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change the world?*

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- directly participating in our projects as a part-time volunteer;
- donating needed materials or funds;
- supporting us through your prayers;
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Per un mondo migliore
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Dearest friends,

*The other day I happened upon a quote written by some-
one I greatly admired during my teenage years, and tried to
emulate: Albert Schweitzer, German medical missionary, the-
ologian and musician of the 19th century. I had read others
of his writings, most of all about his heroic service to the poor
in Africa, but this short phrase hit home: "At times our light
dims, but then the flame gets rekindled by another human
being. Each one of us owes the deepest gratitude to those who
have restored our light."*

*It probably happened to him too, in spite of the strength of
his ideals, that the flame at times weakened. It happens to
all of us, even the strongest. But how wonderful it is when
someone helps us rekindle that flame, restoring in us the en-
thusiasm, life and will to light other flames around us that
we see are weakening.*

*Thank you all, "rekindlers" of the flame, who volunteered
with us this year, or who we met during our numerous acti-
vities, to whom we dedicate this newsletter.*

With lots of love and gratitude,

Anna

*"Far away there in the sunshine are my highest aspirations.
I may not reach them but I can look up and see their beauty,
believe in them and try to follow them."
(Louisa May Alcott)*

*Superficial riches can only buy superficial objects. You
don't need money to buy what the human soul needs.
(Henry David Thoreau)*



...our association hosted 5 volunteer camps and 150 volunteers, young and old. Many people ask us, where do you host these camps, where do you put up all those groups? It's funny to see the looks on their faces, when we answer: right here, in our rented house.

While preparing a better place for the future, at the moment we keep going with what we have, fulfilling the requests of hundreds of young people who would like to experience volunteering, and living in a community, at least for a short time. Sure, it's uncomfortable for a few months (for us, permanent members and volunteers of "Per Un Mondo Migliore/ Za bolji svijet"), but the end result, the final prize of lives changed, as well as all the volunteer work projects we realize together, make every sacrifice well worth it.

Apart from those who participated in camps, we also worked with over 150 more youth, who didn't stay in our house for a period, but became a part of volunteer drives: mural-painting, "Free hugs" and Flash mob dancing.



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before



D. Michele, 30 (who recently became a priest): We found energy within, that filled our hearts, because we found out that with so little effort, one can make a difference, and that in giving there is more joy than in receiving. We saw the need, that even ahead of all material needs, there is a deeper need for human love, for the invisible, eternal values. And we can do what we can also in our surroundings, where we live. Let's act on the enthusiasm we caught.



after!

All in all, with the participation of the volunteers, during the summer months of 2012, we organized:

- 12 shows/clown therapy events** in
 - 3 Homes for the Elderly
 - 3 Hospitals 2 Centers for the Disabled

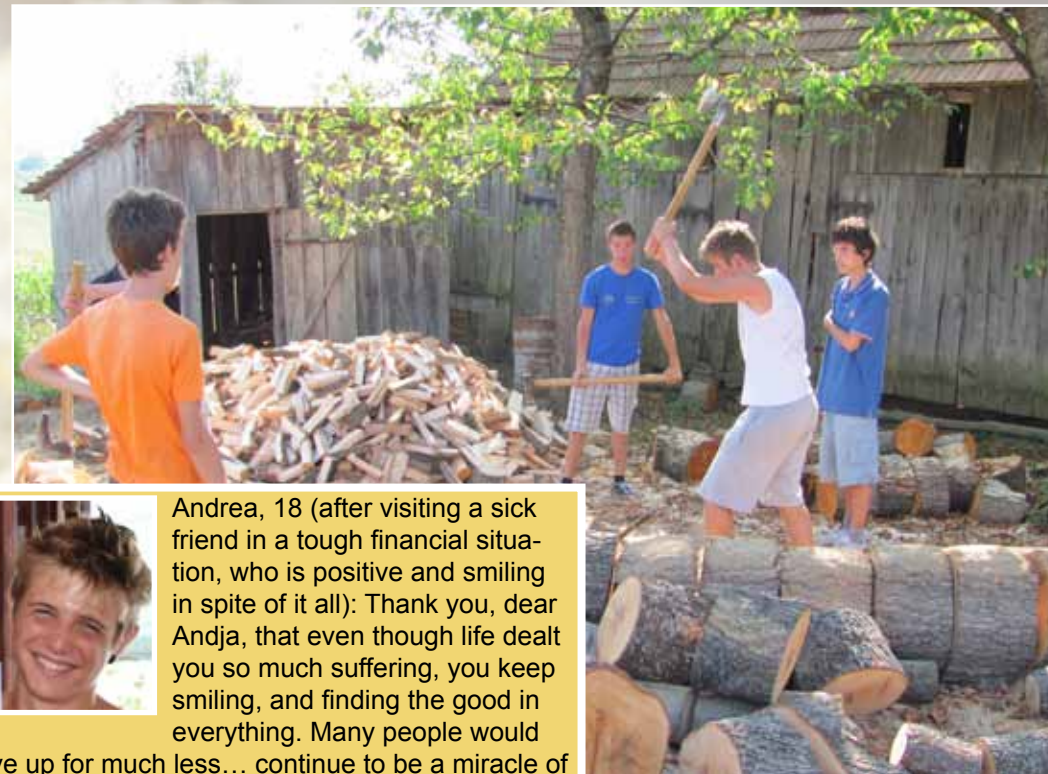
4 major mural projects, changing the face of the following institutions

