

For Immediate Release

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Caring in the Midst of the Recession: “Hometown Girl” Travels to Romania to Help Children

St. Paul, MN (Aug. 25) - When you reduce life to the basics, humans don't need much to survive – just food, clothing, shelter and, most importantly, a warm smile and gentle touch. Yet in the midst of a worldwide recession, these necessities are beyond the grasp of too many impoverished children. One local student initiated a response.

Undaunted by a sour economy, Glendale resident **Abigail Love** travelled this summer to Romania through Global Volunteers, a nonprofit, nonsectarian international development assistance organization to care for disabled and abandoned babies and toddlers.

The deaf education and elementary education student at Eastern Kentucky University cared for children under age 3 at the Tutova Failure-to-Thrive Clinic near Barlad, where the bond she formed with the children enlightened her plans for her professional life. “When I went to Romania, I knew I wanted to spend my life working with children. However, my experience there gave me the confidence I needed to push myself in the field,” Love said. “It was always in me, but Romania really brought it out.”

Many of the children in Tutova's clinic arrive shortly after birth, underweight and abandoned. The clinic staff, with the year-around assistance of volunteers, nurtures them back to health and cares for them for about a year, or until they can be reunited with their families. Unfortunately, in 25 percent of the cases, the parents never return.

Love and her team mates provided a variety of care for the infants and toddlers - feeding, teaching, diapering and giving them the stimulation, love, and nurturing that they need. Because Global Volunteers sends 16 three-week teams of volunteers to Tutova clinic every year, each volunteer's contribution is matched over and over again throughout the children's early years so that they receive nearly constant attention and care.

In its 25th year, St. Paul, MN-based Global Volunteers, and NGO in consultative status with the UN, pioneered short-term, community-driven service opportunities (“volunteer vacations”) in 1984. Working in 21 countries on five continents, the organization's mission is to wage peace and promote justice through mutual international understanding. “I want to get out and volunteer more now,” Love said, reflecting on the organization's goal. “I've always loved giving, but I think I've been lost in the hustle of college life. This was a wake-up call: that life is truly lived only when one is giving.”

Love said no special skills are necessary to join most Global Volunteers service programs – only a curiosity about the world, a desire to be of service, and a high degree of flexibility. Work projects are determined by the host communities, directed by local leaders, and generally focus on children. The four principal projects are: 1) caring for at-risk children, 2) teaching conversational English, 3) building, painting and renovating community buildings and 4) providing health care.

Love said her other summer plans seemed “meaningless” when she reflected on what her team was able to accomplish with the babies and toddlers in Tutova.

The service program was filled with full days of work, Love said, but the team also spent some time enjoying team-building exercises and local excursions. In addition to exploring the local culture and the meaningful service the team provided, many of the volunteers felt that they gained new perspectives of daily life in the European Union.

Global Volunteers measures its success against the United Nations Millennium Development Goals that address the serious consequences of poverty and improve the standard of living for millions of people. In Romania, volunteers contribute to these goals by helping to reduce child mortality and achieve educational milestones.

“Global Volunteers invites people of all ages and backgrounds to serve in this unique way – to give back and make a genuine difference by working with and learning from and about local people in their community,” said co-founder and CEO Michele Gran. “This is Travel that Feeds the Soul®.”

To join a team, call 800-487-1074 today or visit the Global Volunteers website at www.globalvolunteers.org. Service program fees are tax-deductible for U.S. citizens. Airfare and visas are extra.

