

# FAST News - April 2018

Latest news and updates about people and projects.



**£1,242.00**

raised of £1,200 target  
by 18 supporters

**THANK YOU!**

## *A note from Daniel and Ema*

Dear friends, Hristos a Inviat! (Christ has Risen!)

A couple of weeks ago we celebrated Easter, which is a major holiday in Romania. The custom is that up to 40 days after Easter, everybody greets each other with "Christ has Risen".

For us, this time of the year always marks a time to anticipate the summer and the increase in visitors and volunteers. And this year is no exception. There are so many exciting opportunities and plans ahead of us, but first of all we just wanted to say a very big 'Thank you!' for the overwhelming response to Narcisa's appeal we had in our previous newsletter. We have scheduled Narcisa into Bucharest hospital on the 2nd of May, your continued prayers will be very much appreciated. THANK YOU!

Easter has brought a national 4 day holiday to the whole country, which was more of an extended weekend really. As well as a time of physical renewal, the 4 day break has allowed us a time of spiritual and emotional reflection in preparation for yet another great summer ahead. We have

started meeting in the cafe for quiet worship music and Word time each Sunday and the relaxed and open style is appealing to those who join with us.

There is so much in this month's newsletter - photos and news from various projects going on, as well as our new Transylvania Ethical Tourism project which has already brought us attention from people we haven't met yet (though we were amused by the inquiries about indoor pool and gym area).

We hope you enjoy reading the stories as much as we enjoy creating them.

Thank you, Daniel and Ema



**Small beginnings 2004**



**Better Homes 2010**



**Vocational training 2017**

## Plans and future strategy

Much thought and prayer has gone into the changes and plans during this transition stage of FAST. We have learnt that it is important both to look ahead with aims and expectations, but also to learn from the past and allow the changes that are necessary in order to grow and move on.

### Integration Centre - upcoming closure



One of the big changes coming up is the finishing of the 5 year partnership agreement between FAST and Local Council, on the basis of which the Integration Centre in Sacele was established. The centre was not an easy project, as we had to learn and apply a lot of new procedures and operational standards, but many valuable lessons were learned in the process and 150 children at risk received special support in order to cope with the very difficult situations at school and in their families.

Hundreds of other children have benefited from the facilities provided by the centre and we are

now happy to pass on the full responsibility of the project to the Local Council. We want to say a special 'thank you' to all our friends and volunteers who stood by us and helped make this project possible.

## Better Homes - reborn



**Tarlungeni in 2007**



**Tarlungeni in 2010**

Better Homes is the project that has put FAST on the map of community development, social services and international volunteering. The 65 homes built in the nearby Roma villages have shown to the local community and other areas that change is possible and, no matter how impossible the situation might look, there is always hope.

Better Homes has not been so prominent in our work lately as other demands have taken the foreground but also because the need to house building is not indefinite and we have reached a point where building better homes was taken over by the local community itself.

However, there is a massive need to improve, maintain and repair the better homes and so we have refocused our energy and redefined our approach to Better Homes. This has taken into account all the things we learned from our work before as well as the current situation we are in.

Better Homes will now be a project which delivers only when we have a volunteer workforce to make that happen. When no volunteers available, the team will be working on finishing tasks, assessing requests and creating job lists for the next visiting group. They will also be involved in developing local fundraising activities, such as furniture-making, social tourism, and so on. We will introduce a points assessment system so that we can demonstrate to villagers how we have prioritized work, in order to be fair to everyone. The points will be based on the issues identified in our many years of experience working within the villages.

This restructure means we can revitalise a favourite project amongst staff, volunteers and villagers, while in the same time continue in our work of providing education and sustainability long-term.

## Mission House - literacy and early education



The Mission House is now run by Alina and her team: Ioana, Lidia and Jacqui who has recently moved to Romania together with Mike and are both helping in our various projects and activities. Apart from the usual feeding program and every day hygiene education, Alina has developed an ongoing literacy program where children practice their skills in reading, writing and maths. The literacy program is very easy for volunteers to help even if they don't speak Romanian. In fact, it will be an excellent opportunity for our international volunteers to learn some basic Romanian.

The toddlers' activities involve the mums, as well as the older siblings in the family. Soft toy corner for the children and tea time for the mums make this project very appealing and fun. We are so encouraged that nearly 50 toddlers and their families can benefit from this project on a weekly basis. Thank you to all who made this project possible, especially to Liz who started the project together with Alina some years ago. We hope to build a shower block adjacent to the Mission House in the near future, which would greatly improve the facilities and services provided to the community in Tarlungeni.

## Vocational Centre - reaching out to the schools



It is becoming more and more obvious that the Romanian school system needs major improvements and changes in order to answer the needs of the children coming from disadvantaged areas. We are coming to the end of the first school year at our new Vocational Centre and are trying to decide how we can best influence the quality of education not only inside our centre, but also in the schools these youngsters come from. The input we receive from our international volunteers is invaluable to us and the collaboration with schools from abroad such as Bolton College is highly appreciated, as it provides new ideas and alternative methods of education which prove to be very efficient and applicable to our specific situation.

