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BLYTHSWOOD NEWS

Number 63 Summer 2017



UMMUS describes itself as a cultural centre for artistic and moral development: Milica simply loves to paint

Arts and Hearts: Christian Cultural Centre challenges children and adults in Serbia

Milica loves to draw and paint. And at the UMMUS cultural centre in Kragujevac, Serbia, she is able to do just that.

The project supported by Blythswood Care is the brainchild of Pastor Dragisa Armus as he seeks to demonstrate the relevance of the gospel to every aspect of life in post-communist society.

Weekend art classes for six-year-olds is a small but significant part of the programme. Teacher Maja Mrdakovic reckons that art does not get the attention it deserves in state schools. "It's important for the mental development of children," she says. "We encourage them to work together and to share their ideas and experiences."

"Through art we introduce

them to Christian themes and values."

The UMMUS centre's programme for all ages includes music, concerts and lectures. This spring an exhibition by photographer Zoran Milutinovic has provoked discussion on how local residents perceive the migrants who have been passing through Serbia and in many cases are now

stranded there.

It's an issue close to the heart of David Armus who has been managing Blythswood's delivery of food aid at migrant reception centres in Presevo and elsewhere.

"Zoran chose to photograph refugees who did not agree to stay in the reception centres," David says. "That way he was able to achieve direct contact

(Continued on page 2)

You can become a LIFE TRANSFORMER and bring new opportunities to children like Milica – see form on back page

Transforming lives through Christian care for body and soul

(Continued from page 1)
with them and got much closer to their lives on the streets of Belgrade. He spent time with them and even invited some into his own apartment.”

The resulting black and white images had a profound impact on visitors to the exhibition. “One man told me he was against migration through our country,” David says. “But he found these images truly heart-breaking and said that they had changed his mind. Now he saw the migrants as people like ourselves who should be helped if they are in trouble.”



The work of photographer Zoran Milutinovic provoked serious discussion on how migrants are viewed in Serbia

BOOKS FOR CHILDREN REACH ALL AGES IN PAKISTAN

Blythswood’s partner organisation in Pakistan ministers to the country’s sizeable Christian minority, holding children’s events and training Sunday School teachers. Blythswood funds the production of children’s books in Urdu. Here two of the children say what the books mean to them.

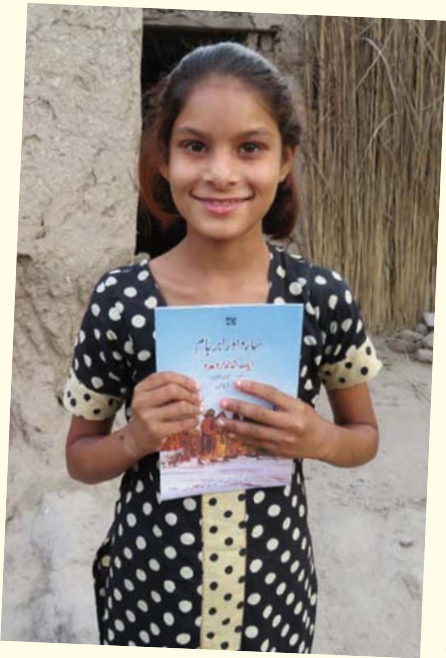


My name is Kashif. I am ten years old. My father works in a brick factory. There are four children in our family. I have always wanted to go to school but because we are poor I never got a chance.

One day Mr Nazeer came to

our village and invited all the children to the church. There he told us the story of Job. Afterwards he gave a book about Job to each of us. I cannot read but the pictures helped me to remember the story that uncle Nazeer told us in church.

After a few days I went to see my cousin. He is in the third class at school and can read. He read the story of Job to me again and now I understand it more clearly. From this book I learnt that we face many challenges in our lives and have to remain in touch with God. He will solve all our problems and bless us abundantly.



My name is Saba. I am nine years old and live in Narang Mandi. In February some people held a Bible camp at our school. They taught us action songs and told us about Jesus. At the end they gave us a beautiful book about Sarah and Abraham. I took it home and read it to my brother and sister.

Because I like the stories, I have started to go to Sunday School. I tell the stories to my parents too. This summer I will visit my cousins in their village and take my book with me to their house. I’m going to tell them what happens in Sunday School.



