

Frontline Bulgaria

OCTOBER 2011 Newsletter 20



News Update...following the visit of Mary Hill and Gill Soper to Ruse and Sofia 15th-22nd October 2011

We first visited **Baba Tonka house** in Ruse in 2008 when it was semi-derelict and in need of complete renovation. This was completed in 2010 under the 'Beautiful Bulgaria' programme in partnership with Karina Association. Here, during the last year, **Friendship Church** has been providing a warm and welcoming environment where young people with learning disabilities and their families can meet and enjoy social, recreational and educational activities.

This summer, the rear of the house became a '**House of Opportunity**', set up by FSCI (Trussell Trust) to provide 2 years of residential support for young adults after leaving state care. Our visit coincided with the official opening of the home on 18th October and we were delighted to meet the home's first residents Darin, Vasko, Ferdane and Krasimir who are supported by a team of staff and volunteers from Friendship Church, enabling them to gain skills for independent living and employment. We experienced the warmth of their hospitality first hand when they invited us to share a delicious lunch they prepared before our departure.

Frontline's latest shipments of children's rehab equipment had already reached their destination in the attic at Baba Tonka house before we arrived, thanks to much help from Friendship Church who had organised transport from Sofia and the manpower to shift the considerable loads.

We had barely sorted the equipment before staff from various services and institutions, and families with their children, began arriving from as far away as Sofia and Varna, hoping to find walking aids, standing frames, special seating etc. We were particularly touched by the dedication of parents who were dealing with overwhelming needs and glad that, for most children, we were able to offer appropriate equipment.



However equipment is only useful if it helps to remove barriers to social inclusion and enables children (and adults) with disabilities to do what *they* need and want to do...where, when and with whom they wish.

Occupational Therapy graduates from **Ruse University** are well-placed to provide holistic OT assessments and programmes, and to train and advise users, staff and carers in the safe and effective use of any aids and equipment that may be needed to achieve this. Frontline is currently seeking funding for UK /European Occupational Therapists to work in Ruse whilst sharing their skills and experience with their Bulgarian colleagues.

We congratulate Liliya Todorova (Professor at Ruse University) who formed the **Association of Bulgarian Occupational Therapists** that was registered in April 2011 and is committed to establishing the OT profession in Bulgaria!

We also called in to see the children in the two small group homes where Frontline has provided wheelchairs through **Motivation Romania**. Again Motivation had done an excellent job in skilfully assessing, fitting and adapting wheelchairs to meet each individual's needs.

Before returning home via Sofia, we had useful meetings with contacts from the British Embassy and LUMOS, looking at wider issues relating to human rights and deinstitutionalisation, and the benefits of working within the political structures and with other NGO's that share a similar commitment and ethos.



'THANK YOU' to everyone who has supported 'Frontline Bulgaria' during the last 6 months, through many expressions of goodwill, financial and material donations, practical help, prayer support and encouragement including...

Friends of Bulgaria + PhysioNet + Aid to Hospitals Worldwide + G&S Smirthwaite Ltd + Delamode Braintree + Motivation Romania + Friendship Church + Sawyers Church + New Church Suffolk + York St. John University + Ruse University + FSCI + Karina Assoc....and many other friends and colleagues in the UK and Bulgaria.

For further information on Frontline's work in Brentwood and Bulgaria, please go to:-

www.frontlinepartnership.org

<https://www.facebook.com/home.php#!/pages/Frontline/230118597029618>

<https://www.facebook.com/home.php#!/groups/168403349855340>

Or contact:-

Mary Hill mary@frontlinepartnership.org or Gill Soper thesopers@thesopers.wanadoo.co.uk

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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