

BLYTHSWOOD NEWS



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Elpis gives a good beginning



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Adult literacy helps next generation



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One volume reaches thousands



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Enabling an abandoned child to fulfil her potential



TK2 BOOSTS CONFIDENCE OF RURAL TEENS

Ramona as Esther: TK2 helped her to overcome shyness and to finish secondary school

A girl who was helped by Blythswood to complete three years of secondary education has now moved on to a vocational course at high school.

Ramona who is now 15 joined TK2 in 2013 when she was in her sixth grade at school. Like many children from outlying rural villages in Romania, she was at an educational disadvantage. She was a shy girl, living with her grandmother on a low income and without anyone at home to help and encourage her in her studies.

But at Blythswood's after-school programme for young

people of secondary school age, there were teachers to give her vital extra tuition, helping her with her homework and school projects.

As a result, Ramona was able to finish secondary school without falling behind with any of her subjects and to pass her exams. Now she is training in leather and textiles, which should help her find work in local manufacturing industry.

"Young people from low-income families in the villages can sometimes suffer from an inferiority complex," says Adrian Popa, who directs Blythswood's work in the Banat region of Romania.

"At TK2 Ramona discovered a gift for writing. She produced the script for our musical show Esther and went on to take the lead role. The acting helped her to overcome her shyness and also stirred her interest in creative writing."

Now, as well as following her vocational course at high school, Ramona visits Talita Kum once a week as a volunteer, to help younger children with homework.



Give a child an education is one of many ideas in Blythswood's Gift Catalogue which let you share the joy of helping someone in need. Go to blythswood.org/gifts or call 01349 830777



Edilene runs her business from home

Training helps widow provide for grandchildren

A sixty-year-old widow in Zimbabwe is able to provide for her four grandchildren thanks to training she received from a project supported by Blythswood Care.

Having completed an eight-month training programme in garment making at Harare Shelter, Edilene makes church uniforms and clothing for boys and girls from her home in Epworth. Sometimes instead of selling them for money she exchanges the finished garments for maize to help feed her family.

Her husband, on whom the household depended, died in 2009 and her daughter has never taken responsibility for the children who have different fathers. Although she suffers from high blood pressure that did not prevent Edilene from taking first prize in gardening and nutrition during her time on the training programme.

Stephen Damuputirai, director of Harare Shelter, says, "Edilene worked hard and impressed us all. She is the oldest person to have completed our programme."

Eric is a pupil at Meir Pamoja Academy near Kisumu, Kenya. There he enjoys opportunities to learn that would otherwise be denied to him as the child from a low-income family.

His father does odd jobs as a carpenter when he can, but work is intermittent and consequently he struggles to provide for his five children.

Eric is shy with visitors – especially those who do not understand the Luo language – but he is popular with his classmates and shares their passion for football.

Without support from Blythswood, it is possible that Eric might attend a government school which has as many as 65 or 70 children in a class. But it is much more likely he would not be in school at all.

Blythswood sponsors a daily meal for all the children at the Pamoja school, making a critical contribution to the education of vulnerable children like Eric. School manager Millicent Ojuki says: "Blythswood has really helped Eric. Many families here go without food and there is no way these children could learn on an empty stomach."

Children from the poorest families have their fees sponsored, some through Blythswood and some through other charities.

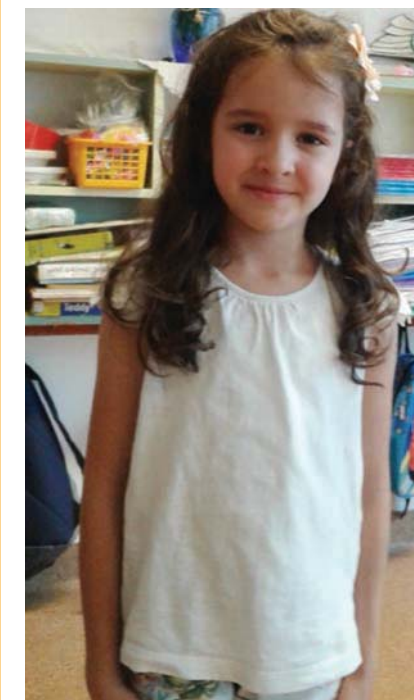
MEAL GIVES ENERGY TO PLAY AND LEARN



Eric enjoys a cooked meal every school day



Passionate about football: a meal provided by Blythswood gives children like Eric energy to play and learn



