

**SUCCESS STORIES
IN THE IMPACT PROGRAM**



Success Stories in the IMPACT Program

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

A few months ago I was coordinating, along with Octavia Borș (NHF), the research work of my colleagues Dr. GELU TEAMPĂU and VICTOR CEPOI (student in a Master program in Political Science, Cluj). A major part of this research was the documentation of some successful stories that include, in short descriptive passages, good practice examples in the IMPACT program; it was about leaders, club members and staff leaders and also about the projects and the clubs. We traveled across the country to meet and talk with the main characters of the stories in person; what you are about to read in these next pages is the result of the interviews my colleagues and I carried out. I myself spent a couple of days in Lupeni, Petrosani and Drobeta Turnu Severin, where I met wonderful people, intelligent children, generous leaders, and highly involved coordinators. I tried to achieve a better understanding why they turned out to be a „success story” of the NHF program; what motivates them-their hopes, dreams and accomplishments, but especially the work behind them.

As a university lecturer and member of the faculty in the Political Science department at Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj, in the past 10 years I have come across many young people slightly older than the youth I met in IMPACT. This is the first time, as a teacher as well as an anthropologist, my professional major, that I have had the chance to take a look at what is happening in the pre-university educational system. The stories in this guide speak for themselves, but they have an important common point; the key to success is always passion. The

successful leaders are always the ones that really enjoy what they are doing, the ones who are comfortable working with youth, and the most important thing, leaders who admit that they are also learning from the youth. The ability to learn, which we consider a natural thing for children, is not an obligation but an option. And this fact is shown very clearly from the IMPACT members’ success stories; they are the ones that want to learn to be the best. The best projects are the ones that use all these ingredients: passion, implication, willingness to learn, the desire to help those around you and making an effort for the good of the community. Finally, the successful clubs are the ones that become not only a frame for expression and personal development of the young members, but also an incubator for future active citizens.

I also learned from this experience, among other things, that there are people that are willing and can make a difference in the world we live in, and their passion and volunteering activity must be channeled and catalyzed throughout education.

Thank you NHF for your support, patience and help!

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Dana M. Bates
Co-founder and Executive Director

FOREWORD

What is „sustainable development” about? This has been the new buzz-word of the world for several decades now. But how is it advanced? It is widely known that most „development” interventions are useless, if not harmful, because they are disempowering. People often quote „give a person a fish, feed them for a day, teach them to fish, and feed them for a lifetime.” Sounds nice, but what if there are no fish in your area, or the fish are poisoned, or you just don’t like fish(ing)?

The following parable can help:

A man saw a person drowning in a river and dove in to save him. The next day, another person was swept down the river, and once more the courageous bystander plunged into the waters to save the struggling victim. The following day, there were three people drowning, and this time the bystanders had to seek help to make the rescues. The day after that, more people needed saving, and many citizens had to join the rescue effort. Soon the river was full of drowning people, and the entire community worked without end to save them. Finally someone said, “We should go upriver to find out where all these drowning people are

coming from.” But others answered, “We can’t—we’re too busy saving lives down here.”

What is the upstream issue? Is it teaching people to fish? No, actually it is intimately related to IMPACT’s core mission. One scholar writes:

In all sectors of development, the adoption of problem-solving approaches is much more important than communicating particular packages of technical information. (J. Edwards)

The upstream issue for sustainable development is problem-solving and developing the problem-solving mentality itself. Development requires not only learning to care for the common good, but to develop real skills in the process of addressing real challenges at the local level. It involves learning by doing; learning by caring for one’s community and addressing specific challenges.

„We will never solve the problem of development without the development of more problem-solvers”. (Dana M. Bates)



And that is what you are doing IMPACT leaders and youth! You are at the cutting edge of what really needs to be happening in the world. You are becoming problem-solvers and developing yourselves and your communities for the common good. It is an honor to work with you!

Dana M. Bates
Co-founder and Executive Director, New Horizons Foundation



Roxana Vitan
Executive Director

IMPACT MEMBERS

„When the IMPACT members tell you what they are doing, their eyes shine. Because it is interesting. Because in the IMPACT Clubs they experience a job well done and success. Personal and group success is achieved because whatever they do, they work as a team. The answer to the question ‚Why do you go to IMPACT Club?’ was a very short one that expresses a lot by its simplicity: ‚Because it helps us to become better!’