Sirisha pictured recently at the home of her uncle and aunt: for children like her, Dayspring is a place of refuge and opportunity

A PLACE OF SAFETY IN WHICH TO GROW AND LEARN

As well as caring for orphans, Dayspring House near Hyderabad, India, is a place of refuge for children from homes devastated by alcohol abuse and broken relationships.

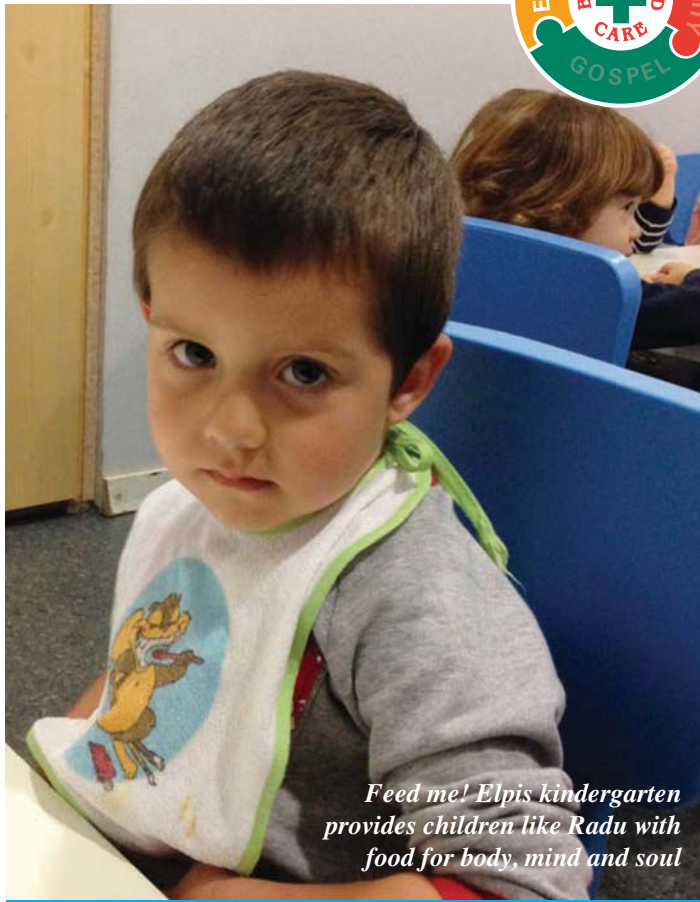
Sirisha, now 11, and her two sisters were taken to Dayspring two years ago by their uncle who was concerned for their safety. Their mother had entered a new relationship, leaving the children with their father who is a heavy drinker. Subsequently her dead body was found on a railway.

“Our hearts melted when we saw the conditions in which they were living and heard their story,” says Pastor Samuel Babu who runs Dayspring House and its associated elementary school. “Their father used to whip them with an electric cable if they asked for food.”

At Dayspring they enjoy regular meals and attend classes five days a week. Reflecting on Sirisha’s progress at school, Samuel Babu says: “At first the girls were poor in their studies but this year they have all got good marks.

“Sirisha got over 60 percent in all her subjects. Her favourite subjects are environmental science and maths. The classes are held in Telugu which is her mother tongue and she is trying hard to learn English.

“I don’t want to imagine what her life would be like were it not for Blythswood’s support.”



Feed me! Elpis kindergarten provides children like Radu with food for body, mind and soul

Preparing disadvantaged children for school

When Radu’s family moved from the Black Sea port of Constanța to a village near Dej, his father had been unemployed for several months. They hoped that this move to a rural community in the furthest corner of Romania would enable them to scrape a living by working the land.

But their new circumstances brought new stresses. The three-year-old was showing signs of withdrawal when he and his elder brother were given places last September in a kindergarten supported by Blythswood Care.

“He was very quiet and didn’t want to mix with the other children,” says Sorina Pop, director of the Elpis kindergarten. “He was missing

his dad who had been gone for months, working at sea, and his mum was giving all her attention to his baby sister.

“His teacher at Elpis recognised his emotional needs and was able to give him the support he required. Now his social skills and his language development have really caught up with other children of his age.”

The good meals which the children enjoy each day at kindergarten are also significant for a family struggling to get by.

Radu loves listening to nursery rhymes and stories. “He’s got a good memory and a great imagination,” Sorina says. “The progress that he makes here over the next two years will be really important to prepare him well for school.”



LEARNING SUPPORT TRANSFORMS OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN IN HUNGARY

Attention deficit disorder. Slow thought processes. Lack of motivation. Poor eye-to-hand coordination.

