

March/April 2010

(Includes Part II of previous letter)

For Debbie . . .



This month's newsletter is dedicated to the memory of Debbie Bartley Williams, our close friend and sister in Christ for 26 years and partner in our ministry at Gandhi for the past 3 years. In fact, she and George, her husband, traveled to Pécs to work with us on two occasions and hosted a Gandhi student in her home the week before she died! Debbie passed away on March 20th while en route with George and others to a medical mission trip in Chile.

Debbie was a remarkable human being and believer who literally gave her life away in service to her family, her friends, her church and community, and her world. She loved and laughed, worked and gave, prayed and blessed, rejoiced and served. Although we are comforted to know that she is in the loving hands of God, we will miss her for the rest of our days. Please pray for Debbie's husband, George, and her two children, Nan and Will, as well as the rest of her family and friends.

Spring News from Pécs!

Spring has arrived in Pécs! We can see the neon fields—yellow and green—from our kitchen; we feel the chilly breezes coming through our open windows; we hear people outdoors laughing and talking, even as they sneeze; and we are bombarded by the cheerful clatter of toddlers riding their big wheel vehicles down the walking street. What a gift it is to experience rebirth after a long, cold winter!

We experienced lots of gifts, as well as grief, in March and April!

Gift: Szalagavató

“Szalagavató” is a traditional high school senior ceremony/“prom” occasion that Hungarian students celebrate during their last year in high school. Glen and I were delighted to be the guests of Ricsi Kalanyos on that special evening at Gandhi. It was both poignant and beautiful to see all of the 12th graders receive their senior “ribbons” and waltz in formal dress. How proud we were of Ricsi and Barbi, Timi, Magdi, Jany, Tamás, Nelli, Klaudia, . . . so many of the students we've known since we began coming to Gandhi five years ago.



One of the most significant parts of the evening was seeing the pride, joy, and awe on the faces of students' families. Most of these students are the first in their families to attend high school, much less get to the 12th grade! So families

borrowed clothes from neighbors and cars from their village governments, loaded up their families and friends, and traveled to Pecs to see the ceremony. The evening did not disappoint!



Gift:

John Paul II High School NHS and
Books! Books! Books!

Thanks to Caryl Gatzlaf--AP English teacher and NHS sponsor-- and the National Honor Society at John Paul II High School in Plano, TX, the Gandhi library and the advanced English classes have lots and lots of English novels and literature books!

One morning the 10th grade Advanced English class got the privilege of opening the boxes

and describing all of the books to the librarian. The students loved seeing the picture of the NHS in Plano. Each student chose a book to begin reading immediately!

In April, all those books appeared on the shelves of the library—including the SAT and AP Preparation books. Gandhi students are already reading the books, and a couple of students are using the preparation books as they look towards trying to go to college in the USA.



THANK YOU! THANK YOU! To the members of the National Honor Society at John Paul II High School and to Caryl Gatzlaf! The results of your gift will be immeasurable!

Gift: Sara and Rebecca Come to Gandhi
One of the gifts of early April was the visit of Sara Webb and Rebecca Crowe, high school seniors from First Baptist Greenville, SC. The Webb and Crowe families hosted Gandhi student, Timi Bogdán, when she visited the USA last summer. So, in return, Sara and Rebecca visited the Gandhi School. They were



completely delightful mission-guests who helped us to host other Americans from FBC Greensboro, met the Gandhi choir, led Bible Club, spent the night at Gandhi, attended classes with Timi, made Easter bags for every Gandhi student, gave the bags at a Gandhi lunch break, hiked the mountain above Pecs, traveled with us to the Roma villages south of Pecs, and crammed in sightseeing when they had a chance!

Their visit had a huge impact on the students and teachers at Gandhi. At Bible Club, their testimonies actually led one new student to ask about becoming a believer. The Gandhi students loved their Easter bags that included signed pictures of the youth from FBC Greenville, and they loved trying to speak with the two beautiful American high schoolers! Sara and Rebecca closed their visit by traveling with us to Görgöteg, Timi's village, to eat dinner with the Bogdán family, which was a delightful experience for all of us!



