

BLYTHSWOOD NEWS



P3

Every gift appreciated by children from low-income families



P4

Shoebboxes reach Ukraine



P5

Something for everyone: Huma shares her joy



P7

Homeless former nurse surprised someone cares



Ionel and Lenuta live with their grandfather

SHOWING KINDNESS TO STRANGERS IN NEED

Ionel and Lenuta look wise beyond their years and perhaps they are. Thus far their young lives have been incredibly hard. Their mother died of alcohol abuse. Their father is away from home, working in Russia to support his three children. Their brother is disabled. And their grandfather – their only day-to-day carer – is a very old man.

Standing in the winter sunshine, on the dirt track of their home village in eastern Moldova, they have a solemn

dignity all their own. The gifts they received from Blythswood's Shoe Box Appeal made them very happy, according to Dumitru Sevastian. "They were very thankful," he says.

Last winter Blythswood's Shoe Box Appeal resulted in 106,000 shoebboxes being delivered to people in eight east European countries and in Pakistan.

Filled with everyday items such as a bar of soap, a pair of socks and a notebook, boxes from the annual appeal bring practical aid to people deprived of basic necessities.

But more than that they bring the message that somebody cares. Whatever their futures hold, Ionel and Lenuta enjoyed the kindness of strangers that day. Their lives were brightened, their horizons broadened.

By filling a box in 2015, you can show kindness to a child or adult in need. Phone 01349 830777 for an instruction leaflet now or register online at www.shoeboxappeal.org.



Change a life this Christmas! Order your leaflets with full instructions now – call 01349 830777 or go to shoeboxappeal.org

KATI LIKED THE SCARF AND HAT



A gift can make an abandoned child feel special

Kati* beamed with delight when she saw a new hat and scarf at the top of her Blythwood shoebox. And there were plenty more goodies in the box for her to enjoy. The fourteen-year-old girl has learning difficulties and has been cared for at a children's home in Hungary since being abandoned by her parents.

"All the children throughout Hungary were really happy to receive your gifts," says Eva Hella who helped distribute the boxes. "Thank you for sending boxes in 2014."

*not her real name

BOXES BRING SMILES TO FAMILY WHO LOST THEIR DAD



Bianca beams with happiness as she receives a Blythwood shoebox

Bianca is the youngest in a large family who lost their father a couple of years ago. Her mother struggles to bring up five children alone.

Their home is small and lacks a bathroom. They are unable to eat well because of

their low income and Mum is afraid to take a job that would require her to leave the children unattended. For them the Christmas cakes and gifts that make the season such a special time for traditional Romanian families are an unattainable dream.

But Bianca's mother makes sure the children go to school to receive a good education and does all she can to bring them up in a clean and healthy environment, and with a smile on their faces.

"These children are happy, even although they live in such poverty," reported the representative of the local charity which distributed boxes in a district near Bucharest, Romania. "Thanks to Blythwood's Shoe Box Appeal, they have received gifts from people they don't know, but who have hearts that care."



'EVERYTHING IN THE BOXES IS PRECIOUS'

Klara* is raising seven children on her own. Her husband died several years ago and the father of her younger children gives her no support.

Twice a year the family receives assistance from Romanian charity Fundația Creștină Elim, which before Christmas distributed Blythwood shoeboxes in Bihor country, northwest Romania.

"I don't know how Klara manages," says FCE worker Lidia Micula. "The allowance for each child is worth less than £15 per month and the social support she receives for herself is just £30. It is very obvious that without the kindness of the people who filled the shoeboxes, these children would have no gifts for Christmas at all.

"When you have as little as they do, everything in the box is precious."

*not her real name



Raza with his mother: the parents' combined income is not enough to allow them to send their children to school, but even if they could, someone would need to stay at home to look after Raza

BOX BEATS GIFTS FOR MUSIC LOVER

Raza knows how to enjoy the simple things in life. The 13-year-old loves music and when presented with a Blythwood shoebox he was soon beating a rhythm on its lid. Lovingly cared for by his parents – and by his younger brother and sister when the parents are at work – Raza has lived with his disabilities since birth.