These were just some of the problems identified in the expert’s report that brought the parents of five-year-old Aron almost to despair.

Unless they could be changed in the next year, their little boy’s learning difficulties would hinder his progress as he started school.

The anxious couple took their concerns to Elisabeth Kardos, a volunteer with the Good News Foundation, a Hungarian charity that receives help from Blythswood Care.

“I read the report carefully and decided to assess Aron’s skills and abilities for myself,” she says. “I’m thankful to our God that I was able to give this boy the learning support he required. When he went back for a check-up, the education advisors couldn’t believe he was the same child they had met a year before. He had reached the level for going to school.”

Five years later, Elisabeth still gives Aron educational support twice a week free of charge. “The signs of dyslexia and dysgraphia have almost disappeared,” she says. “His reading skills are good and his

handwriting is becoming more neat and tidy. He is good at maths and wants to be a software engineer.

“I’m thankful to God for wisdom to make good decisions in situations like this.”

HOT MEALS AND HELP WITH HOMEWORK FOR VULNERABLE CHILDREN IN MOLDOVA



The after-school programme gives Gabriela a safe place to do her homework

An after-school project supported by Blythswood Care gives educational support to disadvantaged



The midday meal funded by Blythswood provides essential nutrition for over 200 children from very low-income families.



Construction of a kitchen for an after-school project in Moldova

children in northeast Moldova, helping them achieve better marks in the classroom.

Gabriela is 14 years old and in her eighth year of school. Her home life is blighted by domestic violence, which sometimes causes her to seek refuge in her grandmother’s house.

The relative calm and safety of the after-school programme provides welcome respite to a girl in her situation when she gets out of school at 1 pm. She and her friends join the younger children – who have been there since 11:30 – for lunch. In the afternoon volunteers give

her extra tuition and help with her homework. With this encouragement she is studying well and getting better marks at school.

The programme, which also includes Bible lessons, sports and music, is attended by 25 children, two thirds of whom are girls. It is now in its second year. Blythswood meets the cost of employing a cook to provide meals for these vulnerable young people. Project leader Olga says: “Without Blythswood’s support, this ministry would not be possible. May God bless you!”

A BOY AND HIS HORSE: BLYTHSWOOD EASES THE BURDEN

Man or boy? At thirteen years of age, Cristi is both.

His mother has problems with her lungs. His father is in hospital, suffering from kidney failure. His elder brother is disabled, having fallen from a height of 20 metres last year. Already an accomplished horseman, Cristi is the only one able to keep the family business running. Crops, building materials, garden rubbish – you name it, he’ll shift it in his cart to enable his parents to pay the rent.

But strictly speaking Cristi is a child, one whose education has been disrupted by the family’s journeys around Europe. In 2011 he spent eight months in school in Glasgow while his parents were begging on the street. When they returned to Jimbolia in

DINNER AT SCHOOL REDUCES HUNGER AT HOME

Although she is just 11 years old, June speaks three languages and dreams of becoming a teacher.

The educational opportunities that she enjoys in Kisumu County, western Kenya, are provided with the support of Blythswood Care.

June was very young when her father died. Her mother had been the second wife in a polygamous marriage, and found herself a widow with eight children to feed and no regular income. Blythswood funds June’s place at Mier Pamoja School, where class sizes are no more than 20 pupils.

Science is her best subject and the teachers encourage her by giving her extra assignments before class. They also give her extra help with maths which she finds more difficult. Luo is her mother tongue and she also speaks English and Kiswahili

which is Kenya’s national language.

June’s family situation is hard enough but not as bad as that of many of her school friends who have been orphaned by Africa’s AIDS epidemic and left dependent on the care of grandparents or other relatives. For all these children the provision of a cooked midday meal at Mier Pamoja, paid for by Blythswood, is vital to their health and wellbeing as well as to their success at school.

The menu includes rice, beans, lentils, cabbage, maize and fish. School manager Millicent Ojuki says: “Many children depend on this meal. When they go home at night they have almost nothing to eat. I really appreciate the dinner given by Blythswood as I know it is such a big help to these children and to the family members who struggle to look after them.”



Cristi's horse and cart were in action at a local park on 1 June as part of Talita Kum's musical show (Picture courtesy Televiziunea Locală Jimbolia)

western Romania, he had to repeat a year.