Having benefited from subsidised places at Elpis Kindergarten, Ruth's older siblings have all gone on to do well at school

ELPIS GIVES A GOOD BEGINNING

When Ruth was enrolled in Elpis Kindergarten last autumn, it was evident that she was not well. The staff at Elpis made sure she got the medical attention she required.

The five-year-old is the eighth in a family of nine children and the only wage earner is their father who repairs cars for a living.

"This family has an average standard of living but at that point they faced many extra expenses including the cost of medical care," says kindergarten director Sorina Pop. "Their older children have all been through our kindergarten and have been given subsidised places with the family able to pay only a part of the fee."

Sorina knows how highly Ruth's parents value the educational opportunities that Elpis gives to their little girl. "Their older children have all gone on to do well at school," she says. "The more formal education of the state sector has its strengths but our educational mission is to apply biblical principles to every activity. This has a positive and lasting influence on the children."



Andrei at school: with help from Blythswood Care, FCE gives educational opportunities to children with special needs

Special school lets Andrei try something new

When Andrei turned 12 his parents knew they had to take action. With severe physical disabilities and slight learning difficulties, their beloved boy was unable to attend the mainstream school in their village, 20 km from the town of Marghita, in northern Romania. His need for constant care was just too great.

Although he was registered for home-school support, they realised he would benefit from the company of other children and the stimulation which only a school environment can give.

"When Andrei's parents visited our school you could see the concern in their eyes," says Lidia Micula who teaches in a school for children with special needs, run in Marghita by Blythswood's partner organisation, Fundatia Crestina Elim.

"The thought of leaving their child with strangers made them nervous. We talked about his needs and the education and facilities we can provide here and they soon realised this would be a very good place for their son."

Five years on, Andrei has made great progress. He is strongly motivated to learn, has extended his vocabulary and has learned to write, using a computer.

"He has such a joyful spirit and is always ready to try something new," Lidia says. "He is courageous and wants to be involved in every school activity."

Lidia knows she's going to miss her star pupil when he graduates from FCE's school next year. "He proves that you can learn to be happy even in difficult circumstances," she says. "We can all learn a lesson from him."



Alin training for the marathon: he would like more young men to benefit from the help he has received at Blythswood's Daniel Centre

Daniel Centre helps Alin pursue his dream

With the help and encouragement of Blythswood's Daniel Centre, Alin (23) is pursuing his dream of becoming a football coach.

A rural upbringing and his commitment to caring for his father, who is an invalid, curtailed the opportunities open to the young man. But within eight months of joining the Daniel Centre's life skills programme, Alin secured a job in a bakery. There he is doing well and has acquired many new skills.

Steady employment has allowed him to save money and to start training to become a football coach.

"Alin is well on his way to

achieving his dream," says Elvira Szasz-Jakab, director of the Daniel Centre. "He's a really positive influence on the other young men here. They play football with him every week."

Alin raised £430 for the Daniel Centre when he participated in the Cluj International Marathon in April. And he continues to help his family, too, providing his mother with bread and meat when she visits Cluj and taking his younger brother around the city. "He wants more young men to benefit from the help he has received at the Daniel Centre," says Elvira. "He's a very positive and much needed father-figure in his brother's life."



Dencil is studying English, geography and commerce and would like to become a teacher

Dencil, aged 14, is in the second form at secondary school in the crowded township of Epworth, near Harare, Zimbabwe.

