



Light for Children July 2020

UK Registered Charity Number 1120680

Having contacted you three months ago with news of how the **coronavirus pandemic** was affecting Dorohoi, we thought that we should bring you up to date with the current situation here. Thankfully, the children and young people whom we work with in Dorohoi and Botosani, as well as our friends and relatives here, are all safe and well. We very much appreciate all the supportive messages, letters and phone calls that we have received from you over the last few months and can assure you that we have also been following your situation in the UK very closely indeed.

Having had strict rules enforced at the beginning of lockdown in March, restrictions have gradually been relaxed, particularly since 15th May, when Romania shifted from being in a national state of **emergency** to a national state of **alert**. Since then, we have been allowed to go outside without having to complete written declarations, shops and offices have gradually reopened and we have been allowed to meet with limited numbers of other people, preferably outside and with extra hygiene and social distancing measures in place.



The children and young people living in **state care** have been incredibly understanding. They actually stayed **indoors for two months**, only going onto their balconies for fresh air between mid March and mid May. Their carers have been equally remarkable. In April, it was decided that rather than having one carer in each apartment working a twelve hour shift, two carers should spend 14 days living with 6 children 24/7, to reduce the risk of the virus being brought in. They did this with so much love and energy that a number of the children and young people have since written letters of thanks to them. **Since 15th May**, the children have been able to leave their apartments each day to spend time together in the fresh air. They still aren't able to come into contact with other people from the town but are delighted to be able to **relax and play outside**.

Throughout this time, I've been able to go to the doors of the apartments to take essential **medication** or fund emergency **dental care**, as required. At Easter, I was able to take board games and table tennis sets to the children. In May, an opportunity arose to be able to take **pizza** to all the apartments and to mark International Children's Day on 1st June, we provided **ice-cream** desserts for everyone. Small gestures aimed at showing the children that we care and that we appreciate how tough things have been for them.



From mid March to mid June, when the academic year officially ended, all the children had **online lessons and homework** to complete. Just after Easter, a local school lent computers to the children in state care and the child protection authorities have since provided a laptop for each apartment. For many children, this was a particularly stressful time. Personally, the 70+ pieces of homework that "we" completed in our family took me right back to the early 1990s and it wasn't pain free! We all hope and pray that the schools will reopen in September, although there is still an element of uncertainty about this.

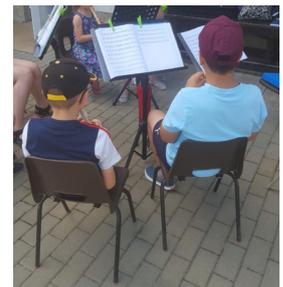
According to online statistics, by 30.06.2020, there had been 26,970 confirmed cases of coronavirus in Romania, resulting in 1,651 deaths. As I mentioned last time I wrote, a major problem here has been that **thousands of Romanian people have returned to the country from abroad** in recent months. Although flights to and from Europe are still unavailable, the borders have been kept open for people travelling by road. Anyone coming into the country has been required to spend 14 days in **quarantine**, either in their own homes or in accommodation provided by the state. A young family with four children, whom we have known for many years, was recently quarantined in Dorohoi. We were able to support them by regularly delivering groceries to their gate.

We are **delighted** to be able to tell you that the girls who have had **leukaemia** in recent years were tested in June and are both doing **really well**. It is wonderful to see them looking so well and being able to lead normal lives. They will be tested again in six months time.



I have been very limited in terms of being able to spend quality time with groups of children over the last few months but I did enjoy being involved in organising a **treasure hunt** for six children from local families in the middle of June. The clues took the children to various historical buildings and museums in Dorohoi, before directing them to the bookshop, where they discovered a treasure chest containing **book vouchers!**

Within days of watching Trooping the Colour 2020, which was streamed live from the Quadrangle at Windsor Castle on 13th June, I started to meet again with 6 young children from the **church orchestra** to rehearse outside. Music is certainly very therapeutic and we will continue to meet regularly from now on, all being well.



Having not been home for 12 months, I'm very keen to be able to visit family and friends on British soil as soon as it is safe to do so. Until then, I will endeavour to keep you updated about the situation here.

**Sending love and many thanks for your ongoing support!
Keep safe and well!**

Helen and Costel Cosman.