‚Better’ has many facets: better people, braver, more organized, better speakers, better listeners, more involved, better colleagues, more creative. The IMPACT program helps them first to experiment with being organized and to experience the joy of success. Secondly it allows

them to talk about what they achieved, what was good and what went wrong. This helps youth improve and grow.

Perhaps later on we will find former IMPACT club members active in community foundations, teaching young people, or involved in one of the thousands of projects NGOs conduct annually in Romania; concerned about the good of the people next to them.

And this fact cannot mean anything else than ‚more good’ for everyone of us.”

Roxana Vitan, Executive Director, Romanian- American Foundation.



Radu:

„IMPACT is like a family ”

„Emil Botta” Theoretical High School, Adjud, Vrancea County

RADU has been an IMPACT member for 4 years, in the „Emil Botta” High School Club from Adjud. It all began out of curiosity: *„The bravest among us went just because we were curious” and continued because „I really liked their method of working and the field they were working in”.* Before he began his experience with IMPACT, in the first year of high school, Radu admits himself that he was a problem child; skipping classes, having behavioral issues, developing an addiction for alcohol and he was part of a harmful

peer group. He managed to find in IMPACT an environment that stimulates him and helps him develop. *„IMPACT is like a family”,* says Radu today. He has gathered 4 years of experience in IMPACT, 2 of which he served as a junior leader.

His personal experience helps him now to understand youth who have age-specific problems, like acceptance and affirmation in the peer group (which can sometimes lead to alcohol or drug consumption). *„I managed to surpass the problems with the help of the group, because I saw I can be appreciated by people for the things I can do, and that besides drinking I can do other more constructive things. I saw that I was appreciated by teachers, people, colleagues, parents and others working in positions of authority”.* Participating in IMPACT projects helped him understand responsibility and made him channel his energy into useful things in which he found a more solid source of self-esteem and satisfaction. Radu has the experience of many team projects, including some in the realm of social entrepreneurship: *„We created ornaments and cards, we went to schools and sold them and with the money we made we then went to a center for the elderly with food and also to an orphanage where we had previously worked. We split into groups and we chose areas to go. We went to the villages around our town, went to all*

the schools where we again split into groups and entered every classroom. This is what we did, we just got started, we are young, but we want to help the young orphans and also the elderly; they were very interested and got involved right away.”

At 18 years old, Radu talks like a grown-up, capable of evaluating and understanding the evolution of his younger colleagues and his own; he not only has the willingness to get involved and to learn, but also the skills of coordinating and organizing activities. He learned in IMPACT not only to use his resources in a useful way for those around him, but also for communicating with others. He learned a personal lesson when he admitted in front of his colleagues the problems he had with alcohol. *„The thing that helped me the most as a leader, but also as a member, was being able to communicate. It helped me a lot to work with the younger club members. Communication and teamwork help me a lot right now.”* When he took charge of the group, Radu found himself in the position of a leader, which he faced in a very responsible manner. He was not shy to ask for and accept the help of the adult leaders and focused on being attentive to the needs of the younger or newer members. Working with the IMPACT Club sometimes means time sacrifices or relinquishments but Radu feels motivated: *„it motivates me a lot. It is a work*

of several years now, work which made me miss some moments with my friends, but I tried to put them behind and I said no, I want to follow this path, it motivates me, and it keeps motivating me.”

What does IMPACT mean for Radu?

„IMPACT, first of all, is in theory a community initiative, but I see it in two phases; in the second phase it can be a way of socializing, a way of meeting people that have the same interests as you do and with whom you can do amazing things that sometimes you can't consider doing alone. Young people sometimes think 'I am young, I can't do much, I can't make a difference'. In IMPACT we show young people that it can be done. Step by step, things can be changed, and if you really want it, you can do it.”

If he were to send a message to people his age, Radu would encourage them to get involved and to enjoy it: „I would try to encourage them with the idea of volunteering itself, the idea of spiritual fulfillment and not the material one, to make them realize that the spiritual one is... I don't know, more important, you get more out of it than by having money. Because, I myself, when I joined IMPACT, I thought that with money you can do anything, but I realized that I feel way better when I work at a community service learning project, when I go and help someone... I think this is what I would like to pass on to others.”



