



WINGS OF HOPE INTERNATIONAL

TRANSFORMING the lives of people in MOLDOVA

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Message from WHI President

As we near the end of 2024, we would like to share an update on WHI's collaborative efforts with AO Neemia (Neemia) in Moldova throughout the year. Neemia has continued its regular community center programs, which include hot lunches for the elderly, an afterschool program, various clubs, and summer camps. We're especially pleased that they've expanded their services to another county. This summer, they organized a camp for children from four small villages in Riscani County. They are now discussing with local mayors ways to extend support to the elderly and individuals with special needs, broadening their reach to a total of nine villages.

Another highlight is the community engagement initiative that Neemia began last year with the creation of a sports area, which continued in 2024 with the construction of a walking bridge in Cobani. Neemia partnered with the mayor's office to engage the community, mobilizing residents to contribute funds and volunteer their labor. The community responded enthusiastically, offering both monetary support and hands-on help to complete the bridge. We are encouraged by the community's positive response over the past two years and hope to see this spirit of engagement continue.

In July, I traveled to Moldova and had the chance to participate in some of Neemia's activities. During my visit, I also met Adam, a new Peace Corps volunteer who will be working with Neemia in Cobani for the next two years. We discussed his role and how it aligns with WHI's objectives.

Thank you for your continued support in improving lives in Moldova. We look forward to your support in 2025 to help us make an even greater impact.

With Hope for the Moldovan People,

Alec Zama

Building a Brighter Future: AO Neemia's Transformative Impact on Cobani

By Liliana Burlacu-Colbasiuc, Mayor of Cobani

Before returning to my village and running for mayor in 2023, I associated Neemia with genuine "care and love for people, especially the elderly." I knew of their initiatives, such as the social kitchen, children's camps, and various community development projects. However, once I was elected as mayor of Cobani in November 2023, I gained a deeper appreciation of Neemia's dedicated and far-reaching impact on our community. Working closely with Neemia, I witnessed firsthand how civic engagement can inspire residents to actively participate in volunteer efforts that enrich our village as a whole.

Since November 2023, our collaboration has reached significant milestones. Together, we completed a children's playground and a multifunctional sports area with financial support from Wings of Hope International, People In Need, the local administration, and the generous time and donations of local citizens. Over time, my partnership with Neemia has only grown stronger. A recent example of our

collaboration was a community-led project to construct a walking bridge connecting Cobani to Vatra Horelor—Cobani's "visiting card" for tourists. Completed just in time for our 650th Village Day celebration, this project exemplifies Neemia's commitment, which extends far beyond physical infrastructure. With Neemia's guidance, local youth are increasingly involved in initiatives like holiday preparations, maintaining village cleanliness, and distributing food packages.

Neemia has truly become a cornerstone of our community. The organization plays a vital role in projects like delivering food packages to the elderly on International Day of the Elderly, which brought joy to many faces. Our shared goal is to transform Cobani—to develop infrastructure, create jobs, and promote rural tourism so that people worldwide can come to know our village and its warmth. We strive to ensure that residents enjoy a higher quality of life and that every visitor feels at HOME in Cobani. I am proud that our work is grounded in shared values:

- **Love and care for people**, especially the most vulnerable.
- **Developing Cobani's infrastructure** to help it grow into a truly European town.
- **Encouraging youth involvement** in community development and engagement.
- **Fostering a spirit of volunteerism** among all residents.

Seeing these projects through from start to finish has shown me the incredible effort and dedication that Neemia invests behind each success. It is one thing to visit a village and admire its accomplishments; it is quite another to witness the dedication that brings these visions to life. I am confident that our community shares this vision—that together, we can achieve remarkable things for Cobani. I offer my deepest gratitude to Victor Zama, Neemia's Executive Director, whose leadership and sense of responsibility make so much possible. His initiative has been invaluable. I look forward to accomplishing even more with Neemia by our side.



