

## **How Far We've Come** MARCH 2014

Dear Friends and Supporters of Project Harvest Hope,

It has been twenty-five years since the fall of Nicolae Ceausescu. It seems hardly possible! During these years, we have witnessed dramatic changes in the social, economic, political and religious landscapes of Romania. Here's a reminder of how far we've come.

Project Harvest Hope began its work shortly after the fall of Ceausescu in response to the vision of two congregations, Okland, Transylvania and Oakland, California, with its ministers, Kelemen Levente and Rob Eller-Isaacs. Initially, large-scale economic development projects were our focus — the mill, bakery and dairy barn.

Romania joined the European Union on January 1, 2007. Big changes were on the horizon. The leadership of PHH changed. And, being small, agile, and flexible, PHH changed its focus. In response to a challenge from Kolumban Gabor, then President of the Transylvanian Unitarian Church and President of Civitas: Foundation for Civil Society, PHH redirected its efforts to small-scale projects whose subtext was to help Transylvanians rebuild the elements of civil society, so brutalized under the reign of Ceausescu.

Initially, we worked with Civitas. Four years ago, we established the Unitarian Community Fund of the Székelyudvarhely Community Foundation and have worked closely with "SzKA" since then. These efforts have been remarkably successful: providing a level playing field for all Unitarian communities to seek funding for small-scale projects, encouraging cooperative work across religious and ethnic lines, stimulating an entrepreneurial spirit, and preserving a unique heritage.

Today, we write to inform you of more changes for PHH. Will Saunders (President), Tom Merritt (Treasurer) and Fred Howard (Member of the Board) retired from the Board effective February 1, 2014. Ann Swardlick, a member of the Board, has been elected President; Jennifer Emrich has been elected Vice president; and Marge Titcomb has been elected Treasurer.

The PHH administrative and financial functions are being moved from St. Paul, Minnesota to Yarmouth, Maine. And perhaps most important, the funding strategy with SzKA is changing. We are moving to implement a social media fundraising model — a strategy that is increasingly common among North American community foundations. This model enables our donors to learn about specific projects being proposed by village organizations and to "vote" for the projects that speak to their hearts by contributing matching funds. We will partner with SzKA's "Give. Get. Do" program to begin this effort in the fall.

Our website, will reflect these changes and will continue to be our primary vehicle of communication. Donations are gratefully received through the website's donation portal. We hope that you will be enthusiastic about this new approach, in line with the huge changes in the philanthropic landscape both here and in Transylvania, and responsive to the ongoing changes in Transylvania.

On behalf of Tom Merritt and Fred Howard and ourselves, we want to express our gratitude for your support for PHH over the years. We hope you will remain engaged with us as PHH moves into a new era of fundraising to support our Unitarian homelands in Transylvania.

With appreciation and hope,  
Will Saunders, President (2006 - 2014)

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Will Saunders".

Ann Swardlick, President (2014 - )

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ann S. Swardlick".