Ionela:

„I like to call the IMPACT Club a little project factory”

„Garabet Ibrăileanu” Theoretical High School,
Iași, Iași County

Ionela is the one to be thanked for the existence of the IMPACT Club at the „Garabet Ibrăileanu” Theoretical High School in Iași. After 4 years of being an active member in the club at her middle school, „Vasile Conta”, Ionela found herself at the „Garabet Ibrăileanu” Theoretical, which didn't have an IMPACT Club and was not on the list of the five local high schools planning to begin an IMPACT club. Ionela proved to have a strong will and perseverance; sending daily e-mails, calling, insisting and eventually convincing her high school principal and two teachers to

lay the foundation of an IMPACT Club at her high school. Ionela, who was the coordinator of the Student Council and was involved in other activities, wanted to do something in her free time. She also wanted to learn useful things for her future and her development as a human being. She grew along with IMPACT: „from the 6th grade, now I'm in the 12th, there is a huge difference. I came at a stage when I can say I grew in IMPACT, it was an evolution and it is noticeable, when you draw a line you can see it and I just love what I see.”

Ionela not only achieved increased self-knowledge, but also managed to take advantage of all her qualities and abilities throughout the projects she was active in. For her, communicating with different types of people, different ages or from other fields, represents a continuous challenge.

„An IMPACT Club is a place where we meet and we put to work our abilities and qualities in order to make something nice and beautiful for us, but especially for the community. I like to call the IMPACT Club a little 'project factory'; it is a place where people who contribute to interesting and beautiful things gather.” More, says Ionela, “at IMPACT you have a freedom, the freedom to be creative, which I consider to be most important for the body and mind.”

After six years of experience, Ionela is mature enough to evaluate her own role in

the IMPACT team: *„usually I am the liaison and I like to communicate. I am the person that comes with the ideas, suggestions, but I also have learned to be a good listener. Lots of times I just listen to my colleagues then I draw a conclusion and we see what can be done. It is really hard to learn as a team and working with people is especially challenging; I'm glad I was able to get to a point where I can coordinate a team.”* For Ionela, volunteering is a life option for an individual who is willing to learn and to share with others what she knows: *„eventually, this is what it is all about, experience; showing others what you know, what you learned. And this is like a reward, because relying on volunteering, all this work which you do to complete your tasks contributes to your experience and your formation as a human being.”*

An important moment for Ionela was her participation in the education through adventure camp, VIAȚA (LIFE): *„There I had, out of my whole IMPACT experience, the most emotional and the most impactful spiritual moment, when we finished those five days of camp and everybody went back to their life with all sorts of butterflies, hearts, signed T-shirts and so on.”* Ionela had similar moments during the projects: *„we had activities like giving the elderly trinkets; when you arrive there you have a very strong emotional response and you see many things*

that don't seem real, but soon you realize they indeed exist and inside you it matters a lot.”

Ionela is an excellent example of the IMPACT member prototype, and she clearly states what that is: *„that person who wants to help, to support people the same age or younger and older, a person who loves to communicate, to relate to others and a type of person who loves what he/she does and accomplishes. It is the person who can feel satisfied or less satisfied of what he/she accomplished during a project; in total, it is a person who wants to aim higher than others around him/her.”*

Ionela is optimistic, believes in change, and this keeps coming back to her: *„I still hope that society will become a better place for active citizens; I rely on the fact that in the future we will succeed in changing ourselves and I will succeed in sharing this mentality of new things and in expanding our horizons.”*



Mihai:

„It is such a good thing he is joining IMPACT, it is the place to develop skills”

**„Liviu Rebreanu” School, Cluj Napoca,
Cluj County**

Mihai is a boy studying in the 5th grade at „Liviu Rebreanu” School in Cluj Napoca, a member of IMPACT for only about a year, but already involved in every activity of the club. According to his teacher, club leader Agafia Costinaș, Mihai is a very curious child, who likes the company of other children and wants to learn as much as possible. Before joining IMPACT, when he was in the 4th grade, Mihai was perceived as a shy child: *„I have known Mihai since the 4th grade and from the start he seemed to be shy. When I found him among the students in IMPACT, I said to myself, Look, it is such a good thing he is joining IMPACT, here is a place to develop and I think I was right. Last year, I had some other students*

who were unsure and who didn't have such a good opinion about themselves, but they started to change during the IMPACT meetings. And it is a change we leaders have observed."

