

## YOUTH

# Making a difference in the community

Readers may remember reading the inspiring experiences of twenty-two young people from Great Britain who took part in an international workshop, *HombreMundo*, in Serbia and Romania in July (New City October 2017). The experience did not stop when they returned home, as we see here.

**Joe Rawcliffe** writes: For me the experience of *HombreMundo* in Serbia and Romania really changed the way I viewed things in my daily life. I have become more appreciative of what I have and the opportunities I get. The following experience happened after I returned from *HombreMundo*.

**Towards the end of August** I went on a three week course called the National Citizenship Service (NCS). The NCS programme consists of a one week outdoor residential, a one week university experience, and a week of planning for thirty hours of social action. I went on this course together with a friend. We were criticised by our other friends who hadn't liked the idea of the programme but never the less we thought we'd go in with open minds and make the most of the experience for us and others. Having just returned from Romania, I tried my best to go into the experience loving, helping the people in our group and trying to build up the unity within it. For my friend it was a bit more difficult, without the experience I had over the summer. For the pair of us it was a struggle, at times, to love people especially when they were particularly rude or not accepting when we offered our help. However through persistence, people saw our intentions were good and by the end of the three weeks we were a close unit.

**The third week of NCS is based on social action** where you are asked to nominate a local charity and to raise money for this. The area of the South Lakes that

I live in is home to a rather large number of elderly people. They have built the community that does so much to help us as young people and as a thank-you we wanted to give something back to them. St John's Hospice is the local hospice for the Kendal area. It is widely used by the many elderly residents or their family members, about 1 in 4 people have a link to the hospice in our area. Therefore three of us in our group decided we'd do our social action there.



Photo: courtesy of Joe Rawcliffe

## Romania Rap

Extracts from a Rap by **Innocent Muwonge** which he wrote on his return from Serbia and Romania as he reflected on the experience.

**World unity** one community  
Building bridges no disunity  
2 weeks that flew by quickly  
If you ask me it should've been 3

**Serbia and Romania**, Romania back to Serbia.  
World unity one community  
Building bridges no disunity .....

**During the week** we helped out the community  
Each one of us jumped at the opportunity  
It entailed singing for the elderly  
Gardening and cleaning peoples properties

**It was great the friendships** that we made  
so many friends can't remember all their names  
although we're different but inside we're all the same .....

**This isn't the end yet** people it's  
just the beginning of the start, its  
HombreMundo yeah and it starts  
with your head and ends with your heart

**It's HombreMundo** a world united,  
We aim to unify all those divided  
It's a party and you're all invited,  
always looking to the future, just  
call us long sighted .....

Break it down for us to  
tell them how it went



Photo: SB

**Serbia and Romania**, Romania back to Serbia.  
World unity one community  
Building bridges no disunity

**Who thought 600 teens** could  
make a difference in the  
community. Thanks to the  
support and help that we received  
we achieved all that we never believed

**Serbia and Romania** two weeks  
amazing phenomena world unity  
one community we won't stop till  
our missions complete.

**We decided that we'd do 24 sponsored challenges** over 24 hours and try to raise at least £300 for the Hospice. Some of the challenges included serenading a stranger, eating a whole garlic bulb, the wear it challenge and free hugs. Each challenge came with a suggested donation. The challenges pushed us outside our comfort zones and also made us feel very ill at times! Combined with the lack of sleep not surprisingly it was a difficult 24 hours! Despite this,

not one of us complained or bailed out as we knew every challenge and hardship for us was a step closer to some help for another person when they needed it the most. It was great to see the community unite around us by donating and cheering us on in the challenges. So many of the online Focolare community also got behind the three of us, to help people they didn't even know, which I thought epitomised the spirit of love we share, and for that I thank them.

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Photo: courtesy of Joe Rawcliffe

Free hugs with Joe Rawcliffe

**After the talks in Serbia** it became even more apparent that achieving a ‘world person’ starts in small communities of people and builds outwards. In Romania, we helped a few people in a small way and saw the huge impact it had on both them and us. The joy and love they felt was well worth the effort we had to put in to enable them to experience it. It is this message I tried to take back to my own community and put into practice in my own life. This difficult but small act of raising this money will bring joy to many. For me that’s one step closer to a ‘world person’. All we have to do is keep taking one step at a time.

**Joe Driver writes:** I lost my Grandad to cancer at the age of one. I never really had the chance to get to know him but my parents always say that the first person I ever smiled at was him. Macmillan Cancer Support helped my Grandad up until the moment he passed away. They did so much for him such as giving him advice, medical assistance and moral support. Consequently in our family we have always held Macmillan close to our hearts. Every year at my school, Alva Academy in the Central Lowlands of Scotland, the sixth year work together to raise as much money as they can for Macmillan.

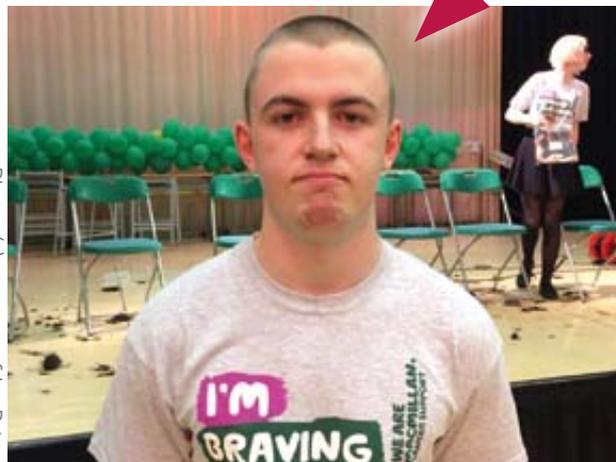
**The HombreMundo experience in Romania** inspired me to join this drive to make a difference to the lives of people living with cancer.

As well as joining in a number of activities I decided to shave my head as a sponsored event to raise money for this charity whilst the whole school watched! This was a hard challenge for me. However some things are more valuable than hair!

**This was a continuation of the HombreMundo** experience for me as the whole campaign brought people together; we all put aside our differences and were united in our fight against cancer. Along with that, we raised over £40,000, a national record for a school. Everybody at my school was incredibly proud of our achievement. I was happy to use, as I had done at the HombreMundo, my head, hands and heart once more to make a difference. 🍷



Joe Driver  
‘before and after...!’



Photos (2): courtesy of Joe Driver