

February/March Newsletter: Part 1

Is it getting warm where you live? It is sunny and warmer in Pecs today—beautiful, actually. Although there are still patches of ice and snow sliding off the roofs outside our back window, the walking street is dry and clear—no more patches of black slush. Even swathed in coats and hats, everyone looks a lot warmer! It is amazing what bright sunshine can do for people everywhere!



The snow has been beautiful, but it has worn out its welcome. Time to go! It was beautiful while the mission team from First Baptist Greenville was in Hungary. Becky Bouton, the team leader, had been doing a “snow dance” for weeks prior to their arrival, and it proved amazingly effective! We got inches and inches while they were here—along with freezing temperatures and ice. So everyone had the opportunity to get completely acquainted with their coats, scarves, hats, boots, long underwear, and gloves. Needless to say, preparing to

move from one place to another took lots and lots of time. Just donning all of those clothes is an aerobic activity!

But . . . now I sense that Spring is coming. Even though the temperatures are still biting and the winds are howling, I feel wisps of Spring in the air. As the winds move in, it seems that hope and renewal and life are blowing into the walking street as well. In the meantime, the winds have already taken our outside thermometer, several sandwich board/signs from neighboring businesses, and one awning from a little shop down the street. I guess it’s too soon to pack up the long underwear!

February was a great month for us. In spite of record snow on every continent in the northern hemisphere, Jim and Ethel Childress managed to maneuver their way over to Hungary to visit us for a few days—ahead of the mission team from their church: First Baptist Greenville. Although their snow-delayed trip took extra days, we were waiting at the train when they arrived in Pecs. When they came down the steps of the train, the world just lit up! They did all of our usual routines with us, even eating Monday night supper at the Tesco Chinese buffet. (How about a Chinese buffet in the “WalMart” in Hungary?) Ethel helped me tutor; Jim and Ethel went to choir with Glen; and they helped us to lead Bible Club—all of this accompanied by constant conversation. I am sure that they were relieved when the rest of their group arrived in Pecs a few days later.

Within 24 hours of their arrival, the Greenville team traveled to Pecs from Budapest, made their plans, and hosted a teacher-appreciation lunch for the teachers and staff at Gandhi. We had a record number of teachers who came to eat Gyros and cookies and to visit with the Americans. They stayed for two hours! As they left, the Greenville folks presented each teacher with a red tote bag, beautifully decorated with a design to represent letting God's love shine through.

Something special happened at the teacher party: Erzsibet Gidane, the new principal at Gandhi, welcomed the mission team and presented each member with a Gandhi t-shirt! Then, Glen was honored to receive—in the name of Hungarian Baptists and Baptist World Aid***—the collection/offering for Haiti Relief from the Gandhi students. Yes, you read it correctly! In the last weeks of January, these students who have absolutely



nothing and who are despised in their own country, contributed their forints to help the earthquake victims half way around the world! They willingly dropped their meager forints (like dimes and nickels) into jars in the school, and they collected an offering of almost \$55.00—a staggering amount of change! Later in the week, Glen and Ralph presented the offering to the Hungarian Baptists for BWAid.



[***You may not know that the Emergency Response Team for the Baptist World Alliance is made up of people from Hungary and North Carolina. They were some of the first responders on-site in Haiti.]

After a very snowy weekend in Pecs, the team hauled their 1000 packets of hot chocolate and bags of mini-marshmallows through the slush to Gandhi—to set up a warm welcome party for the students who were returning from weekends at home. For these students, the arrival of the mission team from FBC Greenville was the highlight of the year! After asking us for months “When are the Americans coming?”, students were primed and ready to see the smiling faces of Becky, Elaine, Connie, Duke, Ben, Beverly, Jim, and Ethel. They were also delighted to see Ralph and Tammy Stocks join the team.

The group kicked off the week with a school-wide hot chocolate and marshmallow party on Sunday evening. With the help of some of our students from Cooking Club, the Greenville folks distributed their bright red t-shirts and stickers, based on John 15:12 [Love one another as I have loved you.] and served 150-200 cups of hot chocolate, complete with mini-marshmallows on top! It was a 2-hour celebration, with students

dropping their suitcases as they arrived at the school and heading straight into the meeting room to get a t-shirt, drink a cup of hot chocolate, and try to talk to the American Christians. The evening was a rousing success and set the atmosphere for the rest of the week.

Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday mornings, the team worked on their preparations: Connie, Beverly, and Ethel cooked cookies in my kitchen, while Becky, Elaine, Ben, Duke, and Jim tied hearts on bookworms and readied teaching supplies!



On three afternoons as Becky distributed t-shirts, the teaching teams set up their lessons at tables in the library where they tutored groups of students for several hours. The response was amazing! After the first, brave students enjoyed their 45-minute lessons, I was mobbed by students wanting to “sign up” for a tutoring lesson with the Americans. By Wednesday afternoon, the teaching “duos” had to split up into teaching “singles” in order to cover all the students who wanted to practice their English.