The fact is that the children initially very much enjoy the structured games and interactions, this can be what initially draws them to IMPACT; but the effect on personality is always beneficial. dom. Agafia continues, „There are students who were shy at first, but participating in the team games and in projects, they start to change, to have more self-confidence, to socialize more with the others and begin making friends. Then there are others, who already have leader qualities and know how to be self-organized and how to organize others. It is about those that want to get involved, who believe that it is in their power to change something."

Mihai is such an example. Today he is an active and engaged young man, according to his leader: „he is full of initiative, he came to me and said ‚Teacher, I created a Facebook page for The Best IMPACT‘; he joined the junior leaders training program and now he wants to attend VIATA (LIFE) camp and tries to get others involved." Even more, Mihai is starting to show real leadership qualities, he likes to get others organized and to motivate them. „I think this is why he started to get involved in IMPACT, because he wants to stand out. And he wants to be acknowledged by others for his work and his value. Today, at the IMPACT meeting he was the one to coordinate the game and to suggest

the story. I believe he has the chance to stand out because of all the IMPACT members he is the one with the most involvement."

Mihai is a member of a middle school club, and the games and the relaxed atmosphere matter the most for the youngest of the IMPACT members. He acknowledges this: „What I love the most about IMPACT is the group games and the fundraising for the projects. IMPACT for me is a second home and is my chance to improve to perfection." However, the leaders noticed that the little IMPACT members work hard at being „good citizens firstly, afterwards being responsible at school and in the community." Agafia Costinaş, one of Mihai's leaders, noticed that „students who participate in IMPACT have a different attitude towards me in class, they have started to study more and pay more attention in class." Together, the club members created nice projects, in which they tried their best to help others within a restricted budget; often they utilized their own resources. That being said, in an activity which surprised and impressed their leader, the children raised money from people by directly approaching them for monetary support for their club, explaining their cause. Costinaş again shares his observation: „They were wandering from table to table, and saying ‚We are from The Best Club and we want a better education, a chance to study, we and many more' and after they gathered the money and when they saw the amount, they couldn't believe their eyes, some saying ‚We actually did this!'...

they really were extremely happy and excited. I think that was a moment when they realized they can do something that they never did before and to be pleased with the result."

After an experience of several years as an IMPACT leader, the teacher Agafia Costinaş has motives and a purpose to be optimistic about the growth of the IMPACT program:

„I wish that as many students as possible would get involved....it changes them, it makes them evolve, it teaches them how to be a group, how to work for a certain goal, because this actually is the goal of the IMPACT club. We want to make a change, as small as it may be, but to make it. I hope that there will be established as many clubs as possible in the country because we need responsible people with the willingness to change something."

With his colleagues from the club, Mihai recently implemented THE PROJECT „THE STAGE COMES TO LIFE" IN which they redecorated the stage from their school so they could hold graduation festivities and celebrations. Their project was one of the winning ones in the „Romania de IMPACT" campaign and a was a big success. Referring to the project, Mihai says „We looked for a place to buy the carpet and the drapes, we installed the carpet ourselves. To fund the project we made trinkets and bracelets which we sold at school . In IMPACT we learn to share our opinions, to create a plan and use it."



Cătălin:

„We all grew up and now we are responsible people”

IMPACT 2 Club, Lupeni, Hunedoara County

Cătălin is 20 years old and has 5 years of experience in the IMPACT program. He is very proud of that, but he is more proud of his mother, who wants to become a leader in the IMPACT club! Cătălin was born with autism, a condition that affected his childhood, but he managed to surpass many of the challenges associated with his condition. As a child, Cătălin not only had difficulties communicating because of his autism, but he also behavioral problems. Now, he says: *„we all grew up and we are now responsible people.”*

Cătălin's mother is a special needs teacher and works with children with autism and believes that the IMPACT model has something to offer these children. During the first meeting in which Cătălin participated in IMPACT, his mother wanted to know more; to be sure it was the right environment and that it would be a positive experience for him. She

saw that it was a group in which Cătălin had the chance to interact with good people who are attentive to his development. She trusted the group and encouraged him to continue. Additionally, at the IMPACT meetings his mother learned more about Cătălin, the way he interacts with others and how he handles responsibilities. According to her, most of the communication and relational abilities Cătălin possesses were gained in IMPACT. IMPACT 2 Lupeni has existed since 2003, Cătălin joined the club at 14; he is now participating in the writing and implementation of the club's 20th project.