Gift: FBC Greensboro Youth Choir performs at Gandhi
Choir performs at Gandhi
One of the groups that Sara and Rebecca helped to host was the youth choir from FBC Greensboro. After an eventful trip over to Hungary, the youth choir and youth handbell choir arrived to perform at the Gandhi School! Yes, you read it right. The FBC Greensboro

folks hauled 9 cases of handbells over to Hungary to play for the Roma folks here. Under the amazing leadership of Doug and Terri Vancil, the youth choir sang and played inspiring and captivating music that fascinated our students, including

three Roma pieces. We cannot begin to describe the thrill Gandhi students experienced when, in a surprise move, the handbell choir began playing “Jarba Mare Jarba,” one of the Gandhi choir’s favorite Roma songs.

After the youth choir performed for the school on a Monday afternoon, the Gandhi choir performed that evening for the youth choir. The two choirs even sang and played together. It was a remarkable and visible lesson about how God uses music to bring people together!

After they left Pécs, the youth choir did a whirlwind tour of the Roma village churches in the northeast of Hungary and closed their trip by leading Easter services at the Danube International Church in Budapest. Ah! The resiliency of youth! They gave their gift of music to the whole of Hungary.

Gift: Bootie Cothran Comes to the Choir!



Also while Sara and Rebecca were with us, Bootie (Scott) Cothran arrived in Budapest from FBC Greenville, SC just in time to enjoy seeing his brother and nephew who were here with the FBC Greensboro group! Actually, Bootie’s nephew made the THIRD generation from the Cothran family who has come to participate in the Hungary Roma ministry!

With the agreement of FBC Greenville, Bootie graciously agreed to come to Hungary with his video equipment to video some of the Gandhi students in their own homes and to video the spring choir tour to neighboring Roma villages. Wow! Was that a gift!



After forming a list of questions with the help of Ralph Stocks, Bootie and Glen spent four days traveling to students’ homes from Budapest to Barcs (on the Croatian border), where Bootie filmed the interviews and the students’ families, homes, and neighborhoods. We have seen only

the two-minute trailer of the video which Bootie is creating, but it is professional, powerful, and beautiful . . . even when we know the students and the story! Bootie is amazing!

Gift: Spring Break Tour for the Gandhi Choir

After lots of negotiation and maneuvering, the administration at Gandhi finally agreed that the Gandhi choir could have a 2-day Spring Break tour. (This followed Glen’s 6-month planning of a 5-day tour.) Even though the tour was shortened, the choir managed to sing 4 times—three in Roma villages and one in Pécs. The choir settled in at a nice little camp in Matty and then traveled to Alsószentmárton and Siklosnagyalu to sing

for the communities there. So many people attended the concert that people were hanging IN the windows in order to hear from the outside! After one concert, the choir went to Peti's house (Jovanovics Peter) for dessert.



One BIG gift that Glen received was the surprise of "Gypsy" shirt, shoes, and hat from the choir members. A few weeks before the



tour, the boys asked for his sizes because they wanted him "to be a Gypsy man." They collected forint from all of the choir members and bought him the clothes to make him "one of them." The whole thing made us cry. It still does! You can see him in the pictures. I think he makes a handsome "Gypsy man!"

On Sunday, the choir sang in another Roma village, Old, and then traveled to Pécs, where they sang a beautiful and successful concert in the Baptista Templom here. This is the church we attend in Pécs. It's the church home of our friends and partners at Bible Club, Szilvia and Tamas Gobl. The outcome of that concert was valuable since it sparked interest in the new pastor and in the congregation. (Tivadar, our new pastor, attended Bible Club at Gandhi this week!)

Gift: My Mother and Sisters



One other group who came while Sara and Rebecca were here: my family! My mother and sisters (Carolyn Huckabay, Tracie Woods, Mary Evelyn Whitehurst) flew into Budapest on Easter afternoon for a trip to Vienna, Pécs, and Budapest. After a nice week in Vienna, my mother and sisters were at the Baptist church to hear the Gandhi Choir in their final concert. Then, they led Bible Club on the following Monday night and visited with lots of the students. One student was wearing a jacket she had

received at Christmas from my mom!

