



Educational
Enrichment for
Romanian
Children

EERC Magazine

June 2016



What have the EERC Alumni been up to?

Editors' Note

Today's society is focused so much on the material aspect of our lives that we might begin to forget what the most important things in life really are: the friends we make, the memories of the places we have travelled to and, of course, seeing each experience as a way of learning, of enriching our knowledge.

Looking back to our EERC experiences, we can say that the program left its most lasting impressions on us, changed the way we think and gave us amazing memories to remember for the rest of our lives.

This way we want to say a big THANK YOU to everyone who is or was involved in making EERC as amazing as it is. 😊

And we have some very interesting stories to share with you this year...check them out while they're hot!

Andi (2013, 2015) and Ariana (2015)

Message from the President

“Gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all the others”

Marcus Tullius Cicero

Greeting alumni, families and future applicants,

Next year we will reach a milestone: a decade since our organization sponsored a group of Romanian students to summer programs in Boston. They arrived here eager to discover Boston and its wonders- pancakes and maple syrup, Cape Cod, Harvard Square -, and especially to make new friends. They are now in college, and some of them are even getting ready to start their first job.

Along these tumultuous and unsure years, with minimal funds but limitless determination many people helped along the way to bring plans to fruition: Radu Florescu and Lidia Bradley as the ones who guided me closely, the core volunteers and board members, the sponsors, the host families, the local Romanian community and parishes, the camp directors, and the artists who participate in our fundraiser. We are of all ethnicities, creeds, social position, and ages. However there is one thing that we have in common: we believe the children are our best investment in a promising future.

As someone who has been with the organization since its creation, I can't help but be amazed at the generosity I met along the way: the work colleague who became the creator of the EERC logo, the local attorneys advising us pro bono, the pediatrician and the dentist who help us when in need, and more. Our first fundraiser became reality with the help of Vlad, a local Russian dance studio owner. I called him on the phone, with me being a total stranger, to help us find a space for our event; he listened to my plea and agreed to all requests. When asked about the fee mounting to thousands of dollars, he kindly replied: “don't worry Dana, it is for the Romanian children.” In 2010 Fr. and Mrs. Onisie Morar and the Woonsocket parish created the best catered party ever, driving across state lines to make it happen. The camp directors whose schools we found on the internet (Thalia, Aaron, David, and Zac) welcomed our students without reservations. What about the host families: De, Joanne, Kathy, and Andreea? to name a few. Well, they have been outstanding through their generosity, kindness, warmth, compassion, they are EERC family. We are fortunate to have exceptional people contributing their talents to make things possible: Florentina, Michelle, DanaL, Lili, Fred, Raluca, Emilia, Corina, Vali, Denisa, Doina ... some of them have already put in years of volunteering and some still do. Thank you!

I am in awe we are still going strong. We started without any experience in this field: \$1,000 in the bank and the drive to make it happen. I feel that with each passing year we got savvier in how to run our organization. I often wonder how EERC is different, if at all, from other organizations with a similar purpose. Likely the most important argument is how we welcome our students; they are entrusted to us by their parents to expose them to an amazing experience. We visit them at camps, we get weekly updates from the host families, we take them to town outings, listen to their daily happenings; in short, our students are never to feel abandoned while away from their family. And then what could ever match a stay in “America”? One could argue this country offers the singular opportunity to appreciate the endless possibilities of hard work, an open mind, and a belief in your goals. The American social fluidity is proof of the human resilience and capabilities; regardless of who you are, at some point in time you still have limitless potential.

Which brings me to the next point: who is our ideal student? Which are the traits, the virtues they should possess? Is it culture, good manners, diplomas, or academic success? Although all these are all important characteristics, as they in some way represent someone's dedication and hard work, they are not sufficient. We look to select students with an open mind, who are ready to be challenged, are tolerant, generous, and compassionate. Our students should strive for civic and social involvement and should not be afraid of having initiative.

Personally, the virtue I cherish most is gratitude. To be grateful implies acknowledging the good you received, to appreciate its impact, and to remember the ones who bestow it upon you and to be ready to return the kindness. Gratitude is “giving back” to your community: a term which doesn’t necessarily imply writing a check, rather, the help you give to others in need without expecting something in return. The emotional growth and the depth of one’s humanity are the reward. I do hope our alumni are ready to become mentors to the new students, coaching their steps and welcoming them to the EERC family; that they will give back to their community and school working with local projects and initiatives, nurturing relations with people of various cultures, language, religion and as such promoting their heritage.

As our EERC family grows, our students and their own “giving back” strategies will lead others through an exemplary life marked by gratitude, compassion and generosity. Let’s spread the light of kindness and knowledge; let’s bring the world closer to home

With deepest friendship,

Dr. Dana Floru



The 2016 alumni
have some great stories
to share with you!
and here they are...

Andreea Andrei



Hello! My name is Andreea Andrei and I'm 14 years old. There are a lot of things that I can say about my first trip to USA. When I arrived at the airport after a very long and tiring flight, I was very excited and eager to meet my host family. In my host family, there are a 21-year-old boy named **Matthew**, an 18-year-old girl named **Madeline**, a 2-year-old yellow lab named **Sammy** and their mother whose name is **Lauri**. I could not stop smiling when I saw how warm and welcoming they were. My adventure was just beginning. The first stop of my journey was a mini tour of Boston. Once we arrived home, my new family made me feel as if I was at my own home and told me to let them know if I needed anything. I felt extremely welcomed and the next morning, Madeline and I went shopping together, then we visited the Southwicks Zoo



The following weeks were amazing! Matthew, Madeline, Lauri, Sammy and I drove up to their house in New Hampshire. I was able to meet Lauri's brother, sister, niece and nephew. We went swimming in the lake and Madeline and Lauri helped me swim to the dock. My visit has gone by so quickly. On July 3rd, we watched the most spectacular fireworks I have ever seen, and on July 4th we went to the Fourth of July parade in Needham.



One day we went to Cambridge and went to the Harvard Yard where I took a photo of John Harvard, the founder of Harvard University.