Cătălin is currently a student in the grade 13 at the Lupeni Mining Industrial Scholar Group, he is 20 years old and is a more mature thinker than many young people his age; but in terms of relating with others he often acts like someone much younger than his age. His sincerity, his direct attitude, his manner of speaking and correctness used to bother his younger colleagues, but now he is received with joy, even ovations, and is loved and respected by them. Impressed by Cătălin's learning results in IMPACT and his passion for the club, his mother desires to become a volunteer parent leader with IMPACT 2 Lupeni.

In answering the question on why he participates in the IMPACT program, Cătălin states; *„I don't come for the parties, trips or anything else, I come here to learn and that is my goal.”* And he has learned a lot in these five years; the IMPACT program, he thinks, offers you opportunities you can't refuse. It has made him a more responsible person, and has

equipped him with the skills to relate to the people around him. He doesn't like standing around and he gets involved in lots of activities. Cătălin would recommend that everybody get involved and learn. He has applied what he learned in IMPACT in other contexts-you notice the responsibility even in the small things such as helping his parents at home. Cătălin wants to be a good man; he admits when he is wrong and tries to repair things and to apologize if it is necessary.

He also likes the games, which he sees as an opportunity to learn something more. IMPACT is like a family for Cătălin, he gets along very good with the other members, but also with his leader, Mariana Strauț. Among other things, he has learned the value of tolerance and acceptance of others. *„Everyone of us has flaws and we have to accept them the way they are.”*

Cătălin participated in 2011 at the IMPACT Gala and spoke in front of the club representatives in Valea Jiului, with strong emotion; he also was one of the winners of the social entrepreneurship contest and participated in the national seminar in Leghia. Cătălin feels very attached to the idea of social entrepreneurship because he wants to help people around him and the community he lives in. Despite the fact that he was the target of harmful words and has had his share of disappointments, he moved on and at every chance he encourages the other members of the club. Many of his fellow club members consider him a very good friend.



Maria Neagu Butyka
IMPACT Program Director

IMPACT LEADERS

-teachers-

„An understanding heart represents everything in a teacher and cannot be esteemed highly enough. One looks back with appreciation to the brilliant teachers, but with gratitude to those who touched our human feeling”. Carl Gustav Jung

Silvia, Liliana, Adriana and Lavinia are just a few of the teachers who are leaders; they have a great soul and students are grateful for who they are and what they can offer.

The IMPACT program gathered over time more than 400 teachers who had the impulse and the desire to believe in youth. These volunteers also believed in their own strength to change the world and were willing to learn from their students. They took the chance to be seen as equals, they knew how to look at young people as more than devices to be filled with information; but rather saw them as people who can solve problems with the capacity to choose for themselves.

They think that education is based on a passion for the art of teaching and love towards the one you are developing. The teachers we are working with in the IMPACT program are people who really show passion and enthusiasm! You can understand and hopefully

agree that these two elements are important in the educational process. Be certain that these are indeed people with special powers to build character, which is the main purpose of the IMPACT program.

There aren't a lot of teachers who voluntarily dedicate 4 hours a week over multiple years to equip young people to make a change in themselves and their community. Volunteers who offer measurable educational aims, use creative methods, understand the importance of moral development and can see further than the present or the near future of the community and the world we live in. But these people, few or many, are the ones that invest in young people, with warmth and dedication; using the power of personal example. We thank them for who they are and especially for being there in the most important moments in the life of a young person and the life of the community.