He was just a year old when he lost his father. His mother has struggled to bring up her four children on her own. It is certain that without the support of Blythswood over the past five years, Dencil would not be in school at all.

But with his school fees paid through Harare Shelter for Destitute, he is making good progress in English, geography and commerce and has his heart set on becoming a teacher.

"He says he is determined to get to university," says Stephen Damuputirai, director of Harare Shelter. "His mother completed our sewing training course but she does not keep well. Dencil wants to be able to support her and others in the family and she is confident that her son will succeed."

In the current year, Blythswood channels support for school fees through Harare Shelter for 56 children attending various primary and secondary schools in and around Zimbabwe's capital city.



Nooka Rani leaves for school: even a basic education can help the poorest to claim their place in society

With support from Blythswood Care, Alpha Educational & Welfare Society provides a happy home environment for 42 children, ensuring they can go to school and encouraging them to study

Education helps prevent exploitation of low-income families

Nooka Rani belongs to a loving, caring family in Andhra Pradesh, India, who want the best for their eleven-year-old girl. But an industrial accident two years ago has devastated their lives and left them unable to provide for their youngest child.

Her dad was working as a labourer on the roads. In April 2014 the gravel lorry in which he was travelling crashed and he suffered spinal injuries. The owner of the vehicle paid for his initial treatment in a government hospital but after that the family found they were on their own.

With the father immobile and unable to work, they quickly sank into poverty. They moved to another village where a relative allowed them to stay in a thatched shed. Nooka Rani's mother has found work with a local farmer. Her sister has become a domestic servant. Their combined income is consumed by the cost of medicine for the father, leaving them barely enough to eat.

Although they are a Hindu family they asked a Christian pastor to pray for them. And because Nooka Rani had missed a year and half of school, they asked Alpha Educational & Welfare Society to care for her and help her resume her education.

Alpha president Mary Kumari is keenly aware that families who are illiterate and innumerate are vulnerable to exploitation. "They take loans from rich people and frequently are cheated, losing money because they cannot count," she says. "This is a big problem in many villages and small towns."

"Those who have even a basic education are able to stand up for themselves in society."

With Blythswood's support, Nooka Rani is at school, acquiring those basic skills that will make her less vulnerable to exploitation. Already she can read and write a little in Telugu and she enjoys science, having a particular interest in plants.

"If she continues in our home we can encourage her in her studies," Mary Kumari says. "She will grow up to understand the value of education."

SUPPORTING EDUCATION IN ZIMBABWE



Gideon (left) with his brother: the supportive family environment at Sycam has helped him make progress at school



Gideon and his friends at Sycam were delighted to receive new jeans at Christmas

CHANGE IN ATTITUDE EQUIPPED GIDEON TO START LEARNING

Now 16 years old, Gideon has received his entire education thanks to Sycam children's home, a project supported by

Blythswood Care in Chennai, India. And those who know him best identify his change in attitude as the single most important factor in the progress he has been able to make at school.

At the age of six, Gideon was effectively a street child. His father had been a drunkard and violent, taking no responsibility for the family. By the time she became a widow, his mother's health was broken both physically and mentally.

At the point at which he was given a place in Sycam, Gideon had never celebrated a birthday,

had not been enrolled in school, had never received medical care and owned nothing more than the rags around his malnourished body.

With such a start to life it was not surprising that he was troublesome, short-tempered and unable to concentrate on learning during his first year at Carmel Christian School.

"At first Gideon was very poor at his studies," recalls Pastor Emmanuel Milton. "But his teachers and the whole family at Sycam were praying for him. As he experienced love and consolation his

attitude changed and he became a much softer person.

"He completed the fifth grade at Carmel School and came out well," adds Pastor Milton.

Now in his fourth year at high school, Gideon enjoys sports, acting and dancing and loves to play percussion. Pastor Milton realises how different the lad's story might have turned out. "Without the support of Sycam and Blythswood, he would still be on the streets, without care or education," he says. "But now he is so happy."