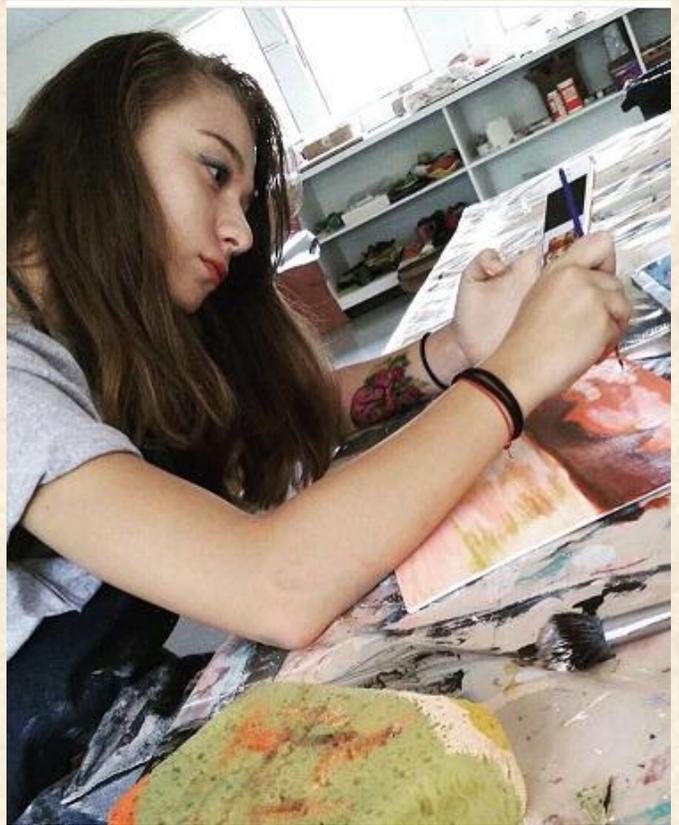
I have to say that I missed my parents a lot, but my host family made me feel like home. I remember how we were staying on the sofa and watching movies or talking. I miss them a lot! I'm speaking with them every day and we are sending each other photos of ourselves. I can say that I really love them.

I am very thankful for the opportunity that EERC gave to me. They are special people who make teenagers' dreams come true.

In this trip I became more responsible and I improved my English! I can say that this was the most perfect summer I have ever had! **Thank you!**



Maria Cardan



In the summer of the 2016 I had occasion to learn about the American life. With the help of the EERC program, which tries to familiarize Romanian students with the American environment, I've made it to Boston. I've spent the whole July at the Prestia family from Hull, Massachusetts - a small town which is situated near the ocean. It was an amazing experience to stay with a big American family. I really enjoyed spending time with them finding out about their country and their culture. I was fascinated to see how such a big family with three boys and other 42 cousins and grandparents, aunts, uncles lives. They were always together helping each other and also me and Hristina, the girl who stayed with me. We had so much fun spending a month near the ocean swimming and sunbathing all day long.



In the morning we were going to Derby Summer Academy where we met talented and friendly children and teachers. Everyone there was open-minded and happy to learn something about the Romanian culture. My passion for painting developed so much there with the help of the teachers and the support of my new friends. At Derby I have also learned how to dance and how to sew, two activities which were more interesting than they seem. Talking to the children I've met, I really improved my English. I visited Boston with my host family and also with the EERC founders. I was amazed when I saw the aquarium, Harvard university and MIT university. But what I enjoyed the most was the Fine Arts Museum. I also loved the CANOBIE LAKE THEME PARK which has some amazing roller coasters !!! I think this experience was helpful because we, students from Romania, think that the life in the USA is perfect but everywhere people have to deal with some problems and hard situations they can solve them if they work hard and are optimistic, qualities that the people I've met had.



In the USA everything was different in a good way, but the food was kind of unhealthy for me (part of it) and the portions were so big that three people could share one. 😊

EERC taught me that the inter-human relations are different from one nation to another and the human being is made to adapt anywhere.

Everything comes into our lives for a reason, to shape us, to make us who we are, so we should be open minded and accept every opportunity.

Elena Mocanca



Summer of 2016 went by fast, with all the emotions related to the national exams at the end of middle school and the joy of success; I was now a student at CNU. What more could I ask for?

A memory of a long ago conversation suddenly enlightened my dull autumn evening. Instinctively, I turned on the computer and searched for EERC, a website that a good friend of mine had told me about. All that I knew about it was that she had earned a one month scholarship in the USA and the experience gained helped her, motivating her future actions. Therefore, I decided to thoroughly inform myself on the steps required to apply for this scholarship. As any youngster fascinated by the mirage of the American dream, I decided that I could meet the conditions of the program and, after a more or less clarifying talk with my parents, I enrolled in the program. Emotions, expectations, they all reached a high point on Christmas Eve when I was informed that I am among the 10 students selected from the whole country to spend the month of July in Boston.



Arrival in Boston was breathing and new. I only felt this when the EERC family met us at the terminal. Around me all I could hear was English with the harmonious American accent and the airport rush was mingling its colours into an amazing show. I was overwhelmed, but I followed the my first hosts, alongside Andreea, the girl with whom I was going to spend the next month and become best friends. The first two days till camp were spent at the Floru's place. We celebrated the 4th of July while our host held a party to which we slowly managed to give Romanian accents. We spent the next two weeks in the Frank A. Day Camp , and the rest at the EC school for the English courses in Boston. We were fortunate to have as our host family the wonderful **Joanne Dixon** and **Neil Epstein** .



Preparing for FrankA Day: We knew that we were going to spend two weeks in the middle of nature, without a phone, computer or any other gadget; the challenge was huge. These were the regulations and we must comply with them, against our worry that someone might announce us missing on facebook or other social networks. It did not matter . Many times I had seen the American camp landscape in the movies. The place was oozing exuberance and freedom; children screaming their happiness among the trees. The wooden cabins were looking in the distance towards the cloudy lake. The fir trees were hiding the loneliest trails, the terrains prepares for the friendly matches, the three units of the camp, the meeting places for freshmen, juniors and seniors and the festivity room.