Maria Neagu Butyka
IMPACT Program Director, New Horizons Foundation



Liliana Olărașu:

„These non-formal activities that seem like games, are actually well organized, well thought out and constructive learning activities”

„Vasile Conta” School, Iași, Iași County

LILIANA OLĂRAȘU has been an IMPACT leader for six years, a beautiful experience which she sees as an advantage not only for the club members, but also for her both at school and at home. Everything started with her passion for non-formal

activities: *„I felt it was something I might do”*. Liliana saw from the start some things she thought she might like in the IMPACT program: *„It matches very well with my way of being; I like to volunteer for things, I have a desire to relate in different ways with the children and it matches what I like to do. I also like working using non-formal methods with students, even though I am a math teacher and this area is generally considered more rigid. My formation started as a primary school teacher and I had to work using non-formal methods with the children.”*

Liliana shares the IMPACT leaders’ secret to success. It is the joy of working with children and the ability to learn from the; *„You can make great friendships, and as leaders we are able to forget that we are adults and they are children; honestly, we end up calling each other by name... what is here is really special. The fact is that we choose to do nice things with all our hearts, no one makes us, we do exactly what we like.”* She also feels motivated because the relationship with the children at the club is becoming a very close one, more warm. *„What motivates me is that the relationship with these children is more beautiful in these conditions, I succeed in knowing them in a very different light and this helps me in my career. I am motivated to do nice things and to get involved in so many projects.”*

Precisely because she is able to learn from the children, Liliana transfers the non-formal IMPACT methods when she is in the classroom: *„It is impossible to say that this methodology won’t have an impact on you. I learned to listen more to people around me, to be more patient, even with my children at home. Many times my thoughts go from IMPACT to home and from home to IMPACT, it can only affect you in a good way.”*

To anyone who speaks with her, it is obvious that Liliana loves children, that she gives them all the attention and the understanding of a devoted teacher: *„this is not necessarily the place for the exemplary children, in the club there are children with different backgrounds. The exemplary students, meaning the ones who study hard, have a different way of getting involved in the process, they seem to be a little ashamed to come without their homework... And I start to know them even better. Here is the place they share what is in their hearts- when we are in class, they don’t have the time to share that... But here, through the really honest relationship we have, we find out so many things that we wouldn’t know in other circumstances. The relationship in class is much improved, and you can feel it; you can feel a difference between the children who come and who don’t come. Sometimes you just mention one thing and they are getting*

involved really quick! They are really more engaged.”

Liliana appreciates the specific non-formal methods used in the IMPACT program because she understands the rationale behind them; helping the children to learn in a non-structured environment, and learning about important things in life. *„First of all, we have an environment of friendship and playfulness; even when we are working on important things. They still have the impression of playing, because we have this vibe that no one is checking your homework or your knowledge...They learn here a lot of things and don't even realize it; they learn by doing, even about friendship and help. These children are fantastic!“. A good IMPACT leader understands the purpose of the activities, but knows at the same time that behind the games and fun there is an individual effort of organizing and preparing. „These non-formal activities, which you apparently would say that are only games, are actually well organized, well thought out constructive activities. The fact that children are not stressed by being evaluated or being graded; allows them to respond very quickly, with their hands up in the air when you ask them something...it is different, the roadblocks disappear, here everything goes...very simple“.*



Lavinia Bârzan:
„you can also learn by doing something different “

**„C.A. Rosetti“ Scholar Group, Constanța,
Constanța County**

LAVINIA BÂRZAN is a psychologist and leader of the IMPACT New Generation Club at the „C.A. Rosetti“ Scholar Group in Constanța, she is a person with a real passion for volunteering. In addition, Lavinia loves children, understands them, and most importantly, manages to motivate them to get involved. She brought to the club not only children that *„want to communicate, have something to say and cannot find a group or environment for that, children who*

are interested in new things; in knowing and getting involved in new things“; but also children who were receiving psychological counseling at school. She recommended that they get involved in IMPACT activities. „There were children who came to me in counseling with different problems and I would recommend ‚Look, you can meet other peers...or, we can do it in a different way‘. If I felt that there was some way I could help that child, I would invite him to experience something else. That was what I would tell them, to see that school doesn't necessarily mean only grades and absences, that school means you can also learn by doing something different“.