- Kinder Garden "Maestral" and "Kvarner" in Rijeka
- Children's Home "Izvor", Selce
- Center for children with disability in Sarajevo

Other improvement work was done as well - painting, floor work, furniture move and makeovers in:

- Home for abandoned children "Ivana Brlic-Mazuranic", Lovran
- association "Koraci"

We also visited and distributed aid to over 30 needy families in Rijeka, Karlovac and Mostar.



Andrea, 18 (after visiting a sick friend in a tough financial situation, who is positive and smiling in spite of it all): Thank you, dear Andja, that even though life dealt you so much suffering, you keep smiling, and finding the good in everything. Many people would give up for much less... continue to be a miracle of life, and with your amazing strength, to share real joy with all of us. You're unique!



Maria, 21: I will add this experience to the many riches you shared with us during these years... I tuck them carefully away, in the most precious treasure chest of my heart! I thank all of you, such rare people in your special expertise... I will never stop thanking Heaven for having crossed our paths. Big hug!



Cristina, 16: I think this experience has really helped me to mature. Being able to help needy people and situations has given me immense joy. Yours is a great Motto: "If you want to be happy, make others happy". I hope to come again next year!



Laura, 17: Coming back to this place seems like returning to a world where I want to live every day. This time with you changed my life, and in part the way I think, and see the world around me. You taught me to value everything good, and to fight the pain, violence and injustice. Thank you!



Renata, 22: I wanted to tell you that this year, my experience in volunteering with you was the best ever. Thank you, because, as usual, you receive us with open arms, and organize an unforgettable week of volunteering, for us, and for those in need, in the situations where we help.

Our friendship is like a flower – starting out as a little bud, now it has grown and blossomed, bringing its petals fully to life. See you soon!

Our "Free hugs" events this summer were enriched by a new addition – "Flash Mob Dancing", or dancing with a group of young people in the center of town, and "Free hugging" as soon as the dance finished. Throughout the summer/autumn we organized 8 such events – in the center of Rijeka, Opatija, Sarajevo (BiH) and Verona (Italy). A total of over 300

young people were involved in dancing and hugging! You can catch a replay of some of those magic moments on YouTube, by typing "Flash Mob Dance Rijeka"! This positive energy changed the atmosphere of every town where the performance was held, and lifted the mood of many a passer-by and spectator.



New Volunteer Center...



So much happened over the past few months... the outside structure and roof erected, stairwells and inner walls completed, the facade partially done, and the electrical and plumbing systems finished...

A special thanks to all the volunteers who worked on it! Boris' team (1.) who built the structure, Hungarian Pal and Danci (2.) who directed the drywall work, Fabio, Sergio, Ezio and Adriano (3.) our electricians, and again Boris (4.) who installed the plumbing system.



In the summer of 2006, a group of Italian clowns came to experience volunteering at our center. This year, 2012, a few of them returned with their families and young children, for a "Family Clown Camp" – here are some impressions from one of the young mothers:

The Family Clown Camp



teering: of meeting new people, being thankful, getting together. What a joy to be able to pull out the magic wand, soap bubbles and magic tricks once again! But the greatest magic was getting to know the lives of people, sharing, laughing, admiring, having fun together. We didn't put up a great clown show; in fact, I was the one watching the show in the eyes of my children, who loved the atmosphere and felt great.

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Many years ago we came to this community as single young people, and this year, we rose to the challenge of returning as families with little children. We tried to give our children those same emotions we experienced while volun-

My message to other parents of young children: step out without fear, and do something for others together as a family. Most of the time it's us, parents, who think of so many complications; the children, instead, are great teachers of life: they're always ready to experience life through the eyes of love.

Silvia-clown Pistacchio

14 years ago I was invited to a farewell party a friend of mine was hosting. The NGO she had been working for was moving its headquarters to another location, and that evening they were saying "farewell" to a large number of friends and associates.

It was evening and, along with others, I headed down a steep driveway leading to a house surrounded by trees and vegetation. As we walked through the door we were kindly escorted to a large terrace, where drinks and snacks were served. I still remember the feeling of what I saw next: beneath me was the deep blue Adriatic sea surrounded by green hills, forming somewhat of a bay, islands in the distance, and a gorgeous sky. I think I remained still, almost paralyzed for a few moments, just looking and admiring such beauty that seemed to appear almost out of nowhere. I wasn't the only one. Most of the guests also took their time leaning against the railing of the terrace, and commenting on the view.

The party went well and it was an enjoyable evening for all. The day after I remember talking to a few people about "The View". At the time we were living in an apartment building on the other side of town - nothing similar there, to the view we had just seen.

