

Dear Friends

It has been a wonderful experience to see how Lydia-trained women organised and ran the programme **“Never Too Late to Learn”**, enabling facilitators to establish new work with senior citizens in differing Romanian communities. Participants came in August from all over Transylvania (Romania) and by the end they set off, inspired to run their own projects:

- (1) **“My Granny’s Recipes”** group will cook traditional recipes and distribute baking to nearby orphans, homeless and a nursing home and socialise at the same time. With others they plan a calendar to raise funds so that they can support other community activities;
- (2) **“New activities for a retirement home”** which has few projects to enjoy, using simple materials but drawing out the lively memories that are often buried in a numbed existence.
- (3) **“We want to be clean.”** Is a laundry service planned for housebound villagers who have no washing machines, bathrooms, or transport. It will use a church venue and volunteers.
- (4) **“Folk Club”** will gather people from several villages plus townspeople to draw on shared musical memories of folk music and present them at special events and festivals.
- (5) **“Stay Fit”**, involves gentle gym, bringing isolated pensioners together for fun that is beneficial, using many of the resources that are simple and encourage joint movement, in a community that does not expect to be active in old age;
- (6) **“Viva Operetta”** will bring together lonely people to learn music and travel to performances in town, with bargain tickets and organised transport, thanks to community contributions.
- (7) **“Chess Competition”** for older men in Armenia is expected to have great support and interest.

Once the first steps are taken, further programmes will follow, and everyone involved gains greater confidence and know-how. **All were trained with Guild support** and made realistic plans and accountable budgets. Every idea was shared and strengthened by group questions and proposals.

Carol Wicker of North Berwick came as a resource person and shared many of the games, materials and resources she uses in her day centre, including colourful parachutes that were shown at a gathering in Tirgu Mures – and more are ordered. Smiling faces lifted and lowered the parachute together, exercising while enjoying themselves unexpectedly.

### **“Children – not for Sale!**

This is the next event that former participants in Lydia training programmes are organising. Some of you were present when two of the planning group were in Scotland, speaking to groups and Guild project coordinators in April. Tamara from Moldova and Nata from Belarus have involved other colleagues in Minsk and Chisinau, who are similarly involved in work with endangered children. The programme is planned to organise a better system of the prevention of child trafficking. They will train people to know the real vulnerability of the young in their communities, and encourage co-operation for the joint prevention of increased trafficking and exploitation of young children. By creating a cooperative programme, it will make trafficking much harder. Boys need care and concerned community members, so that they are not easily tempted east to Russia or to Arab Emirates. Young boys are in increasing danger of trafficking.

In preparation for the international event, now planned for February 2009, roundtables or seminars are being held; all information will be brought to the table for a better understanding of local problems. Increased awareness and cooperation can help to prevent this abuse. Children are in greater danger when financing from other sources is in difficulty – as it is now. As Tamara and Nata pointed out, those criminals which benefit from trafficking are always several steps ahead of the rest of the population. Now that we have become alerted to the trafficking of young women to Western countries, younger children and boys are being used and exploited and taken across easier borders to the East. Participants will join the programme from Armenia, Belarus, Moldova, Romania, Russia and Ukraine, all countries affected by trafficking and exploitation.

*Tamara and Nata speaking to Guild women in Aberdeen.*

**‘Children on the Edge’** offers educational help for children unable to attend school or training and it continues in Moscow, Kiev, and Transylvania. In Latvia help is needed for formerly fostered youths who are not trained to run the farmlands of ‘Mercy House’. Some have a small garden and milk two cows, but lack skills or tools to contribute to the self-sufficient life of the ‘Mercy House’ community. We seek short term trainers in agriculture who could help improve the farm work, in order to make the farms become viable.

You may remember that a year ago, in **Georgia**, a summer camp for street children and children from very poor families was funded by the Guild. Thank you cards of children holding red poppies and wild flowers were given to Guilds. Suddenly Tbilisi partners are overwhelmed by the influx of homeless refugees from war zones, especially women and children without clothing or household goods. This has delayed further steps for children living in the streets because of extreme poverty and the inability of rural families to support them. The Lydia Project friends shared what they could from their own homes, which has delayed further steps for children living in the streets because of extreme poverty and the inability of rural families to support them. We created a special fund and sent the first contributions and hope to continue. Contributions are welcome to help Georgian refugees.

**Summer School for Community Facilitators** is en route for summer 2009 using new Eastern expertise.