



WINGS OF HOPE INTERNATIONAL

TRANSFORMING **the lives of people in MOLDOVA**

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Message from the President

It's been a year since we sent our last newsletter and many things have happened in the activities of Wings of Hope International (WHI). We continued to touch the lives of many children, elderly, the sick and other needy but decided this past summer to change the direction of our activities.

We would like to inform you that WHI had undertaken a new strategic initiative in 2015. We hope this new direction will provide a more sustainable impact on the lives of the most needy in Moldova. This newsletter will provide information about the activities we implemented this past year and details about the new strategic direction and how we might accomplish it in the future. As in the past, we will continue to focus on the four goals that were established when we founded WHI, but will change the methods for implementing these.

On behalf of those in the village of Cobani, whose lives have been touched during the past year, I would like to express our sincerest thanks to each of you. You have generously given of your financial resources to contribute to the work of WHI over the past year. We are excited about our new vision and I hope that you will continue to support us in our new efforts to transform the lives of many needy Moldovans.

With Hope for the Moldovan People,

WHI Takes New Strategic Direction

It was in the summer of 2012 when Becky, my brother, my nephew and I were delivering packages of food to the elderly and other needy in the village of Cobani. We got to the edge of the village and entered the property of an elderly gentleman to deliver a package of food. As we walked on his property we noticed that he could hear us but he was looking in a different direction. We approached him and introduced ourselves and found out that he was almost blind (he could distinguish that somebody was coming his direction but he couldn't see who the people were). As we started our conversation he told us that he lives by himself and nobody comes to visit him. He said that some neighbors promised they would take care of him but they disappeared after he gave them the title of his house. He started sharing with us that he was very lonely and didn't have many opportunities to interact with other people.

We listened to him for a few minutes before I interrupted his conversation to tell him that we brought some food items from donations made by Americans. He didn't want to listen to us and just kept talking. At that time, I felt very uncomfortable and thought that he was ungrateful in focusing on himself and not thanking us for the packet of food that we brought him. I interrupted him and said I am sorry but we had to go because we had to deliver food packages to 60 other families. We walked away thinking how ungrateful this man was.



Building that was purchased for the center.

As we walked away towards the gate of his property, I turned back to say goodbye again and at that time I noticed tears were coming down his cheeks. At that time I felt so embarrassed and ashamed of myself for not taking more time to listen to him. Through those tears he told us: *"I am not dying of hunger but I am dying of loneliness"*. I know that he needed food but food was not the most important need he had at that time. I was humbled because I came with my beliefs of what he needed instead of truly understanding the very needs of the people we choose to serve through WHI. As we delivered more bags of food, we noticed that many of the elderly were very lonely and wanted someone to talk to about their lives and their struggles.

Over the next two years, after the encounter with the elderly gentleman, we started thinking about what we could do to address the emotional needs of feeling wanted and valued and have a feeling of belonging. We felt that our previous efforts were good, but they were addressing only temporary physical needs and were most implemented in summers when I would travel to Moldova. We came to the conclusion that we needed to start something different, something that will provide a more sustainable impact and will have real transforming impact on the lives on the people in Moldova

Strategic Direction, continued on page 2



Strategic Direction, con't

In exploring ideas and opportunities to create a more sustainable development of the village, I was approached by a non-profit organization, Nehemiah, from the village of Cobani with a proposal to form a partnership. This partnership will focus on working collaboratively on a holistic community development plan for the village of Cobani. Together, we will focus on addressing the educational, social, health, and economic development of the village (these areas are similar to the areas that WHI initially established in 2007 – the difference is the way we will be approaching addressing these issues).

In the partnership, WHI will focus on fundraising and providing any needed advising (consulting) on the selection and implementation of projects, and the local non-profit organization will focus on identifying and implementing various projects that will focus on comprehensive community development (educational, health, social and economic). This is a different approach from the past when I would travel to Moldova and implement a few projects during the summer and then wait for a year and do the same thing again. With the proposed partnership, WHI will have a partner on the ground 365 days per year and we believe that having a person/entity on the ground will be able to better identify the needs and satisfy them faster and more effectively than waiting to do so once per year.

The section below provides more information about the opening of the community center and the initial four projects that we plan to implement through the partnership. We hope to start additional projects in the future that will focus in part on social and educational programs, entrepreneurship training, and small business startup and micro lending to move toward a more sustainable development of the community. We also plan to find additional partners to work with us on these projects.

New Strategic Direction: Community Center Initiative

The first step of the new strategic initiative was the opening a community center in the village of Cobani. This would be one of the best ways to address the many immediate needs which have arisen as Moldova continues to struggle with the poorest economy in Europe. This community center will be a place where people with different needs could come and receive assistance. In the initial phases, we plan for the center to serve as a communal kitchen, a communal bathhouse, a communal laundromat, and an after school program for the children from low income families.

Early in the spring of 2015 an individual from England donated funds to the local non-profit organization to purchase an old building which is being transformed into the community center. During the summer and fall of 2015, a crew repaired the building on the outside, built some additions, and built a well. WHI contributed to the majority of the repairs in 2015. The inside repairs are planned for the winter of 2015-16 and spring of 2016 with the hope of opening the center in the summer of 2016.