From the first day, overwhelmed with emotions, we mingled among the groups of children and investigated our unit, trying to adopt the camp colours. We were welcomed by gentle smiles, originating from the joy of the holiday. A swarm of games and activities prompted us in doing our first steps in what was going to be one of the most beautiful memories. But the evening brought up the real program that was keeping the camp between rigour and freedom. As we were going to wake up at 7:45, to attend the flag ceremony each morning and then have breakfast, the evening came quickly and it allured as in. The day seemed longer as the same three activities were occupying our entire morning: 1 of our choice, team games and swimming.

After those came lunch, one hour for leisure, then other 3 activities in the afternoon (2 of our choice and Super Choice, where we could do anything we wanted), the flag ceremony, dinner and evening activities. During the first week I chose to take part in the Drama, Climbing and Magic Club. But the real magic was dripped into my soul by the light of the lake. Seldom, in the evening, I could see the lake, climbing, wave after wave, towards the sand. The sky was pulsing into it. I was not the Creator as in the book I was reading, for I was the creation: I was the lake and the sky all at once and the wound in my chest was still bleeding, allowing the heaven's epiphany bathe in the bloody waves. Only after the pain was gone the stars came out, chasing away the sunlight. I then put on the most beautiful dress and patched the skirt with trees. In the darkness, I draw them in black so I could remember the most beautiful shade of green. And I made it. It was the trees' colour in the terrible light of day. Days went by fast guided by the schedule sometimes mixed up only by rain. The busy mornings caught my soul in sensible games, the afternoons full of heat were looking for our secrets and found them confessed among the groups of children and the evenings brought rest and seem to increase the shining of the forest. The Friday evening melt into a party and the one on Sunday bathed in the perfumed memory of a movie we watched near our cabin, on the floor of the big room.



On the second week, the schedule stayed the same, except the 3 activities of our choice that I had changed with Nature, Card games and, again, Magic. My schedule had the Wednesday checked, day of the Colour War. I was going to find out that for the kids who have been coming to camp for 7-8 years now , this war was becoming a tradition of the Green and Grey teams, tradition that went a bit beyond camaraderie. An entire day, full of activities, games and cheering for our teams ended with a camp fire announcing the victory of the opponents, the Grey team. I saw tears, happiness and disappointment; I saw hopes becoming reality and broken expectations. A multitude of emotions mingled among the branches of the dark trees, projected on the late evening sky. Since my being was not fully involved in the competition, the evening went by fast, and the departure day came. We left the camp behind with the echoes of the lake, trees, stars, heading towards the homes of our future hosts, Joanne and Neil. They gave us a warm welcome, behaving as a true family. The time we spent with them was wonderful: family dinners, going out in the city, nice talks. Seeing the ocean was one of the many surprises gave to us by the new family. Its infinity was the bridge going back home.



Day after day we took English classes at the EC school, located downtown Boston. With branches on many continents, the school is renowned for the quality of its courses. After the initial tests, me and Andreea were assigned to the advanced class, together with other 12 students. The appreciation was mutual, as we were captivated by the modern teaching techniques, and the teachers amazed by our grammar following what we learned in Romania. After classes, we had organized activities, visiting the most significant buildings in Boston. Of course the walks in the parks, malls and China Town couldn't have missed. The cultural and/or religious diversity overwhelmed and amazed me, making me part of this universe. An enlightening moment during my stay in Boston had been the visit at the prestigious Harvard University, of which greatness imposes respect beyond the fame earned throughout time.

Although at the beginning of our journey time seemed to be endless, it perfidiously slipped around us and we found ourselves again at the airport, ready to go back home, anxious to see our families again and share with them our American adventure.

For me and the other young students, **the opportunity given by EERC was a dream came true**, and for those who wish to apply for this program all I can say is *best of luck!*



Razvan Morcov



After my sister came back from the US and told me what she's done and what she's felt while being there, I promised myself I would live the same experience and be part of one of the next generations of alumni. So last year I said I'd keep my promise. Which I did.

"Everything is so bright and shiny", that's the first thing I said to my family when I got there, and that was the moment I realized it was going to be amazing. The four weeks I've spent in the US with some amazing people have really changed the way I think about the world itself. For the past years, I thought everyone was mean and if I said what I thought I'd be disrespected for my opinion. But after coming to the US, all of that changed. I got the fortune of meeting some extraordinary people, in the organization itself and in the camp I've attended. Still, the most special people I've met in the US are the host family I lived with, **the Springer Family**. They thought me how the American life is: beautiful and full of surprises. They've also thought me that it's good to express myself freely and say what I find inconvenient. And that helped me a lot.

When I got back to Romania, I started helping my sister with her project "Rural=Urban=Equal chances" and things got going, and it went big in a really short time, given that after just a few months after I came back and we started working hard on the project, we received e-mails from children all around the country, wanting to apply.

It's been an amazing experience overall and I can't wait to come back to America!

Gabriel Nedelcu



Hello! My name is Gabriel Nedelcu, and I am one lucky student from Ramnicu Valcea that had the chance to be part of the amazing EERC project. Let me share with you a little bit of my american experience so far. If I had to summarize it in one phrase, it would be **“This is one in a lifetime experience”**. As soon as I met **the McKaffrey family**, I realised that it is going to be the most amazing thing that I have ever lived.

What I really love about this big country, USA, is the people. We did some volunteering so I had to meet some really nice open-minded people, all from different regions, different coltures, different past. What they all had in common was their love for their country. They taught me a lot of things about US and about life, things that have changed me as a person and have changed my life perspective.

I did not realize the differences between Romania and America until I was here. You have to experience this yourself in order to say your opinion. A man said once that America is the land of all oportunities. And it is, indeed. USA offers you things that you can't find in other places.

The biggest achievement is that I made new friends, we made memories that will stay in our hearts through years. I fell in love with everything there and **I really want to thank EERC for making this thing happen!**



Radu Nita



Hello! I'm Radu. I'm from Rm. Valcea, Romania and I had the awesome chance to spend one month in USA in Boston, MA, thanks to the EERC program. I know that I was very lucky to be part of this journey, which definitely helped me broaden my mind!

The adventure started with a long, long flight over the Atlantic Ocean. Even though it became boring at some point, I was still extremely nervous: I couldn't wait to meet my host family! When we arrived in the Logan Airport, they were holding the Romanian flag, waiting for us. **McCaffrey family** showed us love and warmth from the very beginning and I will be forever grateful for the beautiful things they have done for me.



