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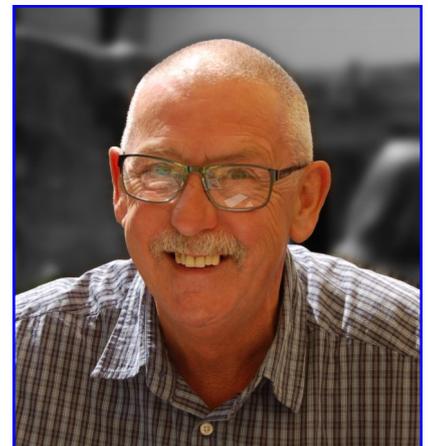
## Spring 2019



[www.bigginhillromaniagroup.com](http://www.bigginhillromaniagroup.com)

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# SO.... What's it all about?



# Because forever changes



**The following was written by one of the Christmas shoe box team who went to Comanesti once again at Christmas 2018. It is intended as an open letter to all those who have ever given money, shoe or family boxes to the BHRG: My involvement with**

BHRG started 8 years ago. By going on the shoebox trip I have had the great privilege of witnessing the difference that your contribution makes to many children and their families living in extreme poverty in the area of Romania that we visit. I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has ever taken the time to make up a shoebox or family box or generously donated and to assure you that your time, effort and generosity really does make a difference. This year, once again, I saw so many happy, delighted children opening their shoe boxes and



getting excited about items that you or I take for granted. How many of our children would be thrilled to receive a toothbrush or flannel on Christmas morning? These children are so grateful for these things. When we were leaving one of the classrooms, after giving out the shoe box gifts, the teacher took one of the team aside and thanked us, then pointed to one particular little girl and said, "This is the first time she has smiled all year". That shoe box was quite possibly the only gift she would receive this year too. So to anyone who has ever made up a shoe box, thank you – it does make a difference





Two years ago you may remember reading in our newsletter about how we planned to help a twelve year old girl who had been severely injured and paralysed in a sledging accident . She lay in bed 24/7. Unable to move , to get out or even to sit up because the family were unable to afford treatment for her. I visited her a year later and because of the money donated she was able to attend a rehabilitation centre, have intensive physio and ongoing physio and showed me how she was able to get out of bed and stand. She also had a wheelchair and was attending school and enjoying being with her friends once again – and all because of you guys.

So to anyone who has ever donated money, thank you – it does make a difference.

This year, we visited a family of five living in a tiny flat in very poor conditions. They were sitting in the cold and darkness because they could not afford the electricity and the mother showed us the fridge which was



completely empty. We had arrived with a family box which contained some basic food supplies and there were also some candles and matches in there so they could at least have some light and something to eat. We then went to the local supermarket with some money a supporter had donated and filled a trolley with some fresh food supplies, fruit and veg, bread and milk etc.. I don't know how much your weekly shop costs, but I am sure that even if you shop at Aldi or Lidl you wouldn't be able to fill a trolley to feed a family of 6 for about two weeks for £40, which is what we did. So to anyone who has ever taken time to make up a family box, thank you – it does make a difference.

Even though I can see that your donations do make a difference, I always come away from the shoe box trip feeling like I need to do more and I have to remind myself that I can't do everything, but together we can do something and if you can give anything, it will be a blessing to someone who has nothing.

To quote the words of Jesus, in Matthew 25, verses 35-40 " for I



was hungry and you fed me, I was thirsty and you gave me a drink. I





Then the righteous ones replied, “ Lord, when did we ever see you hungry and feed you? Or thirsty and give you something to drink? Or a stranger and show you hospitality? Or naked and give you clothing? When did we ever see you sick or in prison and visit you?”

And Jesus replied, “ I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me.”

Please dig deep once again for the BHRG and make a difference, knowing that your contribution will feed someone who is hungry or provide medical care for someone who is sick or even just make someone smile and remember, that in that simple act, you are ministering to The One who came as a baby at Christmas and as a man, gave up everything for us. Thank you and God bless you! **Yvonne Harrison**





**NO  
NEED  
FOR  
WORDS**



**Every picture  
tells a story...**

We could not publish a Newsletter without including an article about Adrian and Hannah's momentous trek and fabulous fundraising! If you know Adrian, you will truly appreciate what an amazing achievement this was:



My daughter Hannah and I hoped to raise £2,000 for Biggin Hill Romania Group through donations/sponsorship of the hiking expedition we were to undertake along part of the North Devon coastal path in May 2018, I'm pleased to announce that not only did we complete the hike over four consecutive days, the fundraising obtained for the charity has by far exceeded that £2,000 target. (£3867.28)

You may have already seen photos that were uploaded to Facebook from each of the four days of the expedition and the two videos that Hannah created from the event. I remained in North Devon for a little over a week after we'd finished the sponsored event and Google has since automatically created a photo album from my time in England, with many of those photos not having been included within the daily Facebook uploads. If you're interested, that album can be viewed at: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/fmMQ1BkVVlzoHqa2> Although Hannah and I were 'only' expecting to walk 77.5 miles, the expedition actually amounted to some 87 miles.

