



# WINGS OF HOPE INTERNATIONAL

TRANSFORMING the lives of people in MOLDOVA

Volume 14, Issue 1

Fall 2023

## Message from WHI President

I am greeting you with this message four days after my return from Moldova. As I mentioned in my e-mail message from September of this year, I was awarded sabbatical leave from Grand View for this fall in order to complete a Fulbright US Scholar assignment in Moldova by teaching at the Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova (AESM). I enjoyed my experiences interacting with students and professors at AESM and building new relationships.

While in Moldova, I traveled almost every weekend to Cobani where I spent time with my mother and witnessed the work of WHI's partner, AO Neemia. This year they continued with all of their regular activities at the community center: meals for the elderly and sick, afterschool programs, summer camps, volunteering clubs, social laundromat, etc. It was encouraging to see the impact that your contributions over the years have made on the lives of many individuals in Cobani and surrounding villages.

One of the exciting things that happened this year, which is related to one of our major goals, was to empower the local communities to address their needs. In the article on this page read more about the Community Involvement through Participative Budgeting initiative (I volunteered on this project in Cobani this fall). We hope this will be a starting point for more projects in Cobani, and neighboring communities where Neemia is involved, where the local community will take an active role in addressing their needs.

Thank you again for all your support over the years, and I hope you will continue to support our work in transforming the lives of individuals in Moldova.

With Hope for the Moldovan People,

  
Alec Zama

## Community Involvement through Participative Budgeting

By Victor Zama

Thanks to the support of Wings of Hope International (WHI) in 2023, we were able to continue our work with our regular programs and services and start a new direction in our activities. One of the strategic directions of AO Neemia is Community Development and this year we were able to access some funding through the "EU4Accountability – A Civil Society Empowered for a Greater Social Responsibility in Moldova" program, designed for a wide variety of activities related to community development. The goal of our project was to help the local community become more informed and more involved in the process of decision-making and implementation of small projects in their community. One of the main activities of this project was titled Participative Budgeting which was a new initiative for our organization and for the entire country. It required the local public administration to create a budget for community projects, and then for people in their community to become involved in identifying specific community problems and accessing the necessary funding.

The process of participative budgeting implemented by our organization had the following steps: informing the population in five selected communities; signing agreements with each local public administration; setting financial contributions; developing courses of actions for participative budgeting; soliciting and evaluating community projects for each community (initiated by individuals living in each community), allocating funding, and implementing the projects.

Two projects were selected through this process. In Butesti, the winning project was Popas la Capitani, aimed at creating an area for rest and relaxation for the community, for the amount of \$6,400. In Cobani, the winning project was to build a Safe and Performance Sports Place for children and young people, with a total budget of \$12,000. The implementation of these two projects was a positive experience for our organization, for the local public administrations, and for both communities. We had good trilateral collaboration and as a result, these two communities have new places for children, young people, and adults where they can rest, relax and practice various types of sports.



*New place in Butesti (like a small park).*



*The Sports Place in Cobani (in progress stage)*

Although we had many positive experiences during this process, two that deserve mention are the involvement of local volunteers and donations of funds by individuals in each community. The majority of labor for both projects was done by local volunteers which helped reduce the costs of both projects, and at the same time gave ownership of these projects to community members. Locals also made monetary donations that helped cover expenses not covered by the grant. I would like to mention special contributions by several individuals of retirement age who made monetary contributions from their pension of 2,000MDL (approx \$110) because they wanted to be part of something good for their community.

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## Community Involvement, (cont. from page 1)

Ms Liusea came to the Community Center one day, and with joy on her face, she said "Please accept this 200MDL donation (10% of her pension), because I would like for my grandson to have a safe place to play sports." It's important to note that there isn't a basketball playground in Cobani and many kids, young people, and adults are waiting with anticipation for our project to be finalized. The new sports place can be used for basketball, volleyball, tennis, and mini-soccer. It will be also used by the local daycare/kindergarten, local middle school, and anyone else in the community to practice a healthy life style.

Since the needed expenses exceeded the amount from the grant and from the local contributions, we engaged in additional fundraising. We are grateful to WHI for their donation of \$2,650 in order to finalize the project. We hope to celebrate the completion of this project at the end of this December. Success will mean the continued offering of new possibilities for people to become involved in identifying and solving the needs of their communities and for the entire communities to be able to benefit from those projects.

Thank you to all the donors of Wings of Hope International for making our work in Moldova possible!

## 2023 Impact Numbers

*From January through October*

Hot lunches – 6,250  
Coal donations – 27,000 kg – 140 families  
Adult diaper donations – 190 units – 42 recipients  
Summer camps – 4 camps – 75 children  
Food package donations – 70 packages  
Children's club – 432 hours  
Volunteers' club – 78 hours  
Volunteering in the community – 1,280 hours  
Electric stove donation – 1 unit  
Community development projects – 4 projects

## WHI Goals for 2024

In 2024 we will continue to support the operations of the Community Center in Cobani, continue to focus on improving educational opportunities for children, continue improving access to quality healthcare, and continue assisting the elderly. Here are the fundraising needs for the upcoming year:

**Community Center** - \$42,500  
**Educational projects** - \$ 2,500  
**Healthcare projects** - \$ 2,500  
**Elderly projects** - \$ 2,500

Please join us in achieving these goals. You can donate online or by mail by sending a check to the address indicated at the bottom this page. You could also donate tradeable securities. Remember, your WHI contributions are tax-deductible under IRS regulations!

## Oven for School Cafeteria in Cobani

*By Irina Ciocchina*

The students, teachers, and parents of elementary and middle schools in Cobani would like to express sincere thanks to Wings of Hope International for the donation to purchase an oven for our school kitchen. The old stove/oven was 15 years old and it was in very bad condition, in fact it posed danger for the kitchen employees. Now the new stove/oven, with four burners, will provide better working conditions for the kitchen employees who will be able to prepare food of higher quality. Now 80 children will benefit from your generous donation. Thank You!



## A Personal Story

Anastasia and Gheorghe, both 15 years old, served as volunteers during the organization and implementation of summer camps for children. Their involvement with the camps was motivated by the desire to provide camp participants with opportunities to have a great time and enjoy all activities. Here is what Anastasia told us "It was a pleasure to work with the children from Camenca. We developed such strong relationships that they became like our younger brothers and sisters. Every time that we have seen each other after the camp, they were so happy and always hugged us with joy. I didn't know that the short time that we spent at the camp would provide us so much satisfaction and that it would bring us so close to the children who attended the camp. I would definitely like to become involved with future camps to impact the lives of children."



*Summer Camps*



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