Talita Kum, Blythswood’s after-school programme, encouraged him to stay in school and helped him to catch up. Now he attends TK2 which helps young people of secondary school age.

“Cristi’s favourite subject is maths,” says Carmen Popa who has observed his

progress over several years. “His grades are very good in this subject.

“He missed a lot of school last year, taking his mum to see his brother in hospital each day. Our programme aims to prevent children like him from missing out on the education which is their right.”



Teresa was given the training she needed to set up her own small business

TRAINING COURSE CHANGES LIVES IN ZIMBABWE

A young woman who completed a training course funded by Blythswood Care is now running her own business and supporting a younger sister who is still in school.

Teresa, now 24, received instruction in sewing at Harare Shelter's empowerment programme in 2015. Now she manufactures seat covers and children's clothes which are sold in South Africa.

As a teenager, her father's ill health contributed to her own poor performance at school. With no qualifications she

went to South Africa to work – illegally – as a baby minder. Her deportation back to Zimbabwe coincided with the death of her father.

"She was traumatised by the loss of her dad," says Stephen Damuputirai, director of Harare Shelter. "The whole family depended on him."

"That was when I invited her to Harare Shelter's training centre. It was a turning point in her life. By supporting this programme, Blythswood Care is changing the lives of many people here in Zimbabwe."



'Wish you were here' – 117 postcards so far

We continue to be amazed by the generosity of supporters like you. But the response to our 'Wish you were here' camp appeal is truly fantastic!

Pastor Dragisa, who leads our Mission Camps in Serbia, recently wrote to tell you the story of Emanuel. Children like him would benefit from a mission camp and knowing that you care for them.

Your donation will allow children and young people to go to a mission camp, and hear the life transforming message of God's love.

So far we've received 117 postcards with heartfelt messages of love, care and encouragement, to bless children and young people.

If you haven't responded to our 'Wish you were here' camp appeal, there's still time. You can download your postcard at www.blythswood.org/wish-you-were-here. Please send your postcard as soon as possible so we can surprise Emanuel and young people and children like him. Your card and message of hope will brighten up someone's life.

Jamie McIntosh, Fundraising Manager

LONG-LASTING LEGACY: BIBLE STUDY IN ROMANIA CHANGES LIVES FOR GOOD

A simple introduction to Bible study, first produced by Blythswood in the 1980s, is helping a young man with limited education to understand the Christian faith.

Valentin comes from a family with no interest in religion. Out of curiosity he started to attend youth meetings in his village in southeast Romania. As a young person with no previous knowledge of the Christian faith, he has found the Romanian edition of Let's Study Mark & Acts to be just what he needs to understand the good news of Jesus Christ.

"The language is so simple Valentin has been able to

understand all the questions so far," says Calin Morar who works for the Elpis Foundation. "The way the questions are phrased, with verse references to find the answers, has encouraged him to study and has reassured him that he is capable of learning."

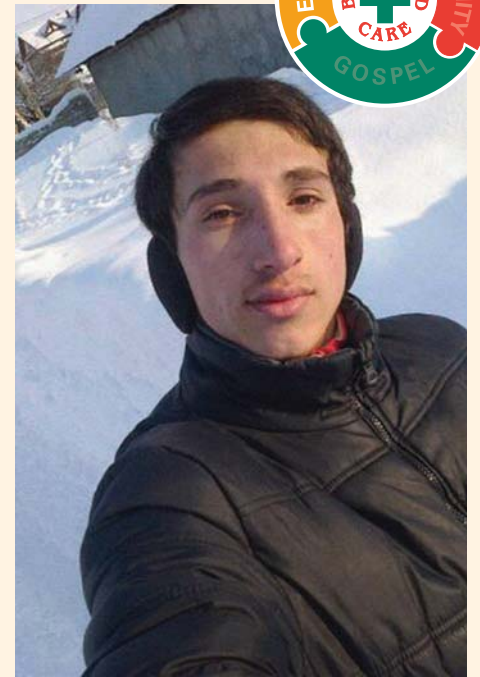
"As a result he has committed his life to the Lord and wants to apply the answers that he finds in God's word to his own life."

Let's Study Mark & Acts has also proved useful to prisoners in Romania. Depressed and hopeless, Ioan was an inmate in a maximum security prison which a team from Elpis visited in December. He took up the offer of a free copy of Blythswood's introduction to

Bible study and hasn't looked back.

