

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER

For Projects Abroad Romania



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VOLUNTEER STORIES

Rafael Day Centre in Codlea

During my time in Romania I have been working for the wonderful foundation called 'Fundatia Rafael' in Codlea. This is an organization that dedicates itself to the support, care, education, guidance, training and community integration of disabled people. It thereby ensures the welfare of disabled people in Codlea and its surroundings areas. This sounded (prior to my arrival and still) as a wonderful goal in this country where not so many social safety nets are present, though very necessary.

Before my departure to Romania I had lots of contact with the friendly staff of Projects Abroad in Romania. They expected me to prefer some kind of internship in a commercial company during my stay in Brasov, because that is what most of the volunteers for a Business project expect. My intentions were actually different from this thought, because I'd preferred a project where I could mean something for the Romanian community, and not purely for myself. This is how I ended up with the Rafael Foundation, and afterwards I was really happy with this choice.

During my first two working days in Romania I got introduced into Brasov city and I got a first glimpse of my placement. The rest of the week I tried my best to work along with the rest of the team at the foundation, saw how everything worked here and got to know the loving clients. As a result of these three days I got a very good feeling, because I was received warmly by the team and by all the clients. I also experienced how loving and involved the team is towards all the clients.

From the second week on, my business project really started off. The coordinator of the foundation also returned from her holiday, and also turned out to be Dutch and carrying the same name as me: What a coincidence! So, from that day on, we worked closely together and we achieved a lot! We put up a new inventory system, counted all the current products and updated the administrative system. I also made a translation of the website of the foundation in Dutch and English, distributed an interview among all the team members and analyzed and

discussed the outcomes, made a list with ideas to improve the website, for marketing and PR, and for fundraising and passed it on to the new employee working on fundraising. Although I couldn't really use the knowledge gained from my study Business Administration, it felt good to help this foundation a little with achieving the things they desired. Next to putting my time into the business projects, I also very much enjoyed helping with making 'martisoare' (traditional jewelry that belongs to the *martisor* and always contains a bracelet of red and white strings) and painting a few candles.

I want to thank everyone from the Rafael Foundation, the team and the clients, for making my time in Romania so wonderful and meaningful. I am sure that we will stay in touch and I will assure them that if they need my help I will always be available. Next to the people from the Foundation, the staff of Projects Abroad Romania were also of a great importance for making this such a nice experience, so thank you very much as well. Moreover I may not forget to thank my host mom for all the good care, and my roommate, for 2 weeks, for all the fun we had together.

At last, I would really want to say: if you want to contribute some time or money to charity do not doubt and donate it to Fundatia Rafael or buy them products! Your money, and maybe your time, will be of a great importance for all the clients and will leave you with great satisfaction.

Emma den Ouden
Business in Romania



SPEAKING OUT

(written by Elly Pough, drama volunteer, Australia)

Did you know, public speaking is more common than death? That's pretty crazy, that people fear speaking in front of an audience more than dying. However, I could think of one thing that would make it even harder; how about public speaking ... in a foreign language. Now that would be terrifying. Yet, every year in Brasov, a competition is held which does just that.

The annual Speak Out competition challenges students from both Primary and Secondary Schools to create their very own dramatic monologue ... in English. This task is something that most Australian students would struggle with. The rules don't end there though, the students must structure their monologue on a provided quote, this year's being, 'It's never too late for a happy childhood' and 'do not go where the path may lead, instead go where there is no path and leave a trail' for the Primary and Secondary School respectively. The monologue must be five minutes long and each student is judged on a criteria ranging from originality of ideas to use of English.

This is where I come in. As a Drama volunteer I was tasked with helping a group of students from *Colegiul Andrei Saguna* with their monologues, in any way I could. Thankfully, public speaking happens to be one of my stronger suits, (mainly because it was the only thing that was technically classified as a 'sport' at my school that I actually had a chance at winning in). I became very passionate about the competition to say the least. So, I was not clueless about the tricks of the trade and I hoped that I could potentially help these students.

My average group of students was around five or six students; each week we would sit down, develop their ideas and get them to practice in front of an audience. Of course everyone's biggest fear is forgetting their lines on stage and the only real way to prevent that is to practice, practice, practice! With each passing second the competition loomed closer and my students monologues became better, however, their nerves built.

Unfortunately, I was unable to attend the competition on the day due to scheduling conflicts; however, I did manage to find out the results of my courageous bunch of students. From my small group, one girl, Mara, won the Primary School category with her monologue about a princess and her newfound friend, a Secondary student, Andra, came fourth with her speech about a dream driven writer and was thusly selected to compete in the county round, and Antonia came third with her rock star centered monologue.

All of the students achieved well-deserved placements. I was impressed by all, given that my youngest students were in the 5th grade and had excellent English. Every student showed impressive amounts of creativity with their speeches and it made me all the more disappointed that they could not pursue drama as a subject, as I am sure many would excel. However, I think the lesson is clear here, the next time I am ever nervous to speak in front of a crowd, I should just remember, at least I'm not saying it in Romanian.