I'd like to take this opportunity of thanking those of you who sponsored Hannah or myself and I'd like to thank my sister Dianne for being our personal coach, training manager, chauffeur and packed-lunch provider. Thanks also to Hannah for getting me to do the expedition with her and for agreeing that fundraising for it could be made to Biggin Hill Romania Group. **Adrian Woodroffe**



**Well done you two intrepid walkers! The countryside is beautiful but the going is tough ..That's when the tough get going!**



## Forever Changes....

June 2018 was a very sad time for The Biggin Hill Romania Group. It was the end of an era. Many of you will be aware that the local Education Department decided that there was room for all pupils with Special Needs in the area who required specialist education to attend the local state run school in Comanesti. The result of this decision was that the Robert Cole Centre was no longer required as a school and in June 2018, staff said goodbye to the pupils who attended. Many had been with us for all of their school life and



we had grown to love them and feel as though we were a real part of their lives. Indeed, this could be said for all our pupils, no matter how long they had been with us. The youngsters, their parents and our staff were a family and it was a real struggle to say goodbye to all the love and support offered to all who belonged.



## And Now?

We thought long and hard about how we could continue to offer help to young children with Special Needs in the area and together with the local Mayor, Viorel Miron, and social services, it was decided to change our role in the community to give extra help to families with preschool children. Help which was not yet available in the area. And so we established

## The Early Childhood Care and Education Centre

**Our Mission:** To nurture all children with or without special needs in safe, inclusive and supportive environments through education, therapeutic intervention and community acceptance.

**Our Vision:** A place where children with special needs and typically developing children, recognise abilities, not disabilities, and learn together in high-quality, inclusive environments.

**Our Values :** **Acceptance** – Our centre encourages empathy, respect and acceptance by providing activities that will integrate children with and without special needs. **Community** – Our centre is a family of staff, therapists, children, parents and sponsors that welcomes one another with joy and love, providing each member of the community with hope and strength. **Customized Care** – Our knowledgeable therapists meet each child on their level and provide them with individualized therapies and customized care to help them succeed. **Peace of Mind** – We are dedicated to providing every child with a safe learning environment and training of staff to be an open book with parents, offering constant communication and absolute honesty. **Inspiration** – Our supporters – from staff and parents to volunteers and sponsors – are invested in building a better future in which each child succeeds and is recognized for their abilities, not disabilities.



The hallways are newly painted and decorated with lovely artwork



Sensory room



Waiting area for parents

Staff have worked tirelessly to make The Centre a warm, attractive place to be, a place where parents can come to learn more about their children's needs, to share with others in similar situations, to provide support both physically and emotionally and to enable professionals to work with the children to enable them to be happy, develop at their own pace and to improve their quality of life. And to bring **HOPE**.

**Therapies and services offered by the Centre:**

- Speech therapy.
- Physio therapy.
- Behavioural therapy.
- Occupational therapy.
- In-home training for parents.
- Counselling for children and parents.



Kitchen area

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This is Andreea. She is one of our new visitors to The Centre and we welcome her!

We are continuing to support the young adults from Casa Lumina and they are still able to come on a regular basis for craft work and socialisation which they enjoy a great deal. Just being able to go somewhere different is such a bonus and they really love coming..

Just to help you get an idea of what this new Centre means to parents, I thought I would include this from Cristina. I challenge you to read it without having a lump in your throat and reaching for the tissues....

Socialisation room for Casa Lumina youngsters



Last Friday I spoke with one of our parents, Dulhac Elena, who brought her child (Ovidiu), a blue-eyed boy of four years old, to the Centre for physiotherapy. She agreed to share with me some of her thoughts.

"There are many lessons that I have learned from this experience of being Ovidiu's mother. My faith has been tested and most importantly reassured. However I have also learned to question everything, which is in my nature but I question all people thoroughly when it comes to my child. Living with despair is an intolerable way to go through life.

After asking the therapist when my boy is going to recover, he admitted that he didn't know but if Ovidiu demonstrated the ability to learn, what would prevent him from succeeding? For the first time, I had found hope. The beginning of understanding that the steps by which we develop are more important than the time frames in which we or our children develop. However, you don't eat an elephant but one bite at a time.

