

10th Anniversary Charity Bike Ride to Support a Better Future for Romanian Children

10th anniversary charity bike ride to support a better future for Romanian children encourages compassion and is a timely antidote to xenophobia in UK and Europe.

Blythswood Care/Suits on Bikes, Deephaven & London, UK (FPRC) June 3, 2013 -- At a time when increasingly vocal elements of the UK and European media and political establishment are fuelling growing public concerns regarding Romanian and East European migration, a gruelling 350km Transylvania bike ride on the 6th-9th of June by charity fundraisers, Suits on Bikes on behalf of Scottish charity Blythswood Care, will refocus attention on the desperate need of children in eastern Europe and the inspiring achievements of the 'lost' children who have received the charity's educational resources and support to achieve a brighter and happier future. The ride represents the 10th anniversary of the Suits on Bikes ride for the Talita Kum Project. Talita Kum means 'get up little girl'. Suits on Bikes founded in 2003 by a British businessman, vicar and a civil servant, was started with a simple and heartfelt inspiration: 'Join us and let's get up from our office chairs and ride bicycles to help Romanian children in desperate need, help themselves and their families with a better future'. Since the first ride in Romania in 2003, men and women of all ages and from all walks of life and countries have cared enough to commit their time and resources to compassionate action.

The Talita Kum Project is administered by Scottish-based charity Blythswood Care and run in Romania by Adrian and Ritta Popa. The scheme seeks to support and cater for underprivileged local children who are provided with two nutritious meals a day, showers and help with homework. Suits on Bikes now focuses on the Talita Kum 2 project which is an afterschool programme for children aged 10-15 from poor homes in Jimbolia and surrounding area. It aims to support them on a daily basis during school and at same time contribute to the prevention of premature marriage, juvenile delinquency and unregistered child work. While the programme remains openly multiethnic, about half of the children come from Roma backgrounds. Having successfully raised funds to build a new school and coordinate the European Regional Development Fund, annual operating costs are estimated to about EUR 50,000 per annum and the children will receive two meals a day, help with homework, music tuition and training in everything from IT to puppet theatre. A good example is nine year old Bianca who has caught up on a year of early education in just two months at Talita Kum, Blythswood Care's after-school programme in Jimbolia, Romania. Abandoned by her parents who emigrated, Bianca and her brother receive no visits, phone calls or financial support from them. Their grandmother provides for them as best she can while caring for their grandfather who has had both legs amputated.

Bianca's grandparents have always encouraged her to go to school but were unable to give her any help with homework. No one in her immediate family can read or write. So it was little surprise that she made no progress in her first year of formal education. But since this summer, when she was referred to Blythswood by her school, she has done well. Talita Kum teacher Brigitte has given Bianca one-to-one tuition, enabling her to pick up skills she should have acquired in year one while keeping up with tasks for year two. For children like Bianca, Talita Kum brings social and nutritional benefits too. At first Bianca could barely eat half of the midday meal and refused to take a weekly shower. Now she eats well, using a knife and fork, and has become used to the idea of keeping clean. 'After only two months, Bianca is already back on track,' says Talita Kum director Adrian

Popa. 'She is more ready to interact with adults and with other children and loves craft work and games. 'She has not missed a day.' 'I feel privileged to cycle alongside a group of ordinary and extraordinary people committed to raising support for vulnerable children – affording them the opportunity to reach their potential through this exciting project,' said James Campbell, Chief Executive of Blythswood Care.

About Blythswood Care

Since 1966, Blythswood Care has combined a charitable message with practical help for those in need. Whether through filled shoeboxes at Christmas, relief and development aid or social projects for young and old, Blythswood brings hope to thousands in Europe, Africa and Asia. Blythswood is committed to long-term care projects in Romania, enabling disadvantaged children and young people fulfill their potential. A founding member of Global Hand, Blythswood cooperates with likeminded charities around the world, supporting the work of local care professionals who best know the needs of their communities. For every £1 donated, Blythswood delivers more than £5 worth of aid. For every employee, Blythswood has more than 10 volunteers. With the support of ordinary and extraordinary people, Blythswood provides Christian care for body and soul.

www.blythswood.org/index.php?id=85

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