

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: November 9, 2009



My name is Florica. I am bright. I enjoy lots of activities. I like to sing and run in the fields near my house. I am like most any kid anywhere in the world except I am Roma. You may know me as Gypsy. Because I am Roma, the teachers in my school rarely give me any help when I don't understand something. My parents cannot help me at home since they do not read or write. Many of my friends no longer attend school. Te rog ajuta-mă învețe.

PROBLEM: According to the ministries of education in Romania and Bulgaria, school dropout rates have tripled since the late 1990s among some vulnerable social categories, such as children from rural areas, from poor families in the cities, and Roma kids. Most Roma children drop out of school to face a life of poverty and ignorance. It repeats itself over and over again throughout Eastern Europe.

SOLUTION: With minimal financial outlay, your church can partner with others to help alleviate this cycle by implementing a tutorial program in rural communities of Romania.

The Homework Project, begun in 2004 by the members of Epiphany United Church of Christ in Chicago, seeks to address this problem. In two villages in Northeast Romania, near the Hungarian border, Epiphany UCC has established centers where young students may come after school for help with their homework. It is a place where they are given tutoring and encouraged to remain in school. They are fed a good meal – probably their only good meal of the day. They are given a warm coat to face a winter much like that of Chicago. Since the inception of these programs, Epiphany has reached an average of 40 to 50 students each year. The program runs between September and May to coincide with the local school calendar.

Epiphany is seeking “partners” so that the program may be expanded to reach children in neighboring villages. Your church may be in a position to coordinate and fund such a program alone or you may wish to join with other congregations or to sponsor such a program. Epiphany would like the opportunity to discuss this outreach. Members of our “mission team” would appreciate the opportunity to come and share details and answer your questions.

The budget amount to fund one program -teacher, textbooks and supplies, food, etc. -is approximately \$5,000 per year. We will share with you creative ways of raising the funds. While Epiphany UCC will assist with contacts and implementation, each sponsoring organization (s) will manage their individual programs.

Recently, when a new Superintendent for the local district announced in a faculty meeting that he planned to “close the program started by the Americans who are teaching district children.” A teacher, unknown to anyone connected with The Homework Project, stood and pleaded, “Sir, these children who attend this program are now my best students. They are prepared and attend better than other students. Please don't stop this.” We could have no better testimonial as to the impact of the program.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this outreach with members of your congregation. Please contact Keith Schwartz or Joseph Burt to request a visit about **THE HOMEWORK PROJECT**.

Keith Schwartz
(773) 296-2600 ext 201 (o)
keith.schwartz@hs2solutions.com

Joseph Burt
(312) 351-1415
jebchi@yahoo.com

EPIPHANY UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
2008 W. Bradley Place at Damen • Chicago, Illinois 60618 • 773-281-4144