"The gospel has given Ioan a reason and a purpose for living while still in prison," says Calin who visited the jail. "His attitude has changed completely. He has been transferred to a penitentiary six hours drive away but I understand that he is trying to set up a Bible study group there."

The Romanian edition of Let's Study Mark & Acts was reprinted in 2004 thanks to a legacy given for this purpose by a Christian lady in memory of her sister.



Valentin is discovering the relevance of the gospel to his own life

"Legacies can change lives long after we are gone," says Blythswood's chief executive James Campbell. "This is especially true when they are used for education and gospel ministry."

Lessons that transform lives in Albania

The Hope Centre helps women and children in Bathore, Albania. Its community development programme receives support from Blythswood Care. Sonila (39) says she has learned three things there that really changed her life.

"At the Hope Centre I learned to read and write. I started school when I was seven but I never learned to read and write properly. Bad results meant I had to repeat a year. I never completed school because I got married when I was still very young. The things I liked best at school were physical education and music. "I have learned to take better care of my children. My mum was part of the centre from the time it opened and she

used to take my children, especially when there was food. Eventually she persuaded me to go too. She took good care of the education of my children. She tried to teach me to do so too but I found it difficult. My mum died in May. Now I am determined to try as hard as I can to educate my children. "At the Hope Centre I have learned to pray. Prayer is a relief to me. Prayer is everything. People face challenges every day. My worst moment was when my eldest son Doris drowned in the sea. He was a sensible and loving child. Over the years I have learned to face pain. I have changed a lot. Through prayer and faith in God I have peace. When I pray I feel as if everything changes."



Sonila with one of her children at the Hope Centre: 'Now I am determined to try as hard as I can to educate my children'



Marian takes a break from tending the vegetable plot: his ambition is to have his own home and family some day

TRAINING FOR LIFE AS WELL AS WORK

Getting to know yourself – it may not seem the most obvious objective of education but it is essential to an individual's full participation in society.

That's why Marian, now 21, is glad to be at Blythswood's Daniel Centre in Cluj, Romania.

Unlike most of the young men who come to the Daniel Centre, he already had a job, which he enjoys, working in a car wash. And he had already completed two years at trade school, studying to be a motor mechanic.

But there are some things that a young person growing up in Romania's care system inevitably misses out on. Learning to cook. Learning to budget and handle money. Learning to build lasting relationships. And learning to know yourself.

At the Daniel Centre there are regular group sessions where boys and staff evaluate their behaviour in an open and constructive way, learning to build trust and to identify ways in which they can change for the better.

"Marian recognises he has a tendency to be a loner," says Elvira Jakab, project director at the Daniel Centre. "Since joining our community he has made new friends and achieved greater emotional stability. It shows in how he takes care of his appearance and how he communicates with others."

"Right now it's hard for him to think about moving on from the Daniel Centre but he has become a lot more independent and confident. He's careful with money and hopes one day to have his own home and family."



YOUR GIFTS TRANSFORM LIVES



This issue of Blythwood News shows how lives are transformed through education, restoring hope and opportunity to disadvantaged children and young people.

In Romania, little Radu who is missing his Dad is given the emotional support he needs to enjoy learning and to integrate with other children (see page 3).

In Pakistan, Saba has a story book in her own language which she is able to read to her brother and sister (page 2).

In Zimbabwe, Teresa has been given the practical training she needed to run her own business and support her family (page 6).

Making education available to all is one of

our primary objectives. Your gifts are achieving great results in young lives in three continents. Thank you very much indeed.

And let's not forget what a legacy can achieve too. A gift from a Christian in memory of her sister enabled us to print the Romanian edition of Let's Study Mark & Acts. Years later this book continues to change lives – even in prison (page 7)!

Thank you for being part of this great ministry.

James Campbell - Chief Executive

“Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.” Proverbs 22:6



June (aged 11) speaks three languages, excels at science and dreams of becoming a teacher. But she wouldn't be in school at all if it wasn't for the support of Blythwood Care (see page 5)

Yes, I do want to help transform lives

Here is my donation of £.....

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

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

Your email:

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Please treat all donations I have made to Blythwood Care for the four years prior to this donation, and all future donations I make, as Gift Aid donations. I am a UK taxpayer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my charitable donations in that tax year it is my responsibility to pay any difference.

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We love keeping in touch with you, but if you would like to change how you hear from us, simply call us on 01349 830777 or email info@blythwood.org



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