Our society focuses so much on "the norm", "within the range" and categories of deviations from the norm. We have unfortunately lost sight of the value of the quality of the process or the means and just focus on the end. Just as we would not ask a child to do calculus without algebra, why would we ask a child to use a walker until his/her body was prepared to stand independently? The more I understood the thought process behind the therapy, the more I realized how logical the lessons really were and the more I watched my child succeed.

As much as I would temporarily want someone else to take charge of being his advocate, no one will do as good a job as I will as his mother. Therefore, if a professional is going to play on the team their glass must be half full. My motto is never, never, never give up. The possibilities appear endless. Replacing despair with optimism and hope, the achievement of potential, the energy to keep moving forward, the motivation to not stop till you are there, the knowledge that you are upgrading your child's existence day to day despite his limitations. Without hope there would have been no life to speak of... for his or for me.

Tiny miracles are happening all around us and there are no words that express my thanks. Acceptance is a huge obstacle for parents with children with special needs, and seeing results so quickly and beautifully, only helps. You have given us the most beautiful gift any human can give another: HOPE. I can only express my thanks and hope you know how much of a difference you have made in my family's life." **Cristina Chirila**—Manager of the new **Early Childhood Care and Education Centre in Comanesti.**



Physiotherapy room



Speech Therapy room

**And finally..... Message from the Chair:** 2018 was truly an **annus horribilis** for so many of us who are involved in the committee for The Biggin Hill Romania Group. Many of us are definitely not getting any younger although we are constantly surprised when we look in the mirror to realise that the person staring back at us is indeed ourselves! Where does all the time go?

Reflecting our front cover this time—Forever changes. It certainly does. People change, situations change, we move on. Sometimes for the better and sometimes for worse. But still those changes come. All we can do is to ride along with them and try to do our best. And of course life in Romania has changed over the years we have been involved. Not least to say the government, now belonging to the EU (least said about that the best for us I think at the moment!). But some things have not changed and as you have read through this copy of the Newsletter, you will have realised that Yes, we have continued to work to make many peoples lives in and around Comanesti less challenging, if only in a small way, but we have had to change the way we do it. Our new Early Childhood Care and Education Centre is welcomed by many families as the only local support available to them and their children. I certainly did not read Elena’s words without feeling profoundly moved and certainly went through many, many tissues! I hope and pray that we can continue with this work for as long as our sponsors continue to support us and that we are allowed to do so.

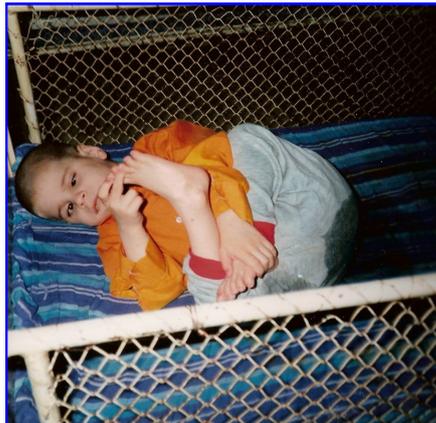
So many people have been a part of BHRG since the early years and our President, Father Flood from St Theresa’s Church in Biggin Hill is one of the early supporters. Some of you will know that he has not been well and due to failing health, he has now retired and is in supported accommodation. We are very grateful for his support and that of St Theresa’s over the years and our prayers go out to him .

You may have noticed that Adam Sambrook is no longer noted as our Honorary Patron. He has now moved on from Romania in his post with the British Embassy and we wish him success. He came several times to Comanesti to the centre to see how the work was progressing but we didn’t manage to ever persuade him to be Father Christmas! Shame!

On a personal note, I would like to thank all my friends and family who have supported me through the most difficult time in my life after the passing of my beloved husband, Joe. He was there at the beginning of BHRG and travelled many times, to Romania, driving trucks packed with goods and causing many a headache along the way! I have included a picture of Victor, one of the first children we saw when we travelled out to Romania. Victor was unable to walk despite being 10 because he had spent all his life in that cot. Joe lifted him out and carried him outside but Victor screamed with fear because he had never been out in the sunshine. It broke Joe’s heart. And he was a big man with a big heart—seeing Victor as he was made Joe, along with all of us, determined to make a difference. And, please God, we have.



Joe at his 70th birthday last year



Victor when we first saw him in 1990.



Part way through his sponsored hair growing!

**Sandra**

<http://www.facebook.com/BigginHillRomaniaGroup>

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