

Frontline Bulgaria

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Newsletter 19



FRONTLINE

Promoting inclusion
... because 'Community Works'!

The Frontline Team of volunteers that visited Ruse in March included Mary Hill, Paul Bamlett, Monika Samuels, Paul Holgate, Dave Barry and Gill Soper

Paul and Dave (right) arrived safely in Ruse following a 1700 mile journey from Suffolk, UK, with a vanload of new and used medical and nursing equipment, children's special seating and other aids for daily living. They also collected several wheelchairs from Gorna Oryaovitsa, involving a further round trip of 120 miles. Assisted by Iliya, Samuel, Simeon and others from Friendship Church, everything was delivered to Ruse Hospital and to Baba Tonka house where the equipment was cleaned...special thanks to Kate Smith from Karina Foundation for her sterling efforts on this! The range of items generally available in Bulgaria is limited and imported equipment is very expensive. The equipment service is taking shape and a system has been set up so that the seating, wheelchairs and other items are now ready to be donated free to any individuals or agencies that need them.

Paul Bamlett, artistic director of Frontline's partner organisation 'Actability', ran drama sessions (right) in the Raliz and Caritas Day Centres, Petar Beron special school and Baba Tonka house, engaging children and young adults with disabilities in interactive drama workshops that were enjoyed by all. Paul also met the Director of Ruse Theatre which offers an ideal performance space for the finale of an inclusive community drama project that is now being planned by Actability and partner organisations. This innovative project will include young people with and without disabilities.

'Occupational Therapy...Transforming Lives' was the title of the Open Day presented by Ruse University in collaboration with Frontline. Invitations for the event, distributed by the course Director, Liliya Todorova, attracted around 150 visitors from the university, municipality, many NGO's and the media, including people from farther afield such as Sofia and Varna. Many people contributed to the huge success of the day, with particular thanks to Angie Fairbanks (OT) for the excellent visual displays (right)



There is a particular need for ongoing support for both the course and the OT profession as it gradually becomes established in Bulgaria. Liliya is drawing increasing support from overseas through OT student exchange programmes, including Emily, Rachel and Claire from York St John University (right), who are currently completing their final student placements in Ruse.



Monika Samuels, the Lead OT for learning disabilities in South Essex Partnership NHS Trust, has supported OT staff to join our Frontline teams many times over the years and, following this visit, hopes to continue to provide professional support, particularly for the newly qualified Bulgarian OT's, as they establish their role and develop their practice.



At Baba Tonka house (below, right) Friendship Church has already begun a social programme of stimulating activities that provides a lifeline for children and young people with disabilities and their families. Frontline is now working with Friendship, 'Foundation for Social Change and Inclusion' and 'Karina Foundation' to help develop this day service, using a community-building approach that will demonstrate equality and inclusion for all. We hope to offer some of the young people work opportunities. One idea is to create a café at Baba Tonka house to provide a welcoming and friendly environment for the local community. We plan eventually to include an Occupational Therapy graduate from Ruse University on the staff team, and other therapies and specialist services will also be provided to meet individual needs.



'THANK YOU' to everyone who has supported Frontline Bulgaria during the last year, through many expressions of goodwill, encouragement, prayer support, and financial and material donations including...



Friends of Bulgaria, Sawyers Church, Essex Equipment Service, Aid to Hospitals Worldwide, British Airways, P&O Ferries and many other friends and colleagues in the UK and Bulgaria.

For further information on Frontline's work in Brentwood or Bulgaria, please contact:-

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FRONTLINE enables and supports people with a learning disability and high support needs to live full and productive lives through their active inclusion, participation and contribution in the community

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