One volume reaches thousands

One copy of the Africa Bible Commentary, given by Blythswood Care to a school teacher in Malawi, has touched the lives of as many as 4,000 people. And that's just one of thousands of various Christian books granted by Blythswood each year to pastors and teachers in Africa and Asia.

Cliff Morson Tebulo was working as a coordinator with the National Association for People living with HIV and Aids in Malawi (NAPHAM) when he came across Pastor Osman Magaso, a pastor in the Church of Christ, in 2009. "He introduced me to the culture of reading the Bible and later



The Africa Bible Commentary has helped Cliff Morson Tebulo to share the gospel with high school pupils and to people affected by HIV/AIDS

gave me the commentary as a gift," he says.

Written by 70 African scholars the single-volume commentary is designed to help pastors, students and lay leaders in Africa to apply bible teaching to distinctly African concerns. Cliff Morson Tebulo reckons that his copy helped him to share some principles and practices of behaviour change with 1,500 people affected by HIV/AIDS.

It has also helped him in his current job as a high school teacher of Chichewa, English and Bible knowledge. In that role he has taught almost 2,500 pupils. "The Africa Bible Commentary has helped to improve my understanding of scriptural texts," he says. "It has guided me where and how to start my teaching and to deliver information to my students and members of the community.

"It has made my students achieve learning outcomes set down in the national curriculum guidelines."

ENABLING AN ABANDONED CHILD TO FULFIL HER POTENTIAL

Sirisha has scored top marks in all six subjects that make up the state syllabus for schools in the Indian city of Hyderabad: Hindi, English, Telugu, maths, science and social studies.

It's a remarkable achievement for a teenager whose schooling appeared to have come to an end when she was just seven years old – and one that wouldn't have happened without the support of Blythswood Care.

When Sirishi's mother died, her father – who had a drink problem – married again. Her step-mother took her out of school to help with housework and beat her severely.

The little girl took refuge with an older, married sister but soon was pushed out by the husband and found herself homeless and hungry. Concerned for her welfare, an



Sirisha (left) with other young people at Dayspring: the home supported by Blythswood Care has given her a nurturing environment and helped her to do well at school

elderly lady took her to Dayspring House, a care home supported by Blythswood.

"It took six months to bring her back to normal health," says Pastor Samuel Babu who cares for 65 orphaned or abandoned children at the home near Hyderabad. "She was weak and had lost hope and had missed two years of school. But at Dayspring she

found a new home and a new hope."

Having achieved over 65% in all subjects, Sirisha is ready to join two other young people from Dayspring at college, where she hopes to train to be a teacher. Samuel Babu says: "These young people need your kind support to continue further studies."



Majlinda (right) holding her youngest child when she attended the literacy class: learning to read and write has convinced her of the importance of educating her children

ADULT LITERACY HELPS NEXT GENERATION

Majlinda had only two years at school as a child and grew up unable to read or write. That wasn't unusual for a girl brought up in the gypsy community in the city of Elbasan,

Albania. Her family's economic situation did not allow her to continue her schooling.

By the time she joined the literacy programme run by Mission Possible

Albania she was a wife and the mother of three children. At the Hope Centre, a community project supported by Blythswood Care, she learned to read, to write and to do basic arithmetic.

These new skills have helped her in her job in a shoe factory in Bathore, near Tirana, Albania's capital city. Now she can read the factory worksheets and even write them too.

But perhaps the most significant benefit is in the education of her family. "Now Majlinda understands so well what she missed out on as a child," says Besa Shaplo, director of Mission Possible Albania. "She would like to be a little girl again.

"Because she sees the value of education, she encourages her children to learn at school and to be good students. She is so pleased to be able to read her 11-year-old son's homework, even although she cannot really help him with his lessons."

Achieving literacy in adulthood has given Majlinda new confidence. "She realises that she is not only to bear babies and do housework but that she can demand more of herself," Besa says.