I spent the first two weeks on an island called Martha's Vineyard where I volunteered at an organization called "The Trustees of Reservation". There I had the opportunity to meet wonderful people from whom I learned a lot about friendship, generosity, joy and how beautiful it can be to give a helping hand. All the conversations have taught me to never lose faith and that all things come true if you truly believe in them.

I also learned a lot of cool facts about the place. For instance, the ferry we used every day to move from a place to another was actually the one featured in the famous movie Jaws, by Steven Spielberg.

After that, we returned to Hull, a wonderful town situated right by the ocean, on a small peninsula. The landscape there is amazing and all the people are very friendly, relaxed and happy. It actually looked like the whole Universe was trying to make me feel home.



In Boston we had a lot of interesting activities and countless places to visit: Harvard University, MIT, Museum of Science, Isabella Gardner Museum. I had different activities like mini golf, surf, fishing. I also tried Japanese and Mexican food and I did a lot of shopping. One of the things that impressed me the most were, of course, the sky-scrapers: they made me feel so small!

After all, I really think that a place is defined by the people that live there: and this is why I fell in love with USA and the beautiful EERC family!



Ioana Negut

My 2016 American experience starts in Poiana Brasov at EERC Conference 2014. There I saw all the children presentations that discovered to me a whole new world of knowledge and adventure and I wanted more to go in America and have my own experience. Finding that I was admitted was a great joy and satisfaction so I prepared all the documents with the desire to feel all the happiness I saw on the faces of the children from 2014 program.

June 2016 came very fast and I couldn't believe that I already have to go to the airport to live my dreams. Friday I had my last day of school and the next day I was in America.

In Boston, **Andrea and Sadie**, my hosts, greeted me with their smiling faces and they got me acquainted with Boston Public Garden. I integrated very well in the family feeling the warmth of this American family.



The first week in America I started my activities that I chose at CRCAP camp where I learned to play the guitar, I improved my dancing skills and I made art with the photo camera.

At dancing classes I met Cecilia and we become good friends spending time together. I told a lot of interesting things about Romania and I was impressed that after a few days she already started to speak a few words in Romanian language. She is a warmth friendly person she taught me some skills about living in America and we had a lot of fun.



Pinhole camera workshops were for me very interesting because it was for the first time when I built something by myself. I was enthusiastic about the results and I loved very much how through such a little hole you can make a lot of beautiful photos.



One day when visited The Boston Mall in town and I found the most flavorful ice cream ever: cookies with cream and chocolate.

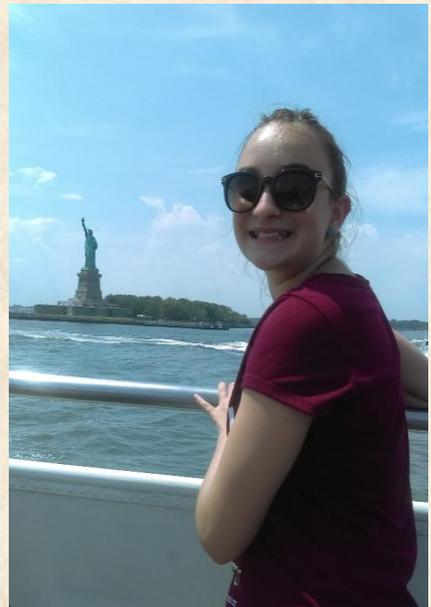


Walking through Boston I had the opportunity to have a nice dinner with the family in the tallest building John Hancock Tower and I used my real camera to take this nice view of the town.



Another extraordinary place was Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum that houses paintings, sculptures and decorative arts, having a beautiful garden with all types of flowers and trees in the courtyard.

The biggest surprise of this American experience was the trip to New York. I was happy to walk among the tall buildings that impressed me. In New York I met some friends of the family and we had a lot of fun at the water fountains in the harbor before we took the boat to see The Statue of Liberty.



This experience taught me to have more independence and be more confident in my decisions. I met different students, we learned from each other and I came back richer in spirit. For this extraordinary experience I am grateful to both my families, to all the amazing people that I met and to EERC team. EERC is a dream that anyone can live if you have self-confidence and act to fulfill it.

Oana Spataceanu

Hi, everyone! My name is Oana and I can say that last summer was the summer of my life. When I got there in was so scared and insecure, afraid of not making friends and enjoy the time spent there. I was thinking those negative things, maybe, because I had never been away from my parents, from my home so far. But my experience in America was nothing as I expected: all people of all ages were kind, friendly, understanding and talkative, whenever ready to help you with any problem you could have. That made me feel at ease and take advantage of everything around me. I spent my first week with King family who made me feel like home and gave me the opportunity of meeting their many nice friends that had treated me like one of their own. The next five weeks I stood at a boarding school called Fay. It was an exclusive camp where I could learn new things in English, swim, climb, explore the forest, paint, build, play different sports, roller skate, go to a baseball game of a famous local team, visit the zoo and the Aquapark and many other amazing things that I can't even remember well.





The counselors didn't let us use our phone for making us communicate to one other, so I made a lot of endless friendships of many boys and girls from all over the world. That was my chance to learn about different cultures besides the American one.



The way back home was full of emotions too because it was the first time I had flown by myself with the plane. Everything ended up just fine and my parents were happy to see me alive.

It's been almost a year since last summer and I still talk to my friends that I made there, even though I think I will never see them again. I wish from the bottom of my heart to repeat that memorable adventure of six weeks. I tell all my acquaintances and friends to try their luck at this program and, maybe, they may feel the courage I once felt there, alone on that unknown land placed of the other side of the ocean, far, far away from our country. If reading this essay aroused you interest, don't waste time, learn more about what this experience is about and be the next one who will go on the trip of his life!



Hristina Sararu

This year's experience through the EERC was great! I stayed at **Prestia Family** together with Maria, another EERC student from Brasov. Firstly, it was difficult to accommodate because there was a completely new world. Since I've arrived there, my host family took me and Maria to the beach and they presented us their family which is quite big. We went to New Hampshire at Newfound Lake.