He also enjoyed the

toothbrush and toothpaste which provided him with an entirely new sensory experience. Such things are luxuries for family like this in Pakistan's Punjab province. Mum and Dad are employed in a leather factory, between them taking home about £5 per day.

Our shoebox distributor in Pakistan reported: "Raza liked most things in his box but he simply loved the box itself."



Anna and Maria really appreciated gifts of soap and shampoo

PENSIONERS IN UKRAINE LOVED SOAP AND SHAMPOO

Anna (left) is a single lady with no family. Her friend Maria also lives alone. Both are retired school teachers, living in the town of Uzhhorod, western Ukraine. Their pensions don't allow for many luxuries so they especially appreciated the gifts of soap, shampoo and towels which they received in their shoeboxes. Shoebox distributor Tanya Shpygunova reported: "They never expected to receive a Christmas gift and were amazed by the kindness of the people who made up these boxes for them."



Delina's box was full of useful things



Every Blythwood shoebox is unique: Delina discovers a hand-knitted pullover

EVERY GIFT APPRECIATED BY CHILDREN FROM LOW-INCOME FAMILIES

What did Delina like in her box? Everything!

To a child from one of the poorer districts of Albania it's a stupid question. Her father is a low-paid construction worker but doesn't have a permanent job. Her mother has no means of earning.

For Delina every gift is precious – the beautiful hand-knitted pullover she found in her box, the wool for mending, the soap, the sweets. But especially the bracelet. When pressed later to say which gift she liked best that's the one she picked out. And who can argue with that? It's only natural for a 12-year-old girl to enjoy wearing a piece of jewellery.

Delina is one of the happy recipients featured on Blythwood's 2015 Shoe Box Appeal leaflet. To obtain your leaflet with full instructions call 01349 830777 or register online at shoeboxappeal.org.



Neda and her sisters were especially happy to find new clothes in their boxes

‘YOUR GIFTS HELP RESTORE DIGNITY’

Neda’s home village on the banks of the Danube in eastern Serbia is a popular destination for tourists who like fishing but life there is not so comfortable for some of its poorer residents.

The rented house in which the seven-year-old girl lives with her mother and two sisters lacks running water and is in poor condition. Her mum is unemployed and without anyone to help her raise her family.

For families like these, gift-filled boxes from Blythwood’s Shoe Box Appeal are a special encouragement, according to Pastor Dragisa Armus who distributed boxes throughout Serbia in December.

“Your gifts help restore their dignity,” he says. “The girls were especially happy to find new clothes in their boxes. People of all ages feel touched to receive a gift. They realise that they are not forgotten and their hope for life is renewed.”

SHOEBOXES REACH UKRAINE

Maryan is seven years old. He lives in western Ukraine. Even by the standards of his country, his family is poor and they have no means of celebrating Christmas. So it was a total surprise for the boy to receive a box full of gifts, especially a toy car. And given the winter temperatures, the gloves and hat were sure to come in handy too. Despite troubles in the region, Blythwood managed to deliver 7,500 shoeboxes to a Ukrainian partner organisation in 2014.

The sleeve of his jacket hides fingers blue with cold – but Maryan’s shoebox includes gloves to keep him warm



CHRISTMAS GIFTS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY IN HUNGARY

Hungarian charity Good News Foundation has been working with Blythwood Care for 18 years. Last winter they distributed 5,000 Blythwood shoeboxes to adults as well as children, with many going to elderly people and to those with disabilities.

Robi is 35 and lives in a care home in the town of Baja, in southern Hungary. Lilla Ficsor has visited the home many

times and says that although he has difficulty in speaking and has learning disabilities, Robi has a warm and affectionate personality. “He likes outings and listening to Bible stories,” she says. “When we were there, Robi and his friends put on a simple play, acting out the story of Jesus healing the ten lepers.

