

Project Harvest Hope

Summer 2007

EU Awards Harvest Hope \$100,000 Grant!

Dear Friends,

It gives me much pleasure to write this first letter to friends and supporters of Project Harvest Hope in my new role as President. I have followed the work of PHH in Transylvania for years and am delighted now to have the opportunity to be hands-on.

No doubt, you know that this is a time of enormous transition in Transylvania. Romania became a member of the European Union on January 1, 2007 and the villages of the Székelyföld entered uncharted territory. While the financial and entrepreneurial resources of the EU promise new opportunities, there is no assurance that the results will preserve the religious, cultural and social integrity of our Székely homelands. Project Harvest Hope is wading into this environment with resolve and with the knowledge that our Transylvanian village friends have so much to preserve and deserve the opportunity.

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We've improved our website!
Find out all the latest news about Project Harvest Hope at www.projectharvesthope.org.

Help Save the Unitarian Homelands!

Ten years ago, our vision was to assist villagers in building tangible assets: a mill and bakery, a modern barn with cows and dairy equipment, renewed pastureland, cows for the villagers. Subsequently, the success of the mill and bakery resulted in its purchase by a larger bakery, while preserving the goal of daily fresh bread for the villagers.

We are pleased to announce that in early January, the Harvest Hope dairy operation received a \$100,000 SAPARD grant from the EU in recognition of its promise as a model dairy for the valley. The grant is intended to assist the farm in meeting EU agricultural standards. We are delighted to report also that local investors are expressing interest in the farm and we expect that its future capitalization will come from local sources. This is as it should be, and we see this as a clear signal that the farm we have supported over the years will become what we have long envisioned: a sustainable agricultural resource for the valley.

PHH is also entering uncharted territory as we turn from tangible projects (mill, bakery, barn, cows) to intangible projects. Let me explain. So much of what we take for granted in the United States – the value of volunteerism, local initiative and decision-making, self-determination, voluntary

associations, a society built on trust and collective action – were seriously eroded, if not destroyed, under the reign of Nicolae Ceausescu. Now PHH seeks to assist Transylvanians in renewing these intangibles. We are doing so through a partnership with CIVITAS (www.civitas.ro), the leading non-governmental organization committed to building civil society in Romania. Its president, Gábor Kolumbán, is also the lay President of the Transylvanian Unitarian Church. We are enthusiastic about this new direction for PHH, believing that the renewal of “civil society” is basic to the future of village life.

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Read about Ildikó Máthé's work as a Local Development Agent, P. 2

Building Trust, Changing Lives

How does a wounded heart learn to trust again?

How do people traumatized by decades of Stalinist totalitarianism learn the value of individual volunteerism as well as community voluntary associations? How do they learn how to make group decisions and take community initiative?

And how might you help such an effort? This story from one village might show us the way.

Just imagine! There is a new community milk collection station in the Homoród Valley that follows stringent EU standards, thus allowing village farmers to receive top dollar on the milk they produce. Funds to build this modern, refrigerated center came from Hungary and from our local partner, Harvest Hope pro Homoród. This center is the result of much hard work by the local people themselves. These villagers participate in the Local Development Agent (LDA) Program of CIVITAS Foundation for Civil Society, funded by the generosity of Project Harvest Hope donors.

At a recent PHH board meeting, one of the newly trained Local Development Agents told us her story and the

story of the village that she is serving. We were moved by the accomplishments of this village, and want to share the story with you.

Ildikó Máthé serves the village of Homoródszentpéter. This most capable and articulate woman told us about the workings of the LDA program in her village, and the continued training and support they receive from the CIVITAS staff. Using her training, Ildikó gathers information from village members about village needs and possibilities for strengthening the village economy. “Slowly the trust grows: With trained and intentionally focused communications, from one villager to another, week after week, the villagers relearn how to carefully listen to one another. Slowly the community consensus emerges”.

Ildiko helps the villagers come to a shared vision and then aids them in the realization of that dream. She has learned how to research and apply for available grants, and assists the villagers from original community-dreaming to community-action and implementation. This is exciting work in the rural countryside, and Ildikó is glad to aid her own community in this way. Among other changes, these villagers now have a self-sustaining, agriculturally-based economic enterprise in their local community.

Ildikó Máthé and Szentpéter village team at a Civitas training.

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But the most remarkable part of this story is that Ildikó is not an employee nor an outsider—she is a volunteer, from within the community! In a society torn apart by totalitarianism, this is an extraordinary facet of the LDA program.

This is the beginning of a society built on trust and collective action. A society which builds on local initiative and decision-making. A society which seeks self-determination, demonstrating the value of volunteerism and mutual respect.

Your gifts help rebuild this society, and transform the lives of these villagers!