We spent the 4th of July on the beach with their family and we had a great time watching fireworks. The host family was very nice to me and the boys were funny. They, their relatives and their friends put me and Maria questions about Romania and we answered them with pleasure. I went to Derby Summer Camp where I chose Fusion Dance Workout, Movie Trailers, Contemporary Dance, Improvisation and Fashion Design. I made a lot of friends and I performed 3 times at Noon-time Show. I loved my courses. The teachers were awesome and very friendly, they were curious and wanted to find out more about Romania.



The host family took us to Boston, too. We visited New England Aquarium and we watched a documentary about white shark at IMAX Theatre. We went to a theme park, Canobie Lake Park, where we enjoyed ourselves. We also went to the cinema with the whole family and we watched The Legend of Tarzan. We spent beautiful moments together.

I think that my favorite part was the pool party. It was very funny even if I almost died because I don't know how to swim. In that period, Mrs. Florentina, one of the members of the EERC, hosted me and treated me like a princess. She showed me the center of Boston, MIT, Harvard University, Museum of Science. I tried Indian food, but it was too spicy for me.

I met wonderful and talented people, discovered interesting things which will help me in the future and had the best summer of my life. I visited amazing and historical places in Boston like the Museum of Science, New England Aquarium, Isabella Gardner Museum, Harvard University, MIT and more. This program gives Romanian children the opportunity to broaden the horizons, to learn how to be yourself and to have unforgettable moments with friendly and open-minded people. I'm very grateful that EERC gave me this chance last summer. Now, I hope that the summer 2017 students will have an amazing summer and will have a great time at their camps like I had. **EERC does a great work and I want to thank again for this opportunity. It has been the best experience of my life so far!**

Andreea Zsak



There are probably endless things I can say about the experiences and people I have met... I still remember when I first walked on American land and I felt overwhelmed. Being far away from home with people I have never met before was both amazing and frightening. For the first couple of days, I couldn't even believe I was in the United States, but as my journey went by, I started to feel at home. The first two weeks I attended an overnight camp, Camp Frank A. Day, on the beautiful shores of Lake Quamquasit, west of Boston. The sunsets on the lake, the campfires, the songs, the people - everything was so enjoyable and full of love. I loved the camp, but, of course, I was not happy that I didn't have my phone!!! At first I was so angry about this, but as days passed by I realized it was a lesson.





Everyone was happy to try new things, even though they didn't succeed. Everyone was open-minded and accepted each other, no matter what clothes you wore, what music you liked or what was the last book you read. These things improve your self-esteem and erase your insecurities, which was the best reason for me to love this camp in the first place. The differences are not just between people, but in food too. What can I say, americans really have a good taste! At the same time, they were happier, more careles than us and loved who they are. They were not afraid or ashamed to do anything, if they wanted something, they went for it. No peaks or turns on the road to what they dreamed of. Everyone sang and danced at every meal, reminding that after such tiring but interesting and nice activities, after the team sports in which we all put our everything and got very competitive, we are still together, we are still a family who will help and love each other.



In a nutshell, the first two weeks were impressive and taught me so many things I can already see a change in my behaviour and I am so thankful I had the opportunity to meet those people, they really had an impact on my life

The time spent here made me be proud of my country, because we were students from all around the world. I told everyone about our traditions and our people and it was one of the proudest feelings ever.

After the camp ended , I stayed with **Joanne and Neil**, my host parents to whom I wish to say **Thank You from the bottom of my heart for everything they offered me.**

This time I had my cell phone, but the time zone was still different. Somehow I managed to talk with everyone at home. It was then when I realized how attached I am to my town and my friends there and the strong connection we have. My host parents were surprised to see me talking with my friends or my family who stayed up all night just for me. While living with my hosts I took English classes at the EC Boston in Faneuil Hall.



The classes were amazing, not only because my teacher was the best (*miss you Jenna!*), but because I was once again with people from all across the world and I learned SO many things from these people and about their countries. It really was an experience that changed my view of the world and it made me wish for more.

As I said, I have thousands of things to say about this experience, what I bought, what places I saw however I would rather focus on the experience itself. Apart from the fact that my English improved a lot, I am now a much more open-minded person, and I have started to appreciate more what I have. I love my country but now I realized I how much I adore it and belong to it. Of course, I like America and I cried when I was in the airport saying the last goodbyes, but nothing can compare to home. I was looking forward to see my family, friends and to share this experience with everyone. While I was in Boston, I felt like I was in Wonderland (coincidence or not, but there is actually a place in Boston called Wonderland). I learned a lot of things and I improved as a person. Because Americans seem so easy going I am trying not to stress about little details but just focus on the important things. I try to see the positive side - that's the point of life.



Thank you, Educational Enrichment for Romanian Children, for giving me this opportunity! I am so grateful I can now say I experienced living in US and I can feel how this experience changed me in better. I wish a more students will have this chance because we need to make the most out of our life and what we have. There are not enough words to explain my gratitude feelings towards EERC and US, they are now a part of my soul. Thank you so much!





Testimonials

Deanne Springer

EERC Host

Thalia McMillion

Director, Derby Academy

Deanne Springer

Hello! We are the **Springer** family, **Mr. Steve (host dad)**, **De (host mom)** and **Harper (host kid)**. Our introduction to EERC was an ad in the local newspaper, followed by a lovely afternoon tea conversing with Dana F. and Florentina A. This was really an interview to see if we would make a good host family and fortunately we passed.

Since then 6 summers have also passed and we have hosted 5 students, whom we adore.

Given our experience hosting, Andi and Ariana (who we also cherish) asked us to express what the EERC program has meant to us. What a difficult question to answer! The measure and meaning of one person's connection to another is a rather intangible thing to describe. But we really believe it is about the people. It is about YOU -- at this sunny and open age in your life -- that makes EERC special. So let me share a little bit about these special people and the pleasure each one of them brought to our lives.

