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School's out for summer



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SUPPORT PLEDGED



BULGARIA

But not for good! The Literacy Program at Sofia Baptist Church wrapped up the 2016-17 school year in mid-June with a week of fun activities. One day was a time for the children to demonstrate the skills they had learned during the year. They solved math problems and Bulgarian language grammar and spelling questions on the whiteboards in front of an eager audience of guests from Western Europe and the church staff. We had a special lunch of pizza and chocolate torte, and the children who came regularly received their certificates of completion for the year and a small gift.

The following day we took an outing to the Bulgarian National History Museum, located in a park area just outside the city. The kids saw some beautiful artifacts from Bulgaria's ancient past and from more recent history of the country. They especially enjoyed the interactive old-time classroom, where students sat on long wooden benches with trays built into them.

The trays were filled with sand and the children used to sand to practice writing because there was no paper. The teacher sat on a platform up front. Very much like the American one-room schoolhouse, except for the small, sunken "cage" on the platform next to the teacher's desk where children who misbehaved were enclosed. Some of the kids wanted to try it out, and decided that it was not a place they would want to spend any amount of time!

Rest assured that this is not the practice in Bulgarian schools today! After a picnic in the park surrounding the museum, we came back to the church. The Literacy Program will start up again in mid-September, when Bulgarian schools begin again.

A few highlights from this year's Literacy class:

The donation by the Anglo-American School of Sofia of 10 refurbished laptops to the Literacy Program.

Tasting American Thanksgiving foods. Some liked sweet potatoes, cranberry relish, mashed potatoes and gravy, and apple pie. Some didn't care for it so much!

Some good conversations and questions about the Bible stories we read each time we meet.

Some prayers offered by the children revealing some very specific needs and concerns they have in their lives. They are worried about their parents having jobs and making a living, about relatives who are ill or have passed away, about their siblings. "K" told us one day that there must not be a God. When we asked her why she said this, she told us that she prays but God has never answered one of her prayers, so God must not exist, or if he does, he does not care about her life. This led to a good discussion about why we pray.

The Bible story about Pentecost led to a great discussion about the Holy Spirit and the Trinity. This is a difficult concept for many, and especially these children. The teacher did a good job explaining it through a computer presentation she had made for the children in Sunday School, showing God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit as three separate pieces which together fit together as one.

Coffeology

The work continues on the café, with the majority of the interior work now completed. Hopefully our next newsletter will include news on the grand opening celebrations!

We will install the espresso machine and other coffee equipment sometime next week. After the installation, we can start the process of getting our food service license. Would you

please pray with us for just the right employees? We need at least two employees and have one in mind, but she cannot start until mid-September and we hope to be open before then.

Greenhouses in the village

We have started a new project in one of the villages in northern Bulgaria where we have done previous work. At the request of one of the leaders we have helped with the installation of two greenhouses, where they are raising tomatoes, cucumbers and peppers. Their plan is for the money raised through the sale of the produce to go to help purchase school supplies for the youth who work in the greenhouses. We are hoping that this project will encourage the youth to stay in school.

We were able to visit the area a couple of weeks ago, and the plants were going strong, with lots of tomatoes and a few really large ones! They are currently selling the tomatoes and the money is being set aside to be used in September when school begins.

Prayer Requests:

- That the children from the literacy program will have a fun, safe summer and come back ready to start the new year in September.
- For the youth in the villages as it is difficult for them to remain in school. Pray they will continue with their education and finish high school.
- For the greenhouses, that the crops will be abundant and return a good price so there will be enough funds to purchase the necessary supplies and the program can continue in the upcoming years.
- For Coffeology as we continue through the process of getting the finishing work done and the final permits.
- That just the right employees can be found who will serve the cafe well.