Letter, cont. from pg. 1

Our new efforts rest on faith. And how appropriate! Our new efforts also rest on determination and commitment. This new direction presents us with enormous challenges. We will meet them and thrive.

Much of my enthusiasm for our work is grounded in the competence and dedication of our Board of Directors. They are remarkable and skilled, volunteering a significant portion their time and energy and resources. Sherm Eagles has retired as Treasurer after several years of devoted service; Tom Merritt, also from St. Paul, is our new Treasurer, to our delight. Naomi King has returned to

the Board. David Keyes is on a year's leave of absence. And we remain grateful for the leadership of our immediate past President, Rob Eller-Isaacs, whom we will honor at our Annual Dinner in June.

And now two things before I close. First, we have a new website under development (www.projectharvest-hope.org). Check it out! And second, the Unitarian Universalist General Assembly 2007 is just around the corner, in June in Portland, Oregon. Please review our schedule and join us for these events: our Annual PHH Lecture, given this year by Bishop Árpád Szabó of the Unitarian Church in Transylvania; the Annual Dinner

at award-winning Simpatuca Restaurant; and our workshop on traveling with PHH Pilgrimages. We hope to see you soon!

One of my goals as President is to be in close touch with PHH friends and supporters. To that end, I invite your concerns, your observations, your suggestions. Speak to me at one of our events, or you may email me at wcs@hermitageinthewoods.org. I seek your counsel and thank you for your ongoing support of our projects, tangible and intangible.

Faithfully,
Will Saunders for the PHH Board of Directors

PHH and Friends Celebrate EU Grant!

Close to forty people attended a festive party in honor of PHH's Bay Area supporters in February. Board member Katalin Voros and her husband Wayne Phillips opened their lovely home in Orinda and supplied guests with Transylvanian hors-d'oeuvres, pálinka, homemade grape juice and lemonade, and tasty pastries, over-and-above the requirements of the attendees! Guests included local Hungarians and Transylvanian-Hungarians, in addition to other longtime-friends of PHH.

The party-goers celebrated the receipt of the \$100,000 EU grant, and had a

sneak preview of PHH's new in-the-works documentary film, currently in production with Viewpoint Media.

The evening was a great success! Guests responded with generous gifts and shared enthusiastic, appreciative comments about the importance of our work. Those who could not attend sent their greetings and graciously included gifts as well.



Long-time supporter and pastry maker par excellence Éva Gerö (Mrs. J. Cillag) with host Katalin Voros



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Transylvanian-Hungarians John Varga, Emilia Fekete, and Anna Máthé Foss.

Thank you to all who attended and to all who responded by mail. Your gifts and encouragement make our work possible, and strengthen our resolve to serve these isolated villages.

Watch for our next party in your area...Portland in June, the Washington, D.C. area in November. We love to meet our supporters over good food and drink!

Pilgrimages of Witness and Transformation

Travel with Us!

Witness the daily joys and struggles of village life
Give and receive the gift of engaged listening
Share stories, bread and work
Reflect upon our vocation as a people of privilege
Explore a spiritual commitment to justice-
making and sustainable living

PHH pilgrims live in the homes of local families, work alongside our project partners, and participate in seminars and study groups. Worship and reflection, feasting, singing and dancing—all are shared on these transformative journeys.



Upcoming Pilgrimages

San Francisco Choir Pilgrimage — July 11- 23, 2007

This trip, led by Dr. Judit Gellerd, will combine singing and sight-seeing with a stay in Kolozsvár, to visit the partner church of the First Unitarian Church of San Francisco. This trip is reserved for members of the San Francisco Church and the Berkeley Choir.

Homoród Valley — August 1-14, 2007

Unity Church Unitarian in Saint Paul, MN, visits their partner church, Homoródszentpéter. Others are welcome to join; contact Justin Schroeder, 651-228-1456, ext. 106, for more information.

Great Symposium — October 7 - 17, 2007

NOW REGISTERING!

Join us for this “graduate level” journey into the heart of Transylvania. Seminars led by local scholars and experts will include sustainable agriculture and globalization, post-communist economics and development, religious and cultural history, and women’s and children’s issues.

NEW! Farm and Feast—Fall 2008

REGISTRATION BEGINS JAN 2008

Led by chef and sustainable farm advocate Linda Colwell and PHH Vice President Cecilia Kingman Miller, we’ll taste local wines, meats, and pastries, as village cooks teach us how to prepare traditional culinary specialties. Local farmers will present seminars on sustainable farming challenges and small-scale agricultural traditions. Nestled in the Carpathian Mountains, surrounded by history, we’ll eat, drink and celebrate farmers.