“He was very glad to receive his Christmas presents.”



The delivery of shoeboxes to their care home was a happy day for Robi and his friends

SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE: HUMA SHARES HER JOY

Eight-year-old Huma regarded her box as being not for herself alone but for her entire family. Soft toys and a pink blanket for her baby sister. Soap for her dad. Toys and hairbands for herself. And a toothbrush and paste to be shared by everyone.

Her parents are farm workers in northeast Pakistan and between them earn little more than £6 per day. Huma’s desire is to go to school – she would love to learn to read and write.



Huma was thrilled to find a pink blanket and soft toy for her baby sister

Restoring the joy of giving



Okay, a hairbrush wasn’t top of Geza’s list of requirements but the experience of receiving an unexpected gift helped change his attitude towards others

Geza* was resident on a rehabilitation course for alcoholics when Blythwood shoeboxes were distributed last December. And this experience of unexpected kindness marked a turning point in his attitude towards others.

His time at Bonus Pastor Foundation’s Therapy Centre in the Transylvanian village of Ozd was his third attempt at addressing the problem which threatened to destroy his life. Twice he had attended a short-term programme but had relapsed after going home.

“His alcoholism narrowed down his perspective on life,” says BPF team member Eva Adorjan. “Although he is married and has an eight-year-old son, the joy of giving had disappeared from his life. He no longer understood what it meant to give or receive a present.

“When he received a box full of gifts he was so surprised. It made a big impact in him. It made him think of giving to others and especially of giving himself back to his wife and son. On his next visit home, his wife noticed the difference in his kindness towards her and towards their son.

“Since completing the course at Ozd, he frequently tells us how his life has changed. Now he has a job and his relationship with his family has healed.”

*not his real name





Istvan was overcome with emotion when he was given a shoebox

When Istvan was given a shoebox he turned away quickly and walked out. After a few minutes he came back to apologise and to say thank you. The reason he had run away, he said, was to

Surprised by kindness – shoebox brings tears and smiles

hide his tears. In all his 67 years, he didn't know if he had ever received such a valuable gift.

Such an emotional reaction to receiving a Blythwood shoebox is not unusual, especially amongst older people who can be more easily moved by an unexpected act of kindness. Istvan, who lives in a small town in northeast Hungary, has suffered many hard knocks in life – his wife left him, he was prevented from seeing their three children, and he turned to drink.

Three years ago he rediscovered the

Christian faith in which he had been brought up but his path to sobriety has been rocky with many relapses. In this situation the gift of a shoebox brought him joy and an awareness of being loved.

“He was smiling like a child,” says shoebox distributor Gabi Geczi. “The box was filled with things he really needed, like a hat, socks, and a toothbrush. The booklet in the Hungarian language touched his very being.

“This Christmas present showed him there is someone who still cares for him.”



Marci was happy with everything in his box

GIFTS FOR CHILDREN WHO FLED VIOLENCE AT HOME

For five-year-old Marci* the children's home in Hungary where he lives is a place of safety. He and his two siblings were given refuge there after they fled from violent mistreatment at the hands of their parents.

When a team from Budapest-based charity ADRA arrived with Blythwood boxes it was a special day for the children. “Marci was very happy with everything he received,” says Eva Hella. “We would like to thank everyone who made it possible to provide the children with these gifts.”

*not his real name



Daniela and Rebecca eagerly awaited their Christmas boxes

CHILDREN IN ROMANIA EAGERLY AWAIT CHRISTMAS GIFTS

Ten year old Daniela and her younger sister Rebecca are used to a hard life. Their parents don't have permanent jobs but take casual work whenever they can. Sometimes the family goes hungry. Sometimes they are cold because there is no firewood for the stove. But the girls know they won't be empty-handed at Christmas because year after year they have each received a box of precious gifts from Blythwood's Shoe

Box Appeal. For children like these, items of warm clothing are especially important.