DRAMA WORKSHOPS with Elly Pugh, Australia



This workshop is part from a series of workshops held by our current volunteers, for the other existing volunteers in the country and also the Projects Abroad staff members. Our Projects Abroad Workshops are held once a week, when one of our volunteers or staff members shares their passions / hobbies / knowledge / experience, with the others.

Tuesday, the 4th of February, we participated in a workshop about Drama, in which Elly, our drama volunteer, explained to us the meaning of this art. We explored the evolution of drama from its beginning to nowadays, and most importantly, we learned new aspects of perceiving ourselves and everyone around us. After the presentation of drama in theory and exploring every aspect of it, we started having some practical activities that Elly uses when teaching her classes.

We went through a warm up activity, then started to play a game of 'Human Tableaux', where we had to form 4 different pictures, with touching points and levels ('drama specific words', as Elly stated). After creating the four tableaux, we had to form a play, with interaction and conversation, by passing from one tableaux to the other, till reaching the final pose. It was extremely interesting and challenging for everyone, as each of us comes from different fields of work, maybe with no experience in drama whatsoever.



Anyway, after paying attention to Elly and the stories about her drama experience, the main focus switched on us: Kate Littleton, Jay Threet, Emma den Ouden, Georgi and Ali. After having a good laugh with the first improvisation game, we passed on to the second one, an even more interesting and challenging activity. This game was about 'Drivers and Hitchhikers'! One is driving a car and stops to pick up a hitchhiker. The driver must find an excuse and get out of the car, while the hitchhiker takes his / her place and picks up another hitchhiker and so on. The driver needs to start a conversation and the two characters have to create the story. As Elly presented the game to us, one of the main rules in improvisation is 'NEVER SAY NO'... So, the stories differed a lot and the characters went along with each change. We went from driving to Canada, Mexico, up north, or south, to getting lost, hiding bodies, being gangsters, children, psychopaths, stokers or classmates. We differed in nationality and even realized we know how to talk languages that we never learned before (such as Georgi, talking Dutch with Emma and even guessing a real Dutch word, through her Giberish). We created very interesting situations, characters, meaning of words and we laughed a lot...



All in all, we had a lot of fun and we realized the importance of drama in everyone's lives, which we understood entirely. Once again, we would like to thank Elly for this amazing experience and for sharing with us a very important part of her life!

10 TIPS FOR CARE VOLUNTEERS

This is an article written by our former care volunteer, **Amy Abbott**, from UK. We chose to present to you the main ideas of her text, inviting you to visit our official blog, [Mytriblog.org](http://www.mytriblog.org), reading the entire piece. Please find the entire article on the following link:

<http://www.mytriblog.org/pg/blog/romania-social-manager/read/332376/10-tips-for-care-volunteers-by-amy-abbot-uk>

1. Pack a pair of trousers that are at LEAST a size bigger. Bread is the staple food and it is treated like one for you 5 times a day. You will be force fed it morning, noon and night.

2. Do not try and make a queue to get on the bus; that's not how people operate in these countries

3. Pack for all seasons, no matter when you are traveling to Romania!

4. Pay attention when you cross the street! You take your life into your own hands when you use a zebra crossing!

5. Buy a dictionary before you go and actually read it.

6. Give 110% in everything you do

7. Go out and explore.

8. Make friends with the minibus drivers

9. Make the most of the office and the amazing people that work there. Also make the effort to be friends with the other volunteers.

10. Get ready to have the time of your life



Hello everyone,

February was a really enjoyed and happy month!

It was a great period of time, filled with great stories that were formed through our volunteers' hard work and enthusiasm. In February, our business volunteer, Emma proved the best of her skills and experience at Rafael Day Centre, Codlea, NGO that she helped and advised entirely. Then, we participated through the fascinating stories of Elly Pugh and her activities as a drama volunteer, for the community of Brasov's youth. And later on we went through some very helpful words of advice from our care volunteer, Amy Abbott, who wrote her article from her whole experience in our dearest destination, Romania.

Special thanks for this newsletter go to the following people:

- Emma den Ouden, The Netherlands
- Elly Pugh, Australia
- Amy Abbott, UK
- Catalin Buhnla - Buu Photography (partner photographer), for the professional photos we used for the "Speaking Out" article
- Ionut Bogdan, professional photographer partner, for the cover photo

We would also want to invite you to join our Facebook community where we share our pictures, happenings and news, every day. The name of our networks is:

Projects Abroad Romania Official Group

We also encourage everyone to write their stories for us to publish them in our newsletters. If you want to write something about your current or past experience with us, please do not hesitate to send it to me along with your pictures to

alexandraichim@projectsabroad.org

Alexandra Ichim
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