



# Volunteering in Romania:

your chance to help small communities grow!

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# Goals

- Focus on small/independent initiatives.
- Target an audience of young college students/graduates -> energy & optimism.
- Pose a challenge: **summer volunteering trip.**
- Tailoring projects to fit community's needs.
- Convince you that volunteering **IS** worth doing and **CAN** make a difference!

# Romanian NGOs – past and present

- **Recent Past:** state-governed society, no place for NGOs; state knows better!
- **Honourable Past:** private charities & cultural patronage  
*Elena Cuza, Elena Bibescu, Alexandrina Cantacuzino, Aretia Tatarescu, Royal House of Romania; ♀ power.*
- **Post '89:** groups tackling corruption, social injustice, child/family welfare, urbanism, cultural preservation.



Deal with public apathy &  
lack of support!



# Volunteering Mentality

- Old traditions: **Scouts** 1914 – 37.
- Totalitarian regimes: Strajeri, Pionieri, Union of Communist Youth.
- Communism brought volunteering efforts to derision; “**Munca Patriotica**” = forced service.
- Today’s attitude: “*Don’t want to be a loser who works for nothing!*”
- Need **YOUR** enthusiasm!



# A Success Story

- **Ghencea Community Center:** partnership Sf. Stefan Association & Princess Margareta of Romania Foundation
- Projects aimed at improving the life conditions of children, the elderly and families at risk.



Kids sell their own artwork!



# Bring a Fresh Mind

- Put your American education to use: the advantages of a liberal arts curriculum.
- Volunteered in the U.S.? Why not trying in Romania? -> **real challenge**.
- You have the courage & imagination: share it with others!
- You have the wings. Just start to fly!
- The **LITTLE** you can offer means a whole **LOT** to the ones you help.



# Summer Project @ Rosia Montana

- Student-run volunteering trip: 17-26 August 2008
- Grass-roots project in support of sustainable development of an old mining village
- Partner with local NGOs: *Alburnus Maior*, *Greenpeace*, *Floarea de Colt*, *FPMR*
- Don't oppose development per se, but focus on **preservation** and responsible business.
- LEARN what the locals need and how they can be helped.

# The Impact of the Mining Project

- Gold mined since ancient times.
- Au, Ag still dispersed in microscopic quantities.
- Proposal initiated by Gabriel Resources, a Canadian mining corporation, to create Europe's largest open cast gold mine.
- Exposure to hazardous cyanide compounds, to separate Au & Ag from the rock, by blasting and pulverizing the landscape.
- 15-20 year project; then what?





# Preserve and Respect

- What happens to the environment? Can an ecological disaster be prevented? (Baia-Mare 2000)
- How can archeological treasures be “reconstituted” or relocated?
- Why has there been no interest in supporting local tourism? (Note: January 2008, change of status)



Plan: Help locals market the natural and historical treasures of the place & transform the village into a tourist destination.



# Challenges

- Get people realize the long-term dangers.
- Make use of local potential, though many resources have been drawn towards the mining project.
- Local administration = largely in favor of mining.
- Aggressive media campaign to market an “environmentally conscious” investor.

How to convince people to simply give up the promise of money and jobs?

Offer sustainable, environmentally friendly alternatives like tourism, traditional crafts, organic agriculture.



# Listen and Understand

- Resist the temptation of forcing a made-up development plan upon the locals.
- **Listen** to their concerns and tailor a program that solves their longer-term needs!
- Start with **simple ideas**, like putting back in shape the local museum, convince regional tourism agents to invest in the area, encourage people to open bed & breakfasts.
- Identify key areas that need immediate help.



Restore HOPE in a  
better, safer future!



# Potential Supporters

- *Alburnus Maior*: association of villagers who won't give up their homes to the mining company.
- *Greenpeace* Romania & Hungary
- Hon. *Dan Dimancescu & IntBau*: traditional masonry course in Rosia Montana, May 2008.
- *Princess Margareta of Romania Foundation*
- *Floarea de Colt*: supporting local tourism.
- *Codruta Nedelcu & co*: responsible archeological research.

All of them care about long-term, sustainable development!

# Be Part of the Solution

- Help strengthen communities.
- Start to care: get informed!
- *“If you’re not part of the solution, you may be part of the problem!”*
- Development from bottom up: contribute with your own ideas of volunteering projects.
- More info at [www.princeton.edu/~rssa](http://www.princeton.edu/~rssa)





# Own Experience



- Volunteers for Science in Nashville, TN (2002)
- Non-violent conflict resolution in Detroit, MI (2003)
- Ghencea Community Center in Bucharest, RO (2006)