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## Reach Romania 2002 Mission Adventure

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# REACH Romania 2002 Mission Adventure

BY ERIN HELDSTAB

**F**or 21 years, I've been an only child. But this past summer, my family was expanded, and I experienced what it's like to have brothers and sisters. Lots of brothers and sisters!

From July 31 to August 14, I was part of a group of college and high school students who traveled to Peretu, Romania, for the REACH Romania 2002 mission trip, sponsored by Pioneer Memorial Church (PMC) and REACH International. Oliver Archer, PMC youth pastor, and "Mama Jasmine" Jacobs, REACH director, were the individuals instrumental in the planning and success of the trip.

The group left Berrien Springs with 10 people and were joined in Romania by seven others from various locations in the U.S. and Europe. There were several in our group who were experienced mission trip veterans, having been to Romania three or four times. I was looking forward to finding out what it was that kept drawing them back.

When we arrived at the airport in Bucharest, Romania, I was eager to get to the orphanage to meet the children. But God had some plans for our group before we got to the orphanage.

Throughout our flights, we were reminded that our passports were our most important identifying documents, and that we should

always keep them close to us. Sometime during our layover in Zurich, Switzerland, one of our group members lost his passport. But he didn't realize it until we were ready to go through customs in Bucharest. Word soon spread through the group, and, knowing this wasn't something we could handle alone, we turned to the One who had sent us to Romania—the One who was holding our itinerary in His hands.

There was talk of sending our group member back home, so we prayed with even more fervor. When we finally walked out of the airport with our luggage and boxes for the orphanage, we also walked out with the entire group. In the end, the officials had decided to extend a little grace and let him enter the country on the condition that he would return the next day to apply for a temporary passport. They saw that we were a group of Christians coming into their country to work for the children there. God took that moment of panic and used it to show us He was in control, and to draw our group even closer together.

The wait to meet the children at the home was well worth it. When we got to Peretu, the children greeted us with hugs and kisses and shrieks of joy. Each of them wanted to know our names, and we did our best to remember theirs, despite our state of exhaustion. During our time there, we worked closely with our new brothers and sisters from Peretu and Mislea, another REACH orphanage. We were able to show them love, attention, and loads of fun while conducting a FLAG Camp (Fun Learning About God). Some of us were counselors and led a group of six or seven children within the same age group, while others taught classes, such as music, games, Bible, gymnastics, or art.



*REACH Romania 2002 team members pose with the children they have come to love as their family.*

In my opinion, the trip was a success! We gave the children what we could, but, as is the case with most mission trips, each of us walked away with a blessing as well. Best of all, my family was extended to include all the children and team members I grew so close to.

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