklet for teenagers, or a Scripture calendar for adults. As 2016 marks Blythwood's 50th anniversary, we plan to celebrate the occasion by adding a copy of John's Gospel to each box going to Eastern Europe.

Our target is to fill 150,000 boxes for Europe and Pakistan, taking the total to over two million since the appeal was launched in 1993. Please, will you fill a box for Blythwood?

James Campbell

James Campbell
Chief Executive



*"You hear, O LORD, the desire of the afflicted;
you encourage them, and you listen to their cry." Psalm 10:17*

You Tube See our appeal on
YouTube or ask for DVD

Yes, I do want to support Blythwood's 2016 Shoe Box Appeal

Here is my donation of £.....

(please make cheques / CAF vouchers payable to Blythwood Care)

I am a taxpayer. Please send me a Gift Aid form ☐

If you can give us your email address, it will allow us to acknowledge your donation without incurring postage costs. Your email:

☐ Please tick if you do not require a receipt

Please send me information on:

- ☐ Please send me the 2016 Shoe Box Appeal leaflet
☐ Please send me the new Shoe Box Appeal DVD
☐ We would like a speaker at our church/ club/ school



We also accept donations by (please tick):

- ☐ Visa ☐ Mastercard ☐ CAF ☐ Charity Card ☐ Switch/Maestro or online at
www.blythwood.org

Card number

Start date

Expiry date

Issue no.

3 digit security
number necessary

Name on card

Signature.....

Title (Mr/Mrs/Miss/Other) First Name

Surname

Address.....

Town..... Country.....

Postcode..... Tel no.....

Please return completed form to:

Blythwood Care, Deephaven, Evanton, Ross-shire, IV16 9XJ

Tel: 01349 830777 • email: info@blythwood.org

Standing Order

This cancels any existing standing orders in favour of Blythwood Care or Blythwood Tract Society but will be in addition to any standing order for child sponsorship.

Please DO fill in all details including your name and address in the form opposite. You can find all the bank details we require in your cheque book.

From: (Full name of Account Holder)

.....

To:

Bank PLC:

Bank Address:

.....

Postcode:

Your Bank Account:

Your Sort Code: -

From my account please pay £.....

Every ☐ Month ☐ Quarter Until further notice

Commencing:

Please pay Blythwood Care A/C No 00140261 Sort Code 80-08-84

Bank of Scotland, Lochcarron, Ross-shire, IV54 8YD

Please make sure all backdated payments are credited.

Signature

.....

Date

Banks may decline to accept instructions to change Standing Orders to certain types of accounts other than current accounts.

FOR BANK USE ONLY Paying Bank please quote this reference

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