“The parents are ashamed of their poverty but they hope for a better future for their children,” says Balazs Csiszer, who delivered boxes to families around the city of Cluj. “The girls are really motivated to go to school and get an education so that they can overcome their family's difficulties.”



Pencils, crayons and colouring books can open a new world to children like Anka

Anka enters a world of colour

When three-year-old Anka opened her Blythwood shoebox she entered a new world of colour. She loved her My Little Pony set which included pencils and rubbers and was soon engrossed in using her new crayons on a colouring book.

For the children who gathered in a village hall in Sliven province, Bulgaria, the gift-filled boxes are a treat they could not have imagined. Anka comes from a family of four living in a single-roomed dwelling which had suffered flooding earlier in the winter. Her father's employment in construction is seasonal, leaving the family dependent on state provision of about £80 per month.

“Anka was really taken with everything in her box,” says Danny Muschate, Blythwood's head of fundraising who helped distribute boxes in December. “She discovered hair slides and put them in all by herself.

“Your gifts mean so much to families like these, whose day-to-day standard of living is incredibly basic.”



HOMELESS FORMER NURSE SURPRISED THAT SOMEONE CARES

Woolly hats and scarves were immediately useful to Zina and other homeless people in Chisinau

Zina was one of eighty homeless people in Chisinau, Moldova, who received Blythwood shoeboxes last year. The hats and scarves were immediately useful to them on the streets of Moldova's capital city where average low temperatures in the month of December are minus 4C.

And Zina and her companions were glad of the food, too, which Blythwood's partners bring them once a week throughout the winter.

For 25 years Zina worked as a nurse in a hospital. But when she lost her job, her life fell apart. She started drinking and soon became homeless. Dumitru Sebastian is one of those who deliver boxes and aid funded by Blythwood Care. He says: “Zina was surprised that someone cared about her when even her own relatives had abandoned her.”



Lili knows a treat when she sees one

Sweets are treats for low-income families

What makes a four-year-old happy? How about some sweets? For Lili who comes from a big, low-income family, the Giant Strawbs promised to be a real treat.

ADRA distributed Blythwood shoeboxes to children in residential care and to low-income families at social centres around Hungary. ADRA team member Eva Hella says: “Some families such as Lili's live in very poor conditions. Your gifts bring much happiness.”



GIVE A GIFT AND BRING SOME JOY



Last winter your generous response to Blythswood's Shoe Box Appeal enabled us to send 106,000 boxes to people in eight east European countries and to Pakistan.

So often I have seen tears – tears of joy – when handing over Blythswood shoeboxes. To realise that someone cares for them, someone like you, whom they've never even met, can bring indescribable happiness to people in need.

It is the unexpected act of kindness that brings joy to everyone who receives a box filled with such care and generosity by you and by the many others who support this important project.

This issue of Blythswood News shows how your gifts have an impact that is both practical and personal. Young and old who receive boxes are helped to keep warm and

clean. Their dignity is restored and their awareness renewed of what it is to love and be loved.

Will you do this for someone in 2015? Please fill a box for Blythswood's Shoe Box Appeal and help us provide joy and happiness to many who have nothing and are unlikely to receive any other gift.

And please pray with us that many will come to experience the greatest gift of all – the love of Jesus who died and rose again that we might have everlasting life.

James Campbell

James Campbell
Chief Executive



YouTube See our appeal on
YouTube or ask for DVD

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, prince of Peace." (Isaiah 9:6)

Here is my donation of £.....

(please make cheques / CAF vouchers payable to Blythswood 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 send me information on:

- ☐ Please send me the 2015 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.blythswood.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:

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

Tel: 0845 456 9460 • email: info@blythswood.org

Standing Order

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

Please DO fill in all the details including your name and address. 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 Blythswood 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

Blythswood Care, Deephaven, Evanton, Ross-shire, IV16 9XJ Tel: 01349 830777

Email: info@blythswood.org www.blythswood.org