Shortly afterwards, due to an unpredictable series of events, the house with the amazing view



became my house, and I still live in it (along with family and co-workers) to this day. During the course of these fourteen years, in that same house, we've hosted seminars, volunteer camps, gatherings of all kinds, and have received streams of visitors from the four corners of the earth. And, guess what? The first place they go to is the terrace, and there they stand in awe, not moving for a while. The same breathtaking view. Before going to bed at night and first thing in the morning, you see them sitting out there in silence, watching.

I wish I could say that I also do the same; but I must confess, I don't. The view outside our terrace has been part of our daily life for many years, and yes, I see, but don't appreciate it enough any more. I guess it's part of our human nature: it happens in relationships, with the material comforts we enjoy, and even in our spiritual life. We start taking things for granted and get used to their beauty or usefulness, and eventually go numb to them. That's why the Psalmist says: "Restore to me the joy of your salvation" (Psalms 51, 12).

How wonderful it would be if we could learn to look at things the way we did when we first discovered them! To treasure that freshness and sense of wonder as much as we can, while we still can!

Soon we'll be moving houses. And, guess what? I find myself spending more time on the balcony, just taking in the view...

One Unsung Hero

Andja was born in Prijedor, Bosnia, and in August 1995 fled to Vojnic, Croatia – like many others. Her husband, after witnessing atrocities of ethnic cleansing, was put away in a psychiatric institution and declared “schizophrenic” for life.

Already suffering from diabetes and a bad case of psoriasis at the time, Andja fought to provide for and raise her 3 little boys. She managed by working the land around the hut where she was living, and thanks to the aid of many humanitarian organizations. The first time we met was in May 2000, as we were one of the organizations going to Vojnic and the surroundings to distribute aid to needy families.

Since then we have visited often, in her hut/home, to bring aid, but mainly friendship and understanding. We



thought, it must not be easy, to raise 3 boys alone, especially in those conditions. In spite of it all, Andja received us always with a smile, and was cheerful; so much so that after a while we started bringing friends suffering from sadness and depression, to her home. As soon as they met her, they felt much better!

Like any good Bosnian, in due time Andja decided there must be a way she could return the help received, so during each visit she prepared zucchini, potatoes and other vegetables from her garden, to give “for the com-

munity”. They were gifts from her heart, and helped her feel useful and like one of us.

In 2005, the government finally gave her family a house to live in. Though unfinished, the house was a great step upward from the shack they’d lived in for years. One of our groups of Italian volunteers helped to dig a canal and connect the water. It seemed like the beginning of a better life for Andja... and with how much enthusiasm she dug the land... but her disease progressed until she lost her sight in one eye. The year after, she also lost sight in the other. “*I would give my legs in exchange for*



even one eye”, she would say.

Between 2005 and 2012, Andja was urgently taken to the hospital a few times, with little hope to remain alive. But her joy and zest for life won the battle, and though she lost both legs, as we visited her with different volunteers, she still sang with all her heart from her wheelchair, and would have danced if she were able. As one 17-year-old boy put it, “*She sees her cup half-full, even when it’s practically empty*”, and lives to teach us that happiness rarely depends on circumstances; but rather, on our attitude.

News and Projects

Matt and Melissa from Germany, and their 6 children, lived in Sierra Leone and other African countries for 10 years, doing humanitarian work there at the cost of great personal sacrifice. Three of their children were even born in Africa! This year, the family came to our community for a joint project called "Sponsor a book". Together, we visited 3 retirement homes, 1 home for mothers and children, and 1 psychiatric hospital, where the children performed, and the family donated inspirational books for the beneficiaries/patients.

Sept. 16th was a great day in Verona: in light of the Volunteer Festival, where our association had a stand, over 60 young people (summer camp attendees) and many other friends joined us in changing the atmosphere with free hugs and dancing!

International Days for Peace and Non-violence: on Sept. 21st, and October 2nd, 120 young people from Rijeka helped us make the days memorable for our local community. Along with "Free hugs" and Flash mob dancing of more than 100 youth from 3 high schools, we painted a big canvas entitled "What everybody needs is love" in the center of the town.

On Oct. 1st, the beneficiaries of Dom Turnic joined us in our new center (still under construction, but with a pizza oven on the property!), for pizza and fun activities, together with Italian friends from association "Paolo con noi".

"A heart that loves is always young" is a project sponsored by CSV (Center of volunteer service) in Verona - and consists of producing a documentary in honor of the "European year for active aging and solidarity between generations". The video will capture members of the older generation who are actively involved in volunteering, and thus are living a full life in their golden years.

Along with all current activities, we are preparing for Christmas, which in our community starts in October; and a winter volunteer camp, after the Christmas season!

Keep in touch, dear friends, and may God bless you!



THANK YOU

In this number, we would like to express our special gratitude to two Croatian companies, which donated materials and work to the construction of our new volunteer

center: **MODERN LINE d.o.o.** – Klana, and **FULL BLIND d.o.o.** – Kukuljanovo.

We would also like to thank **Boris Slišković and his company VEGRA d.o.o.**, for the many hours they have spent counseling and giving attention to our center.