## Economic activities - furniture, coffee-shop, tourism

One of the main activities of FAST in the future will consist of various economic activities aiming to provide a sustainable source of support for the charity long-term. Already furniture making is proving to be a reliable opportunity for future funding as we are starting to receive contracts from well known estate developers in the area.

## The place to be - The Cafe



Our last 2 newsletters gave you a taster into the progression of this excellent new initiative. One of the strengths of this idea has been the range of opportunities this has opened up. As is often the case, this has also been a weakness as the flexibility has left us pondering the many options. We now reached some clarity and are excited about it. We still see the flexibility and are open to many uses and want to make it first and foremost a place of meeting people in the area and sharing God's love in a way everybody understands: by serving.

We have been meeting in the coffee shop for music and prayer and see it as the ideal place for sharing our ethos, vision and love with those around us. Members of the community have already been impressed with the physical improvements we have made to the area and this has inspired some of them to do the same. They are a metaphor for the spiritual improvements we hope to make in our neighborhood from here. And all these while we have the guitar lessons, the English lessons and a cup of tea or coffee. We now have a clear focus on what the Cafe should be: a small oasis of inspiration to the nearby community.

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Meet Gina



www.garcini.ro

# Știi că...

**CARTIERUL TĂU = CASA TA?**  
**Îngrijește, acționează,**  
**comportă-te ca atare.**



**PROACTIVI PENTRU**  
**GÂRCINI**

Gina Borzo is a 17 year old student, in year 12 at the local high school "George Moroianu" from Scele. "I met her for the first time when she was 13 years old. At that time I was coordinating a local mentorship program and she was part of it. Since then, we kept in touch. While being a highschool student, Gina joined our youth program in the Integration Centre as a volunteer, and we supported her along the way to grow into the self-confident young woman she is today." - Ruxi

She comes from a Roma background and lives in Gârcini, right in the middle of the community, at the main street. She is very happy that she studies at a public high school! First days of the 9th grade were the most difficult as everyone was a bit reluctant to her educational potential and school performance. But all teachers have discovered in her a wonderful person with a burning desire for studying, and now, they have become her daily supporters.

Gina lives together with her parents and four brothers in Gârcini. Troubles have surrounded them many times, however this hasn't been an obstacle to family's unity. „The neighbourhood is our home! While in a family the children copy the actions of their parents, no matter if it's something good or bad, the same happens in the neighbourhood, where we are constantly influenced by the behaviour of those around us. Therefore, children should go to school because school helps you shape the future you want to have and those who drop out or don't go to school eventually end up in poverty and great need” – Gina.

Gina is a grown up, ambitious young lady, who sometimes feels that she can move mountains. She is currently working part-time at McDonalds, so she now has little time for volunteering. However, she has great plans for her future. After graduating and passing her final exams this summer, she wants to continue her studies by applying to law school. "I will do anything to be able to go to university!", Gina says. She wants to work with law and regulations in order to help people and thus to become a role model for the whole community.

We stand by her in this journey, admiring her attitude and perseverance!

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## Special Visits

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Every spring that comes around brings our friends from Farnham who come to visit us and other projects they have in Romania. Thank you, Phil, Andrew and John for your visit! It was wonderful to see you!



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We also had the pleasure of having Brian with us for couple of days. Although keeping in touch through email is so important, it is always encouraging to see our friends in person. Thank you, Brian, for always being such an encouragement to us!



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Quote of the Month.



From our Roma staff: *"We like it when people come and visit us because they treat us as equals, but when we walk into a Romanian shop everybody looks at us with bad eyes!"*

This month we have chosen a quote from one of our Roma staff as we feel it is better than anything we heard anywhere else. When you visit us, remember that your kindness, smile and simple friendship can be as helpful as your work!

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And finally...

Quick snippets of news and a taster of future stories:



With the birth of their first grandchild expected later this month, Daniel decided he needed the appropriate head gear. Daniel now looks very dapper and distinguished as he strolls around the building.

Great new look Daniel - it could soon catch on

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Transylvanian Ethical Tours is a project idea that we would like to explore in order to develop tourism in the local area. Both Sacele and Zizin has got so much to offer in terms of sights, people, culture and nature.



As we have increased the capacity of our accommodation facilities, we could offer booking opportunities to groups, families and individual visitors, especially in the lower volunteering seasons such as winter and spring. This would enable us to become more self-sufficient and could create more jobs for the Roma in the villages.



We are presently developing a brochure and booking tool which enables people to book as volunteers, tourists or to mix the two. That would mean as well as helping us out with our work, visitors can get a wider cultural experience and help support the local economy in the process.

Please email us if you would like a PDF copy of the brochure and please "like" and "share" our Facebook page:

[Transylvanian Ethical Tours - Facebook page](#)

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A big smile from Ionela to just say '**Thank you**'!

Thank you so much for your donations and support over the years. People say it is quite unique how FAST can operate with no EU grants or large regular support. It only shows that miracles are still possible and people can do great things when united by common goals and aspirations. Together, we have really made a difference and continue to do so!

[Donate](#)