Project 1- Establish a Communal Kitchen

The community kitchen will be used to prepare and serve meals for three categories of individuals: the elderly who don't have any relatives and are encountering difficulties in satisfying their basic needs. (31 individuals); individuals with disabilities (72 individuals with various degrees and types of disability); children from low income families and families at risk (57 children)

The initial proposal is to feed about 30 elderly and/or persons with disabilities and 30 children from low income families 3 (three) times per week for lunch. Those who are able to walk will come to the community center, while those who have difficulty walking will be served at home (using a van to transport the food). The preferred method is for people to come to the community center so they will be able to socialize with other individuals and with the staff at the community center.

NEED: At the present time there is a need to purchase kitchen furniture, a stove, two refrigerators, dishes, glasses, and other equipment needed to offer meals.



Building that was purchased for the center.



Community Center Initiative, con't

Project 2 – Establish a Communal Bathhouse

About 99% of homes in the village don't have running water or any type of plumbing so all bathing is performed in the living rooms or bedrooms in large tubs. The bathhouse will be a place where elderly, people with disabilities, and children from low income families or families at risk will come to take a shower at least one time per week. They expect to have between 60-80 people per week taking showers.

NEED: Purchase the shower cabins, install all the necessary equipment for the showers, purchase two water heaters, and other needs to have functioning showers.

Project 3 – Establish a Communal Laundromat

As mentioned above, about 99% of homes in the village don't have running water and very few of them have washing machines (some have washing machines without running water). This will be a place at the community center where they will wash the clothes of the elderly, people with disabilities, and low income families.

NEED: Purchases three washing machines and two dryers.

Project 4 – Establish an After School Program

One of problems that many people in the village are confronted with is the lack of employment opportunities. As a result, a significant number of working age men (fathers) are working outside the village and in many situations outside the country. Often both parents are outside the country in search of employment opportunities. In many of these circumstances, when parents leave the village for employment opportunities, their children are left with very little supervision by the remaining parent or grandparents. The latter often encounter difficulties in supervising their grandchildren. As a consequence, some children don't attend school or, even if they attend school, they don't engage in productive activities after school hours. At the present time there are 67 school age children who have at least one parent working outside the country and 10 school age children who have both parents working outside the country. The social workers have also identified 25 children who are living in families with a high degree of risk (alcoholism by parents, violence, etc.).

We would like to organize an after school program for children whose parents are outside of the country and for children from families with a high degree of risk. The plan is to hire a teacher who will work with these school age children in completing their homework at the center; organize arts and crafts classes; organize sport activities; and to teach how to use computers for educational and other activities that will keep these children engaged.

One feature of the after school program is to have the students who receive assistance through the center engage in volunteer work in the community. The employees of the community center will identify specific projects in the community where students will volunteer their time to help support the neediest in the village.

NEED: At the present time there is a need to purchase various school supplies for the students to engage in various educational activities and to hire a teacher.

Immediate Need: Prior to opening the Community Center, our local partner will start delivering hot meals to homes starting in January 2016. He signed an agreement with the school in the village to prepare the meals and plan to serve 30 families. A donor has donated funds to purchase a van and we are in need of funds to purchase ingredients and equipment for storage (a refrigerator) and transportation of meals in order to meet the Ministry of Health standards.



Building Addition



Addition Finished and New Windows and Doors Installed



70 Families Receive Food

During Summer 2015 WHI continued to support the elderly, sick and low income families with food supplies. We distributed packages to 70 families which included what are considered basic necessities in Moldova. Those who received assistance included: (1) 46 elderly who don't have any relatives; (2) 6 disabled from childhood and disabled children; (3) 14 disabled of 1st group. Each food package contained the following staples: 1kg each of corn meal, wheat meal, buckwheat, sugar, rice and pasta; 2 kg wheat flour; and 2 liters sunflower oil.



Distribution of food packages

Please check our website at www.whintl.org for more pictures and testimonials.

WHI Fundraising Goals for 2016

In light of the new strategic initiative the budget for 2016 has increased. We will continue to focus on improving educational opportunities for children, improving access to quality healthcare and assisting the elderly and also support the community center in 2016. Here are the Fundraising goals for the upcoming year:

- Community Center — \$16,500**
- Children projects - \$3,500**
- Healthcare projects - \$2,000**
- Elderly projects - \$2,000**

Please join us in achieving these goals and remember, your WHI contribution is tax-deductible!



New Desks and Supplies

For the past several years, the principal of the Cobani schools has been asking us for assistance with the purchase of tables and chairs for the cafeteria used by the elementary school students. The existing furniture was over 35 years old and had been used in other places before it was transferred to the elementary school. Many of the tables and chairs were broken and dangerous for the students to use. During the summer of 2015, we were able to cover 70% of the total cost of the tables and chairs.



New desks for school cafeteria

Here is a message from the school principal:

On behalf of our children, parents and entire educational personnel, I would like to express our thanks to WHI for their efforts to assist us with the purchase of the tables and chairs for the school cafeteria. We would like to let you know that at the present time the new tables and chairs will be used to feed 84 elementary school children (grades 1-4) and the new furniture is of a much higher quality compared with the old and it is much more comfortable for the students.



Elementary students at lunch

Thank you again for this donation and for all the previous donations that have contributed to the improvement of the learning conditions of our students.

With respect,
Cobani School Principal.

In addition, WHI donated educational supplies to the daycare/ kindergarten in Cobani which more than 80 children attend. The children, teachers and other personnel at this educational establishment were very thankful for the donation, giving them a better chance of growing and learning.

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