For more information or to apply for a specific trip, visit our website at www.projectharvesthope.org.



Restoring the Circle

April 2007

PHH Board Member Gary DeCramer brings invaluable experience to us. Besides growing up on a farm in southwest Minnesota, serving ten years as a state senator and many more years as a university instructor, Gary served as state director for the US Department of Agriculture Office of Rural Development. He now teaches and directs a mid-career master of public affairs program at the University of Minnesota's Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs.

In 2001, Gary wrote a report to the PHH Board, "A Part of the Circle is Missing: A Unitarian Pilgrimage." This report provided us with a crucial review of the societal conditions in Transylvania, and helped us shape appropriate responses to local needs. Gary is embarking upon a new review for us, and will present his observations at our Annual Lecture. (See back page.)

Here, in Gary's words, is the next stage of his work:

"Domokos and Erzsébet, I long for the day when I can once again stand in your doorway and feel your embrace."

Each year since 2001, I have written those words to my host family in Homoródszentpéter, Transylvania. On May 29, together with fellow pilgrim and Project Harvest Hope Board member Olga Zoltai, I will return to this village of two hundred (most of whom are Unitarians) and stay once again in the Jobb family home. Like last time, I will be overwhelmed as I am surrounded by farm animals, sweet hospitality and savory food.

Since my 2001 pilgrimage with twenty other members of Unity Church Unitarian in St. Paul, Minnesota, I have

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enjoyed being a member of Unity's partner church team. We support efforts directed by Szentpéter's visionary minister, Kinga Réka Székely. Many members of our congregation continue to travel to the village; some more than once. We have learned that these villagers mean it when they welcome our return. Unity members recall when the Jobbs came to Minnesota in 2003 and joined us on Flower Communion Sunday; last fall, villagers Ildikó Máthé and Ilonka Máthé joined us in St. Paul for a meeting of the Project Harvest Hope board. During their visit, we learned of the transforming work Ildikó is doing as a volunteer local development agent for Szentpéter. (See related article page 3.)

I hope to learn more about this work. My students at the Humphrey Institute come from all over the world. In my course, Leadership for the Common Good, we talk about leadership challenges. I learned much from these Unitarian villagers in 2001, and so I intend to further deepen my understanding of leadership and civic engagement during a return visit to the Homoród Valley.

"These villagers have not experienced democracy as we know it. Yet they yearn for it."

Here are some questions I am pursuing:

- Following Romania's accession into the European Union, how will civic life in the villages be transformed by the new institutional arrangements?
- What are local leaders doing to make sustainable adjustments?

In previous research in Transylvania, I concluded that decades of communist oppression resulted in a culture of mistrust. The culture of agency and free association that we take for granted



Gary DeCramer and the Jobb family.

as citizens of the USA was not evident in lives of the people I interviewed and interacted with in Transylvania. As a teacher of public affairs, I am struck by the lessons that emerge from the struggles faced by these villagers who have not experienced democracy as we know it. Yet, they yearn for it.

In that report, I said that because villagers do not trust one another, there is little institutional knowledge or prior experience upon which to build or design collaborative community or economic development initiatives.

Now PHH is partnering with the CIVITAS Foundation to address these very needs. CIVITAS is providing a path toward building village level experiences necessary for civic life. Olga and I will attend a June training session in Magyarsáros with local development agents (LDAs) from six Transylvanian villages. These LDAs volunteer their time to their local villages, creating strategies to meet EU adjustments to farming and marketing practices.

I look forward to sharing with all of you what I learned from the Unitarian LDAs, those young men and women who are making things happen at the village level. I pray that with the work of Project Harvest Hope, Civitas and the LDAs, a part of the circle will no longer be missing.

Project Harvest Hope Transylvanian Farm Dinner



Friday, June 22, 2007

6:00 p.m.

Portland Oregon

Honored Guests: Árpád Szabó, Bishop of the Transylvanian Unitarian Church, and the first ever Project Harvest Hope Fellow, the Reverend Rob Eller-Isaacs.

Our destination: award winning Simpatica Restaurant, named one of the 100 best restaurants in the US. We'll enjoy a selection of courses inspired by our Hungarian friends and celebrating the bounty of Portland area farmers. We'll linger over the table, sharing news from our projects, welcoming friends old and new—we might even sing a few folk songs!

All proceeds support the work of Project Harvest Hope.

To reserve tickets, return the form below in the enclosed envelope.

