

# Education Project Newsletter

## Spring-Summer 2020



We are in the midst of an extraordinary time as the COVID-19 virus affects all parts of the world and all aspects of life, and in such times, we ask for your continued prayers and support for those in the Smiles Team, working on the front-line in Romania.

At this time, we must put our trust in the Lord. He is at the centre of it all, knows what tomorrow holds and is right by our side. The Smiles Foundation along with the staff and beneficiaries of all our projects, need your support. As the impact challenges each of us, please consider the needs we have, to maintain our support of those who need it most. We pray during these dark days, we can continue to be a light, giving hope to others.

Thank you for your love and support.

**Kevin D. Hoy - CEO The Smiles Foundation**

Our **Nursery in Tileagd** is a very important option for many families of the community, not only Roma, but Romanians too.



We have three groups with children from 3 to 6 years old, for a total of 40 children.

They all come with great joy every morning, knowing they are loved and cared for and they all see the nursery as a place where they come to meet with their enlarged family, all the children feeling they are just like brothers and sisters to each other. The teachers make sure they all feel comfortable, appreciated and encouraged, and this is something these children really need!

We ourselves as workers are encouraged and pleased to see the progress these kids make. They have a good start in life and we are all happy to be part of this, knowing the effects on long term are wonderful and nothing else could replace this. We are blessed to be part of it!

Not all is clear and easy all the time of course. We still need to fight sometimes with the little understanding some parents have about the importance of education. We still need to convince them to send children to the programme... These are cultural difficulties that we need to face working with Roma families.

Thank you for being a supporter of Tileagd Nursery and we hope that you'll continue to pray and to be an encouragement for us all!



*"The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith." 1 Timothy 1:5*



This is our 2020 motto for **Gepiu Community Centre**. Even if we are passing through difficult times these days, we started 2020 very optimistic, and God's love spread all over the centre and its beneficiaries.

The kids always enjoy the games, crafts and all the other activities that we do

at the centre, especially the one's for celebrating the Mothers Day. Because of the current world events, we did not succeed in putting together a proper presentation for mothers, but we still did something special for them: special flower pots.

The moment was a little bit more difficult for Denis, one of the Gepiu kids who was abandoned by his mother and raised by his grandmother. Each time when we prepare something for the parents, I am concerned with his reaction to what the others kids might say and the hardest thing is talking with him in moments like that. But each time God arranged things in such a way that Denis felt surrounded with His love, and to us He gave wisdom on how to handle everything.

For a few days we had some friends from United States who had some sessions with the kids on issues of Public Health and other similar themes. Those were very useful things for teenagers to

learn - respect, acceptance and care for themselves and those around them! Spread love! So, this is our encouragement for you too, our supporters: Spread the love through prayers and by supporting our work in Gepiu and overall across Smiles projects! Thank you for being good friends and for your encouragements! God bless!





**Rapa Community** continues to be both challenging and rewarding to work with. People in Rapa are always surprising, with good and with not so good. But we continue to serve there and to encourage the progress. Sometimes we are more hopeful, other times we just need to admit there is a long way to still go in seeing real improvements.

Children on the other hand are as keen as always to participate to our programmes. The afterschool we do in the community is a great

success, they are present each time and ready to learn something new. The problem is that in regular school they are not so interested, because the teachers did not yet find a good way to get them involved. For most of the time, they are left in a corner or even encouraged to leave the school under various pretexts - like being sick - simply because teachers prefer to have a quieter class and be left with only those children that are easy to work with - Gypsies are rarely in that category.

So, our job is even more difficult in trying to work with the community. We encourage parents to find jobs and to keep them. We did some research ourselves to find some appropriate options and some of them gave it a go. Unfortunately, with most it does not get beyond being 'a try', but we need to keep at it, stay optimistic and maybe one day we'll see a better response.

We also encourage families to do the best they can in everything. We want them to understand they need to become more able to deal with life day by day and not always wait for us to do it for them.

Please continue to pray and to support this work, as they still need us, for a while.



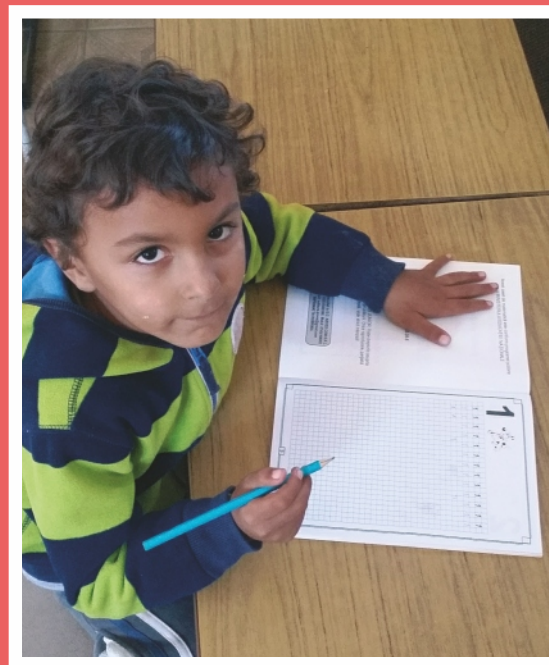
Under the Educational Project we also have the special After-school Programme for children of **Rapa Community**. The work was started three years ago and we were very determined, right from the beginning, to make a significant change, something that was desperately needed.

The educational level was so low with these kids that we felt some urgent action was needed. That was what we did and the results were visible after a short while. They are smart children, but their educational needs are ignored consistently by their parents, as well as their teachers in the State school.

This season we are once again trying to do something for Rapa kids. We have about 13 of them who are enrolled with the school and while the older ones are doing a little bit better, the youngest are still very much learning only the basics of handwriting and maths.

We are also trying to help the families as a whole, to understand the importance of moral, cultural and social knowledge, so that in the future they will have a better life and perspective. We are very happy to see children being very interested and receptive to this, so we took several opportunities to teach them also this type of lesson, which are very important for their overall development.

As we go through a difficult period these days, when schools are still closed and education suspended, we need your support in prayer and as possible also financially, because we want to continue providing services to these little ones in Rapa. There are some good plans for the future, but they all depend on the human and financial resources being secured.



## Educational Project Newsletter

*Thank you for being a supporter of the Educational Project. Your support is very important and enables us to*

*continue our programmes that will change destinies in the years to come! Your support provides the help that is essential in trying to educate children from difficult backgrounds. Thank you!*

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