Lavinia's projects in the IMPACT club put the children in contact with less known populations, such as adults in a penitentiary or with the elderly at the County Hospital. In this way, her students had to be more responsible, they had to understand more about the world outside their comfort zone; normally represented only by family-school-group or friends. She shares another example: *„We would go to the local kindergarten and together we would create toys from reused materials, ecological materials like pine cones; high school students would be interacting with very young children. Not all of them had brothers and sisters at home so were unsure how to act. And there would be our*

students, very proudly watching the small ones and how they would look at them while they were making different things for them". Lavinia is aware of the impact these meetings had on her students : „I think something has changed, in these relationships they started to see and understand that the family they have is the best family in the world. And there were some things the teachers saw and learned too, the students weren't who some of the teachers thought they were! "

As a psychologist, Lavinia also works with children with problems, children that formal education has labeled differently. For example, Marius Grosu, a student who at the beginning of his high school years was isolated and uncommunicative, became after two years of IMPACT a role model for his peers. „He liked so much what was happening, he really got involved in our projects. He is the one that gathers his colleagues, who motivates them. I see him as a future leader because he has experience and knows how to engage his peers, how to motivate them to accomplish things". Marius is passionate about photography, movies, and haiku. With the help of Lavinia and his teachers and IMPACT colleagues, he has succeeded to use his abilities for positive purposes. A large project involved making a motivational movie and organizing a march around his city to

raise awareness of drug problems facing local youth. This particular project helped Marius to re-orient his life. Lavinia states: „What really helped him was the fact that he was able to stand out using his passion, filmmaking; he got out of the crowd, he wasn't just the student from the 11th grade anymore".

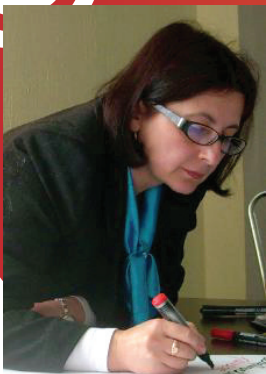
An important dimension of Lavinia's projects in IMPACT is that club members succeed in conceiving and implementing projects regarding issues and problems specific to youth. „They saw the evolution of their peers, what had happened to them, where they had been and are now, and said that this cannot go on like this; they wanted to tell them that this is not good. I was really happy because this type of education between equals, peer-education, helps a lot; the message is different if it comes from them. The students going into a classroom and saying ‚Look, this is not good, what happened to this guy!' is much more effective than it would be if it would come from me."

Lavinia is an IMPACT leader who succeeded in showing children that learning isn't necessarily only compulsory and a routine activity, strictly associated with school. „Everytime I was referring or talking about studying, they would immediately think of school, but I explained to them that we learn everyday, even at home and on the

street. Learning doesn't always mean that the teacher comes and teaches; this is what I wanted to show them, that you can learn in different ways. The way you communicate with people near you, the person beside you... you can understand what empathy is and you can react to the needs and the suffering of those around you. These are things which I think they learned without even realizing it".

In Lavinia's opinion, the IMPACT program has a major role in the development of students because „it shows the students another facet of school, the fact that students have alternatives. Also that they can do something else besides wasting their time. They learn things they could normally learn through traditional education, but they just don't realize it. In this area of non-formal education, things are assimilated much easier and they come naturally; these are the advantages. The fact that they communicate and have activities, it allows them to see education in a different way, they learn new things".





Adriana Moldovan:
„I like their enthusiasm ”

School no. 3, Lupeni, Hunedoara County

ADRIANA MOLDOVAN is a teacher at School no. 3 in Lupeni and a teacher of methodology at the County School Inspectorate in Hunedoara. She is an IMPACT leader and has a life-long passion concerning non-formal education. For Adriana, non-formal education means „reaching a goal in an easy way. ‚Easy’ meaning you don’t feel it... playing, drawing, dancing, moving, doing something else, something extra, and not even realizing that you’re acquiring

knowledge”. Adriana gets lots of respect from her students, but is also respected by parents who appreciate the fact that „Miss Adriana does something else besides just going to class”. She talks about herself as being an open person, someone who likes to listen and to get involved. The children love „Miss Adriana” a lot, have total confidence in her and are glad that she understands them; „we can tell her anything or confide in her, we know she won’t let us down”.

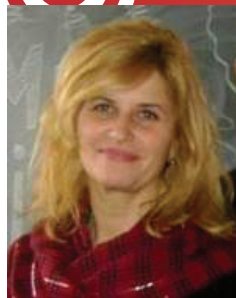
Adriana is one of those involved teachers who knows that they can also learn from the students they are teaching. „At every meeting when we are telling a story or playing a game or we’re doing a debrief, there are questions. I ask questions and I get answers I wouldn’t have considered before because I have my own way of seeing the world, they have their own. Their home influence is different, my influence over them is a factor, their peers influence... the influence of the world we live in. There are things I would have never considered doing that way...they have a realistic way of seeing the world. In every thing they see a good side, they find good in every story; sometimes I don’t even realize I am taking the discussion to the negative side, but they take me back to the good side. I love their enthusiasm. When we play, for them everything is important”.