Although this sounds like a routine arrangement, it was a new and highly risky experiment; and God made it work! Until this year, teams always taught in the English classes. However, with new administration rules, we are not allowed in the classroom. Therefore, we had to devise another

way for the mission team to interact with the students. Glen and I spent days and weeks trying to fine-tune this new arrangement, and--needless to say--we were very, very apprehensive about our “plans.” What if the students didn’t respond? What if the school made alternative plans (a routine occurrence here)? What if there weren’t enough students to help translate?

In spite of all of our worries, God once again did a miracle. Yes, there were scheduling conflicts, space conflicts, student no-shows. However, God worked in all of those small frustrations to reveal an even better arrangement and more successful plan. By the end of the week, it was evident to all of us—Adkins, Mission Team, and Gandhi folks--that God had been working in ways we hadn’t even considered! The result was that several students who have never interacted with Glen and me spent hours with their “new” Greenville friends—even some German-language students!

Every evening, the team hosted a special event for a group of students. Monday night, the Greenville folks had a Valentine's party for the Bible Club after Duke taught a great Bible lesson. Elaine took photos of each student for framed pictures, and Beverly set up a Bingo game with prizes! Everyone—students and adults—had a ball, and the students love receiving their framed photos the next day.



To top off the evening, Ben opened his bags of hand-decorated warm-winter scarves and allowed each student to choose his/her own. The scarves were gifts from Aimee Waldrop, her friends, and an elementary school in Greenville. [Later, Ben presented the remainder of the 100+ scarves to the Gandhi social worker so that she could distribute them to other Gandhi students.]



Tuesday night, the Gandhi choir dressed in their traditional performance clothing and presented a wonderful concert for the mission team. I think it was their best performance ever! Following the outstanding concert, the team hosted a valentine's party for the choir, complete with homemade cookies, hot chocolate, candy, Elaine's photos for framed pictures, and more Bingo. You can see that they all had a wonderful evening.

On Wednesday evening, the team hosted a talent show for the entire school. The library was packed with students—standing room only—when the first dancers began performing. Wow! The talent was remarkable and

the audience was enthusiastic. As the judges were making their decisions, the Greenville team appeared onstage dressed in wacky costumes and dancing to "Love Train." The students went wild, especially when the team emerged from their conga line and began throwing their beads and bracelets into the audience. As the song ended, teachers,

administrators, and students were laughing, singing, and dancing with the mission team. It was truly a celebration!



After the decisions were announced, the Gandhi students surprised every member of the mission team with a hand-written thank you card and a Pecs 2010 pin. Then the students presented the team with their gift of friendship—a giant loaf of homemade Gypsy Bread (made by Laura Orsos) which was wrapped in a cloth bearing all of their signatures. The bread was delicious, and what it represented was even more wonderful! No one will ever forget that special “Thank you.”



As wonderful as the evening was, the team’s work didn’t end on Wednesday night! On Thursday, the new Gandhi principal, Erzsibet, invited the team to eat a Paprika Chicken lunch in the Gandhi Dining Hall. The school even bought Coke for the American mission team! The Gandhi School folks made a special effort to recognize the 5-year partnership and work of FBC Greenville, SC and the 10-year partnership of CBF missions with the school.



Following the lovely lunch, the Greenville folks brought their week to a close by posting themselves in the main hall and giving a valentine gift and candy to every student and teacher at Gandhi. The gifts were handmade, crocheted bookworms—complete with eyes and a laminated heart with the Bible verse for the week. The precious bookworms were the result of months of coordination by Connie Glass with volunteer knitters from FBC Greenville. What an amazing project! As we left the school, I saw students wearing their bookworms. One student tied her own bookworm to one earring and her boyfriend’s bookworm to the other. Several



students also tied the bookworms to the zippers on their sweaters or jackets. We see the bookworms everywhere--in books, on book bags, on zippers, . . .

As the folks from Greenville made their way out of the school, they were hugged and kissed by emotional students and teachers. It was a wonderful week and much-needed boost for the entire school community! This effective mission team touched the lives of almost every student and teacher at the Gandhi school, and we saw some of the results occur right before our eyes. THANK YOU, First Baptist Greenville!

Prayer Requests

Thank you for your continuing prayers. This has been a difficult year for the school, the students, and the Adkins. God has worked with and through your prayers to redeem lots of hard situations. Please continue to pray.

1. Please pray for the graduating seniors at Gandhi. Ricsi has applied to medical schools in Hungary; Barbi has applied to school to learn to teach English; Timi is waiting to hear from a tourism program; Tamas is planning to try flight-training . . . Almost every senior has applied for some kind of further education. They need your prayers in more ways than I can describe in this newsletter!
2. Please pray for Glen as he plans for the Gandhi choir and tries to negotiate his way through the mine-field of the new administration.
3. Please pray for First Baptist Greensboro Youth Choir as they come for a week to Hungary to work both at Gandhi and in villages near the Ukraine.

Give to CBF Global Missions, P.O. Box 450329 Atlanta, GA 31145-0329 ©2007 Cooperative Baptist Fellowship 800.352.8741. If you would like to designate your Global Missions gift to the Gandhi School ministry and the Adkins' ministry at the Gandhi School please let CBF know your contribution is for the Gandhi School Project Account #85183. For the CBF website click on the CBF logo.