Actually, because of the volcanic ash, Tracie and Mary Evelyn were stuck here for an additional week and led Bible Club, met with students, and made the Serenity Prayer bracelets for the Gandhi seniors. What began as a vacation ended up as a full mission trip for them!

Gift: Gypsy Mission Team

Before my mother even got out of Budapest, our mission team (CBF field personnel to Roma in Europe) were assembled at our apartment in Pécs for the annual team meeting. Glen moved the upholstered furniture out of the sitting room and set up tables for the 3-day meeting. (Thank goodness that Ralph and Tammy hauled their folding table down from Budapest.) In spite of lots of computer and cell-phone calls to airlines about the volcanic ash, we managed to complete our business and enjoy a visit with Keith Holmes/Mary van Rheenen from the Netherlands, Dianne and Shane McNary from Slovakia, Ralph and Tammy Stocks from Budapest, and Becky Smith from the USA.



Gift: Debbie and Ballogas

Just yesterday we had the gift of Ballogas: the traditional school-leaving



ceremony for seniors here . . . like graduation in the USA. I used a whole package of tissues, but it was beautiful and poignant to see these students, whom we have loved, say good-bye to their home for the past 5-6 years! Glen and I were so honored that the 12A class, with whom we have had a special relationship, included us in their class balloon-release for a new future! Oh the joy these students have brought to our lives and how we will miss them.



Because on New Year's Day, our friend, Debbie Williams, began helping me develop the idea for a parting gift for the seniors, I had Serenity Prayer bead bracelets for every senior on Wednesday afternoon! Because Debbie sent the beads, the gift bags, and the instructions AND because my sisters assembled the bracelets, all of the

students—believers and non-believers alike—received a gift to remind them about the presence of God and His guidance in their lives. What an emotional moment it was to give those bracelets to these precious young adults! As I explained the bracelets (Ricsi translated) and said every senior's name, I thought of Debbie and her gift to these students. I will never forget the privilege of giving those bracelets in the name of Jesus and in the memory of Debbie. I will never forget seeing them on most students' arms during the Ballogas!



Gift: Students excel!

. . . at Ballogas

At Ballogas, Ricsi Kalányos (Richie) was the most outstanding student. Ricsi had the highest grades and received a number of awards, including a certificate from the Board of Directors. This spring, he also won a small scholarship towards his hopeful acceptance to medical school. It was a wonderful day for this resilient and dedicated young man! After experiencing a couple of anti-Roma racist situations this spring—one at the medical school orientation—Ricsi deserved a day of praise and encouragement!

Monika (Moni) Stojka was also recognized for having highest grades. Some of you may remember this quiet girl from your mission trips and English teaching. She was glowing and beautiful as she marched in the senior parade around the school!

Timi Bogdán, Barbi Horváth, Kaludia Kalányos and others also received books and certificates for their accomplishments during their years at Gandhi. Most of the students have applied for one or more universities or professional schools in Hungary: medical, law, social work, teaching, early childhood education, tourism, nursing, pilot-training, police-training, . . . All of those goals are huge for Roma students; any of those avenues would be remarkable accomplishments.

Several 10th graders and 11th graders are also studying for high-level exams so that they might apply for college in Hungary or the USA. Balázs Bogdán is already studying for the SAT in English, and several others are beginning to try.

Please pray for these students. Please pray that God will open doors. Then pray that God will provide the means and the courage that these students will need to go

through the doors! These young adults will need both internal and external resources to persevere to their end-goals

... in the USA

Dori Radnai and Gábor Gurbács, at Northfield Mount Hermon Academy and Deerfield Academy respectively, will graduate from the prep schools this May and will enter American universities in September. Gábor has been accepted at and chosen Williams, and Dori has been accepted at three schools and has yet to choose. Dori and Gábor have had the fortitude to march forward! This is thanks, in large part, to you.