PROJECT HARVEST HOPE TRANSYLVANIAN FARM DINNER

Please mail this form with your check, made out to Project Harvest Hope, in the enclosed envelope before **June 1 to:**

Project Harvest Hope, 732 Holly Ave., Saint Paul, MN 55104

Name(s) _____

E-mail _____ Phone _____

Number of tickets:

_____ Bishop's Table \$250 each \$ _____

_____ Presidents' Table \$100 each \$ _____

_____ Supporters \$75 each \$ _____



I cannot attend the dinner, but would like to contribute \$ _____

TOTAL ENCLOSED: \$ _____

Tickets will be confirmed by e-mail (or phone).



Saving Unitarian Homelands: Sowing Seeds of Hope

Your gifts are needed today to –

- *Save Unitarian Homelands from European Union over-regulation and corporate land grabs.
(It can be done and our partners know how to do it!)*
- *Preserve family farming, the landscape, and a way of life that has endured for generations.*

Sowers Circle

___ Yes, I/we want to sow the seeds of hope in the Unitarian Homelands with a gift of \$1000 or more! We understand we will receive a beautiful landscape photo as an acknowledgement of this gift.

Sustainers Circle

___ Yes, I/we want to preserve the Transylvanian environment and sustainable agriculture with a gift of \$500.

Supporters Circle

___ Yes, I/we want to help villagers shape their own future by giving \$250 to help train and support a local development agent.

Friends Circle

___ Yes, I/we would like to be listed and known as Friends of Harvest Hope by making a contribution of at least \$100.

___ I/we know that all gifts help. Enclosed is \$_____.

___ I would like to know more about how my congregation or organization can participate in Project Harvest Hope, through service projects, farm dinners, and more.

___ My company has a Matching Gift Program. Please contact me for more information.

___ This gift is in memory or in honor of: _____

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Telephone: _____ E-mail: _____

Please use the enclosed envelope to mail your contribution to:



Project Harvest Hope
c/o Unity Church-Unitarian
732 Holly St.
St. Paul MN 55104

Or donate on line at www.projectharvesthope.org

Project Harvest Hope

works with local people to protect the Unitarian homelands
by providing assistance for sustainable rural development
in the Székelyföld region of Transylvania, Romania.

Fourth Annual Harvest Hope Lecture: "Protecting Unitarian Homelands: Practicing Sustainability"



Thursday, 6/21/07, 1:00-2:15 PM at Oregon Center Ballroom 201

Rev. Árpád Szabó, Bishop of the Unitarian Church of Transylvania

Sustainable values preserved Unitarian villages of Transylvania for generations. Now corporate farming and globalization threaten their future. Rev. Árpád Szabó addresses a liberal theology for these times. Project Harvest Hope presents its efforts to protect these villages and preserve local culture in a changing world.

Project Harvest Hope Celebration Dinner 2007

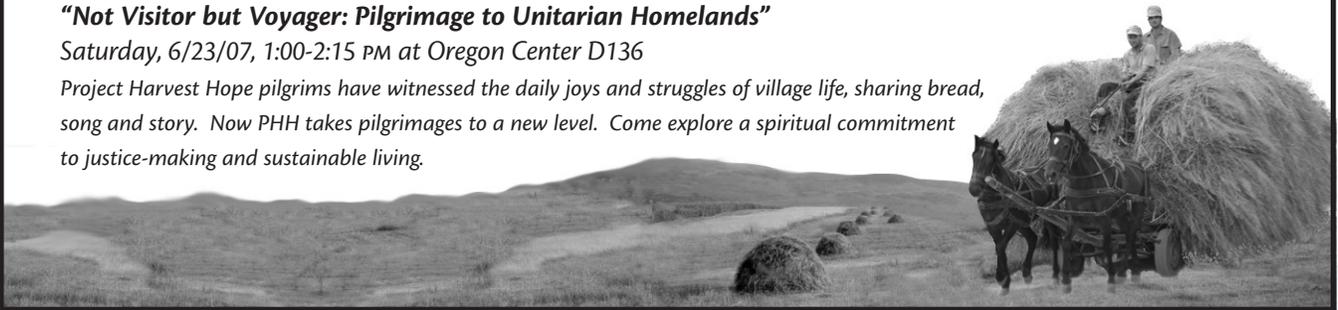
Friday, 6/22/07, 6:00-8:00 PM

A festive Hungarian dinner at what Bon Appetit Magazine called "one of the ten hottest restaurants in the country." Simpatica Restaurant collaborates with area farmers to bring the best of local foods to the table. Come celebrate our successful year with a sustainable meal. (limited number of tickets available at our booth.)

"Not Visitor but Voyager: Pilgrimage to Unitarian Homelands"

Saturday, 6/23/07, 1:00-2:15 PM at Oregon Center D136

Project Harvest Hope pilgrims have witnessed the daily joys and struggles of village life, sharing bread, song and story. Now PHH takes pilgrimages to a new level. Come explore a spiritual commitment to justice-making and sustainable living.



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