I will start with our most recent student, **our 5th**, from last summer. I have nicknamed this student **James "R" Bond**. He was also humorously dubbed Cinnamon Roll for reasons that will remain a mystery. Summer of 2016 was a rather agitated time here in America because Donald Trump was campaigning for the US Presidency -- need I to say more? -- and the election preoccupied the family conversation. Surely this must have bored our EERC teen, but he remained observant and attentive, making astute comments with each breaking news story. We didn't know much about Guccifer 2.0, but our "Mr. Bond" explained (or teased us -- we're not sure which) about the supposed Romanian hacker, who was really probably a Russian spy.



We joked and imagined that our EERC student, Cinnamon Roll, alias James "R" Bond, a.k.a. **Razvan** -- was a secret agent, perhaps even a double agent. Romanian? Russian? Guccifer 3.1? It was all in jest; all in fun. Yet, just a few weeks ago, Americans learned that Guccifer 2.0's cyber attacks and the online deployment of disinformation influenced the American election, assisting in the Trump victory! While we were just joking around then, how prescient our play was! Fiction has become Truth! Of course, Razvan, our "Mr. Bond" is not a spy, but we think if he wanted a career in that field -- he'd be quite successful!

Before Razvan, there was his sister, **Elena**, who stayed with us summer of **2013**. She was our 3rd EERC student. Elena is full of surprises. And our summer was filled with ARTS. We attended a new original musical, the debut of the Boston Out of the Box Festival where we chanced upon the country music band Florida-Georgia Line in free concert BEFORE FAME with their first pop hit "Cruise". Check it out on you tube: <https://youtu.be/zAND37zOC9g>, Elena, an elegant and serene young woman, is unexpectedly a heavy metal fan. She is the World's Skype Champion in Clue. And, she is also a natural, photogenic actress with a social conscious. But that's not all. She produces. She is an emerging leader. We like to think that Elena developed her confidence and the power of self-agency while at camp here in America. But her ideas and tenacity are all her own. Her projects are making a difference in the lives of others. When you meet Elena ask her about them: her video community news show; her Skype Pal endeavor; the summer acting workshop. Elena will surprise you and we are very proud of her accomplishments.





Ioana was our **4th** student, summer of **2015**, and of all of our EERC kids, she was the most similar to a typical American teen, from her funky sneakers to her "make a positive statement" t-shirts. It may be that Ioana is more American than we are! Ioana participated in any activity, with any peer group with ease and friendliness. She was comfortable everywhere, with everyone, doing everything. One of the things we do together that is an American family past-time is playing board games. And Ioana excelled in beating everyone who came over to the house that played. She even beat Mr. Steve. In fact all our kids have learned a plethora of games: Blink, Swish, Battleship, Scattergories, Rumis, Blokus, and Set. With superior visual spatial skills, a quick analytical mind and competitive spirit -- Ioana beats EVERYONE. Can she continue her winning streak????? I challenge EERC alumni (Tatiana T. , Flavia, Vlad, George, Andreea to name just some of you.....) to play Ioana in one of these games at the next EERC gathering in Romania. They are fun and so is Ioana!

2012 marked our summer hosting and our **2nd** student **Oana** was placed with us. She arrived wearing a sweet little hat. This is an apt description for Oana herself: sweet and little, but also brimming with energy and joy. Oana kept us busy, even after a full day of camp -- playing croquet, taking bicycle lessons with Harper, and spending many hours at the beach where she loved to swim and frolic in the cold, cold, cold Atlantic Ocean! Oana was only two years older than my own son Harper. Nearly every afternoon she would invite Harper to play something with her. Harper's limitations due to the autism syndrome in communicating verbally, his anxieties, and his short attention span would sometimes upset him and abruptly stop their play. Still, she accepted him fully, tried to understand his problems, and undeterred encouraged him the very next day to "come play again". We will long remember Oana's efforts to include Harper, just as if he was a kid without a disability. Back then Oana said she wanted to be a heart surgeon. I think she still wants to be a heart surgeon. This makes sense not because Oana is so passionate about Science, but because her own heart is full of compassion for others'.





And finally, I will end at the beginning with **Ada** who was our **1st** student, summer of **2011**. Adele's hit "Rolling in the Deep" dominated the radio waves and while Adele's music might move us to tears, The Duck Song (an international online sensation) inspired a fit of laughter that ran about 20 minutes long. If you ever wanted to attain "six-pack abs", this would be the way to do it -- laughing uncontrollably with Ada. Ada wondered at many things that made us laugh. Incredulous, but with the tact of a diplomat she mused, "Really, how many bathrooms does an American family need?" "Really, how many cars does an American family have to have?" "How many things can an American recycle?" We should have started a game show! As Ada took an inventory of the differences and similarities between American and Romanian lifestyles -- we saw a person committed to making the world a better place. When I cajoled, "Ada, you're the next Angela Merkel", she demurred with her usual modesty, "Ms. De, I'm just 13!" Well, Ada-girl -- you're in college now and the world is ready for improvement.

So it is these moments -- once present, and now past -- captured as memories that made us happy then and bring us happiness now -- that make EERC the experience that it is and why we continue to participate in the program.

Too, we think there are two parts, two steps to the EERC mission, the first is to "**bring the world closer to home**" and the second is, when you eventually leave home, you will **make the world a better place**.

We look forward to meeting you.
With love,
The Springers

Thalia McMillion, Director, Derby Academy, Summer Arts

For the past fifteen years, Summer Arts at Derby has hosted two Romanian students at camp in Hingham, Massachusetts. Their presence has been a wonderful experience for all!

Both the campers from the United States and the campers from Romania benefit greatly from the interaction with young people from a different country and a different culture.