Many of you have written notes and letters, prayed for Dori and Gábor, and continued your interest in them. During spring break this year, both students needed a home for 2 weeks and many of you responded.

My daughter—Katie Beth, sisters—Mary Evelyn and Tracie, nephew—Douglas, and niece--Margaret hosted Dori in Dallas for over a week. Then my father—Douglas Whitehurst—took Dori with his some of his grandchildren on his annual baseball spring-training trip to Arizona. He even took her to see the Grand Canyon!

Meanwhile, at the very last minute, our friends at First Baptist Augusta hosted Gábor for two weeks. Although they were about to leave for a mission trip to Chile, George and Debbie Williams picked him up from the airport, hosted him in their home, and took him 4-wheeling and fishing. Margaret and Warren Daniel, Kathy and Milton Martin, Beth and Joe Pollock, David and Janet Hudson, and Greg and Amy DeLoach all hosted Gábor, introduced him to new experiences, listened to him, talked to him, and gave him the warmest welcome he could imagine.

Because of all your prayers and efforts, Dori and Gábor have had the internal and external resources to keep moving forward! Each of them has already exceeded the expectations of everyone over here in Hungary. Just their names are inspiration to the students at Gandhi. Students ask me about them on a regular basis. Because Dori and Gábor have moved forward, other students are beginning to believe that the goals are possible! Because you have helped Dori and Gábor, Dori and Gábor are encouraging other students. The result: HOPE! Students are beginning to have hope!



Gandhi Ensemble to USA!

So thank you. Thank you for taking the time to pray, to show your interest, to send notes, to give resources, to care. Your efforts are gifts!

Gift: Good News—

Gandhi Ensemble to the USA

BIG GIFT!!!! YOU, many of you, are giving 10 students the opportunity to come to the USA this summer. Glen will bring 9 students from the Gandhi Choir to sing about 15-16 times in the USA from June 23-July 12, from Charlottesville, VA to Dallas, TX. When he told the students a week ago,

they were actually speechless . . . a first! We will begin sending details about each of these talented young people. We hope that all of you will be able to meet them and to hear them sing! I can promise you that it will be a unique experience! What about the 10th student? First Baptist Huntsville is giving Laci Bogdán the gift of joining them on their annual summer mission trip to Connecticut. Laci will fly over to the USA with us; then he will join the FBC Huntsville youth to ride a bus to the northeast and do Bible Schools. After his trip with FBC Huntsville, Laci will travel to Jackson, MS and spend several days with the youth from Northminster Baptist. That youth group met Laci when they led English camp last May THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU! Laci is one very excited teenager. Laci's family are non-religious, so Laci is just learning about all of this. However, Laci is reading his Hungarian New Testament (from the Cason Bruker SS Class in FBC Augusta) so that he will be ready to teach little children about Jesus. Doesn't God work in mysterious ways?



Gift: Prayer

Thank you, again, for your prayers. Please keep on praying! Prayer is the fuel, the energy, the power that keeps us going. It is also the glue that keeps us together when things aren't going well!

1. Please pray for these seniors who are grasping for opportunities and the courage to grab the opportunities when they present themselves!
2. Please pray for the Roma in Eastern Europe who are facing increasing racism and persecution every day. It is actually getting worse instead of better, perhaps because of the economy.
3. Please pray for the summer ensemble trip. Please pray for Glen to hear and feel the guidance of God as he makes plans. Please pray for the students and their families who are excited but afraid of the unknown.
4. Please pray for the Gandhi School. Things are not happy and smooth there. What was a place of learning, encouragement and refuge has become a place of conflict, tension and upset. There are so many students with outstanding potential, and they need a positive environment in order to be courageous enough to be Roma pioneers!
5. Please pray for us. We are not sure where God will lead us when we must return to the USA in August. We know that God led us here and that He has a place where we can serve. In the meantime, we are trying to focus on the "now" and not worry about the future!



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