From left to right: Victor Zama, Liliana Burlacu-Colbasiuc, and the EU Ambassador at the opening of the Sports Complex





Integration in Cobani

By Adam Minahan, Peace Corps Volunteer in Cobani

As a Peace Corps volunteer, the first three months in our communities are considered an “integration period,” during which we learn about Moldova, our communities, and the work of our counterpart organizations. In my opinion, Neemia is one of the best organizations for a volunteer to be part of to ensure a smooth and enriching integration process. I say this because Neemia is dedicated to improving the quality of life for individuals at every stage of life, so my first three months have given me a complete picture of Cobani and a deep appreciation for the diverse needs and strengths of its people.

Three days a week, I help deliver hot meals directly to elderly individuals and people with disabilities. It's a privilege to connect with people rich in life experience and wisdom while helping to meet their needs. Not only does this improve my Romanian, but I also receive history lessons through firsthand accounts and invaluable advice on navigating hardship. Many of our beneficiaries have invited me over for coffee in my free time, and I've never hesitated to embrace these wonderful opportunities. Five days a week, I'm greeted by the cheerful faces of the children in our afterschool program, led by our wonderful teacher, Ms. Angela. On Fridays, I contribute to this fun and educational program by giving an interactive English lesson to 9-10 year olds, and do

(continued on the next column)

2024 Impact Numbers

From January through October

Hot Lunches – 7,243/75 beneficiaries
Afterschool Program Lunches - 1,130
Coal Donations – 11,000 kg – 55 families
Adult Diaper Donations – 157 units – 30 recipients
Summer Camps – 8 camps – 157 children
Food/Gift Package Donations – 3,072 packages
Children's Club – 272 hours/20 children
Retirees' Club – 48 hours/13 participants
Volunteers' Club – 1,000 hours/45 volunteers
Community Development Project (bridge) – 108 volunteers

WHI Goals for 2025

In 2025 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 - \$56,000
Educational projects - \$ 1,500
Healthcare projects - \$ 1,500
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 tradable securities. Remember, your WHI contributions are tax-deductible under IRS regulations!

the same at the kindergarten every Thursday. The warm greetings and seemingly endless hugs from these appreciative kids are heartwarming beyond words. I feel blessed to be able to contribute to their development while creating happy childhood memories.

One of Neemia's greatest achievements, in my opinion, is the formation of a dedicated group of youth volunteers. For sustained development to take place, development work must focus on long-term impact. There is no better way to achieve this than by developing the youth into socially conscious and civically engaged citizens—an art in which Victor Zama is a virtuoso. His ability to inspire, lead, and transform youth into change agents in their community is a key reason why I see a bright future for Cobani and Moldova.

As I near the end of my "integration period" in Cobani, I've come to appreciate the resourcefulness, optimism, and tenacity of its people. The work that Neemia does and the youth who aid its mission have been an inspiration to me, offering a deeper understanding of how grassroots efforts can profoundly impact communities. I believe that by the time my two years in Moldova have come to a close, I will have grown immensely alongside its youth volunteers, the Neemia organization, and the community of Cobani.

And that, I think, is the essence and beauty of an open, connected world: one that trades not just in goods, but in knowledge and experiences. These exchanges not only develop our communities but foster mutual understanding, creating a more compassionate and peaceful world for us all.



Adam at the Kindergarten

Personal Testimony

By Daniela Coltun, Mayor of Braniste (comprising 4 villages)

"We truly appreciate Neemia's openness to organize a children's camp in our community. This was the first time a camp like this has been held here, and we are thrilled that the children were able to enjoy such an engaging program. After speaking with both children and parents, I can say they are delighted to have spent their time learning valuable lessons and discovering new games and activities. On behalf of the parents and myself, thank you for all the effort you put into making this camp possible. We are grateful for this wonderful initiative in our village, and we look forward to future collaborations that will create more opportunities for children and support for those in need".

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