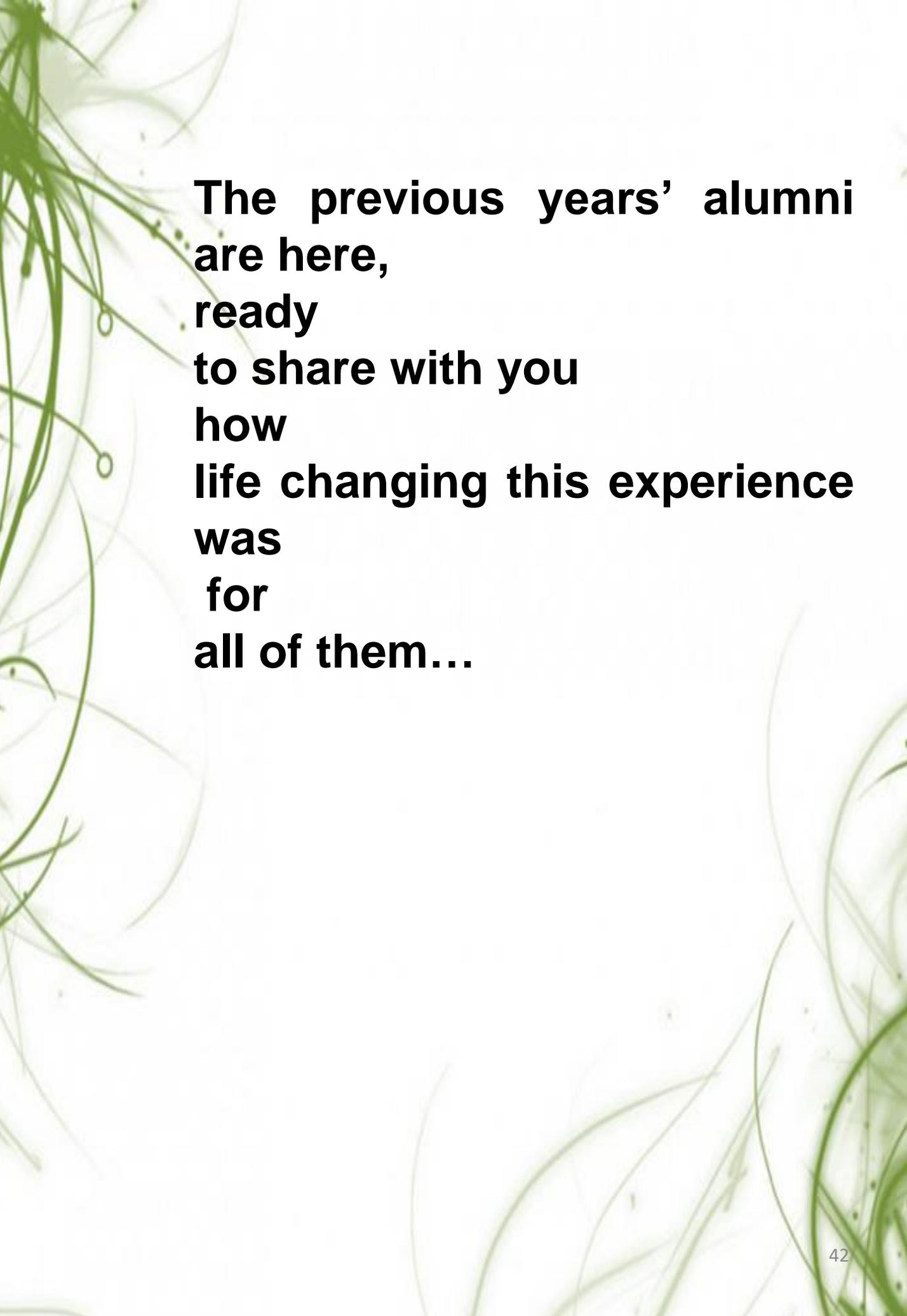


Our campers learned so much as their Romanian friends shared the history, traditions and the foods of their country. The exchange has opened their eyes to a different culture, and they have developed very close friendships over the years. I have enjoyed viewing the paintings, pottery, jewelry and mosaics that our Romanian campers have created. I also love watching their music, dance and theatre performances on stage. There was extra special fun on Water Days and on Festival Day at the end of the program! We look forward to continuing our collaboration with EERC.

To **Andi, Hristina, Maria, Andrea, Mihaela, Ionut, Tudor** and all of our Romanian friends! We will always treasure your time with us. You have a special place in our hearts!

Thalia McMillion, Director
Summer Arts at Derby
Hingham, Massachusetts





**The previous years' alumni
are here,
ready
to share with you
how
life changing this experience
was
for
all of them...**

George Refec, Alumnus 2012,2014

Hi, I am George, born in Sebes and presently living in UK where I am enrolled in International Business studies at Loughborough University, a Top 10 UK college. I am looking at the future planning to pursue a career in business consulting, maybe eventually run my own business. I must say that I feel I got to a good start this first year of college! I made a point in meeting people and taking part in the most exciting competitions and projects. As such together with three other Romanian students we won the Loughborough Apprentice competition, where we organized an event for the Students' Union and to run a profitable market stall.



Another project is being part of a team formed of representatives from other international universities aiming to create a social enterprise which would tackle the global issue of food waste. We have to think big! I feel the present academic environment offers a wide range of opportunities which will allow me to capitalize on my strengths; I met with representatives of companies such as Goldman Sachs, Mercedes, Tesla or even Formula One teams and Disney. I even met the Romanian Ambassador in the UK and got in touch with business people from around England as part of a networking event. These are just some of the things that come up in my mind when describing my experience here and I could go on ... (and I'm just in my first year). However, I feel the most important aspect is that I made a lot of great friends and we have lots of fun ...it's not all just serious stuff. In spite of so much great stuff I must say one thing I do miss being away is my family and my old group of friends... and of course grandma's food. I am grateful for their support as they know that for me, this is the best route towards achieving my objectives.

In retrospect the experience I had through EERC opened my eyes for the first time towards new opportunities and so I am able to set much higher life goals for myself. It made me more...more confident, more sociable and more determined. I advise the new students to take advantage of this opportunity at maximum by interacting with everyone and taking every chance to make new friends. They should try to understand America beyond what it is known from watching movies, to try and capture the positive aspects of the culture and apply it to their own advantage. The final thing I would like to tell the new students is: Welcome to the EERC family!

Roberta Tripea, Alumna 2009, 2012, 2016

I would like to start by telling that it is an honour and also a great pleasure to be invited to contribute to this year's magazine. Onwards, I will try to be less formal because, to me, EERC is, first a family and a great community, and second an outstanding organization, but also because I want to express, the best I can, the feelings and memories crafted by my experiences alongside these wonderful people.

I will avoid talking about the actual activities in which I took part during the time spent in the US, mainly because many of you perhaps have already heard about them and I do not want to repeat myself and become boring. Therefore I will focus on how these experiences influenced me as a person and what they taught.



I firstly mentioned "self-discovery". Why? Because when you go alone in the world (and please ignore the fellows who are accompanying you because you will not be together 24/7) you'll be on your own and you'll have to handle it. You have to integrate into a new society, a new family, you start looking at a new culture, and as easy as it can be for some, as difficult it may be for others. You might suffer a cultural shock, you get the impression that you don't fit in, and you are overwhelmed by everything that happens around you. My advice is to be yourself because it is for whom YOU are that you were chosen to participate in this project. It is because you managed to make yourself noticed among many other applicants, because you're intelligent, talented and special. Be yourself because the camp you will attend and your host family were chosen carefully for you in order to make you more mature, to teach you something new. And certainly, if you manage all of this you will have an unforgettable adventure. On one hand you will have the most awesome vacation of your life (this one is guaranteed), you'll visit a lot of places about which you've only dreamed before, and every day will seem drawn from a Hollywood movie. On the other hand, you should think of yourself as an ambassador of cultural exchange between Romania and the US. You must learn from the experiences you'll have there and try to bring a piece of America back with you, but you also have to be a proud Romanian and promote your own traditions, tell your host family and the colleagues in the camps about the rich cultural heritage of Romania. Don't be afraid to answer the questions everyone will have for you. Be natural, open, sociable. Do not worry because of your accent because your English might be limited. Everything solves itself when you get there surrounded by Americans. Whatever English I knew before going to the US has improved considerably, my vocabulary doubled because you are forced by circumstances to speak and you have to handle the situation. So yes, you will grow in these 4 weeks more than you might imagine, the people who will host you will become your second family and it will be incredible how attached of them you can get in such a short time, you'll learn a lot, you'll have fun and you will have the experience of your lifetime.

My experiences with EERC brought me where I am now, it helped me discover hidden talents and passions, it broadened my horizons, made me more open-minded and tolerant. I cannot imagine how my life would be now if I had not been part of this program, if I had not got to know all these wonderful people who have left their mark on my development as a person. But to be honest, I do not think much of it because once you get into the EERC family, you can only look forward knowing that you are walking on the right path.

Elena Morcov Pahoncea, Alumna 2013

Almost four years have passed since then, but I still can't say this experience is part of the past, since I can still feel its effect. And I think I'll feel it forever. It makes no sense in me saying that it's been an amazing journey and that I could have never imagined seeing all those things, that goes without saying. But about the people I've met there, about what I learned and what I got into doing after all of this... That's something to talk about. Five weeks next to honest people, devoted, creative, ready to help, learning bits from all of them really changed my life. "How?", you may ask. Well, from an emotive kid that wasn't involved in activities that would help the society I got to one that's not afraid of telling his opinion and that was involved in so many activities and volunteering actions that I didn't really have any free time. I always knew when I had to thank someone, but I've never known how. But I tried. And in the summer of 2014 I've written an article in a local newspaper in which I've explained my experience in the US in detail.



A few months later, I opened a theatre club in my High School, because America thought me to do what I like. Then, the articles and stories about how I've lived five weeks in America started flowing. I got to the point where students would stop me on the high school's hallways to tell me they've seen my posts on the Facebook about EERC and to ask me to tell them about the life-changing experience that EERC brought to me. Anyway, the most important of my projects in promoting the organization was "Rural=Urban=Equal chances". For a few months, I went to schools from and around Focsani to present students my experience. The news got all the way to Bucharest, Vatra-Dornei and Mures because I received e-mails from kids living in those places that were interested about the program and wanted to apply. That's how I thought about thanking EERC and the exceptional people that form this organization. Without them, I certainly wouldn't have gotten... like this.

EERC Alumni

2009

Cristina Burlacu, Bucuresti
Iulia Maties, Brasov
Ana Maria Moise, Bucuresti
Roberta Tripea, Brasov

2011

Cadmiel Botac, Sighetu Marmatiei
Iuliana Dima, Vaslui
Marius Hodoleanu, Brasov
Valentin Marchis, Carei
Tudor Ruxanda, Brasov
Alexandra Simion, Sibiu

2013

Andi Arnautu, Valcea
Paul Filip, Sebes
Andrei Neacsu, Bacau
Elena Morcov Pahoncea, Focsani
Andreea Robu, Brasov
Mihaela Stoicanescu, Brasov
Daniel Szabo Schuller, Sebes
Flavia Tuica, Brasov

2015

Patricia Arens, Brasov
Andi Arnautu, Valcea
Ariana Bejanaru, Brasov
Florena Buse, Valcea
Medeea Florescu, Valcea
Adriana Lupea, Sebes
Ioana Marinescu, Valcea
Vlad Refec, Sebes
Vlad Similie, Brasov

2010

Calin Barsan, Brasov
Sergiu Duda, Brasov,
Ionut Luca, Brasov
Andreea Mandruta ,
Bucuresti
Rober Mihalca, Brasov
Mihaela Stoicanescu, Brasov

2012

Oana Badea, Brasov
Anca Balaceanu, Valcea
Andreea Barbu, Valcea
Radu Grecu, Brasov
Vlad Minca, Timisoara
George Refec, Sebes
Tudor Ruxanda, Brasov
Tatiana Topa, Brasov
Roberta Tripea, Brasov

2014

Stefania Cebuc, Valcea
Mihai Cioroianu, Valcea
Dragos Crisan, Cluj
Irina Goga, Brasov
George Refec, Sebes
Valentin Szekeli, Brasov
Daniel Ticu, Brasov

2016

Andrea Andrei, Brasov
Maria Cardan, Brasov
Gabriel Nedelcu, Valcea
Ioana Negut, Brasov
Radu Nita, Valcea
Hristina Sararu, Valcea
Andreea Zsak, Valcea
Oana Spatacean, Sebes
Elena Mocanca, Focsani
Razvan Morcov Pahoncea,
Focsani



Educational
Enrichment for
Romanian
Children

We hope you enjoyed our magazine !



Send us your feedback and questions at the following e-mail addresses:

Andi Arnautu - andrei.arnautu@yahoo.com

Ariana Bejanaru - arianero2000@gmail.com