Adriana’s IMPACT club is a middle school club, therefore the children can be both challenging and energetic. „They laugh, and laughing is energizing, and sometimes they laugh too much! Some of them have 6 classes and then we have activities for another 2 hours and you expect them to participate, but they start laughing because of how tired they are....but I love it”. The games are, at a certain point, more attractive to the children, but Adriana knows how to motivate them and also how to help them understand the messages behind the stories. She does this in a very subtle way; „The stories... some of them are, I mean some are easier to understand, others you have to ask good questions, try to open their minds, bring them similar examples...something from their life, or school life or their experience. But they get it in the end”.

In addition, Adriana knows how to make them responsible and attentive to the consequences of their actions; for that, she invented the candy tax. „For everything you don’t do right, there is a logical consequence. If you are late, next time you have to bring candy”. One of her secrets in facilitating IMPACT activities is that she manages to relate at the level of her students and does that by correlating present experiences to the experiences in her childhood; „I myself

remember how I used to be when I was little, I don't remember all of my Romanian classes, Math classes; but I remember the festivities, all the shows I participated in... sometimes you don't remember the information, but you do remember the emotions".

Adriana is optimistic about the long term effect of the IMPACT program on her students. *"I believe that everyone should act responsible, it's just that some of them have the courage to face up to the responsibility and have the self-confidence that they can do it... that they can carry out their actions. Others don't yet have it; at a certain point, I am sure that all of them are going to be people who are going to stand up for something in the community."* Adriana's students want to continue learning, want to set an example for those around them. So far, they are a happy group of children of different ages between 11 and 15, intelligent and open, who help each other and think of the community they live in. They are happy when they can do good: real IMPACTs.



Silvia Farcaș:
"at IMPACT we are a group of friends"

„Al. Papi Ilarian” Theoretical Highschool, Dej, Dej County

SILVIA is a Physics teacher and an IMPACT leader since 2009, founding her club with the children she was a head teacher for. Those members have now graduated from high school, and this year the IMPACT club will have new members, *„willing children, who learn and also make time for volunteering”.*

The last project created by her club was called *„Trinkets for Hope Day”* and was a benefit show held to help 10 seriously ill children. The money raised at the benefit

that was held at the Culture House in March of this year was used to buy medicine for these children suffering from chronic diseases. The show was named *„Grandious”*, a marathon show of over 5 hours which included theater plays, songs and recitals. They didn't sell tickets, but they placed two boxes for donations, and attendees contributed as they saw fit. The room was jammed, and the reaction after the show was *„When are you doing the next show? You have done something for Dej!”* Silvia's children mobilized very well, each of them performing their role with enthusiasm and Silvia considered this a very useful experience for the club. In addition, they found some new members: because some club members that were commuting from a distance had to leave early, students attending offered to help and some decided to become IMPACT members. The club members were very happy about the results of this fundraiser and were motivated to go on.

Silvia is a very warm person, kind-hearted and a very good teacher, she likes working with children, and they also love her back and come to the club because they are drawn by her. The members who are committed to the club are the members

who really work; they understand that there are things to do, it isn't just about fun. Even though she is a very open person, Silvia usually keeps some formal distance between her and students in her classroom; except, as she herself admits it, it is different with her students in IMPACT, the relationship is closer. *„We work together, we get stressed out if something doesn't go right, we are together a lot of time. In class I do my job, but I try to keep the two roles separate. Here at IMPACT though, we are more free, here I always encourage them to express their opinions, here we are comrades; in class we are simply teacher and student“.*

As a leader, Silvia manages to personally encourage every child; the girl who managed the benefit show had her support, even though some teachers disagreed. *„I'm interested in the child as an individual, I don't care about the environment he comes from, how much money his parents have or what their jobs are, but the child. How are you as a person?...what do you want to do?...are you willing to get involved?“* Silvia genuinely loves children: *„I really like children, I love everything about them; their honesty, their ability to be open. I love that they know what they want to do, their positive thinking,*

optimism, innocence, and especially their purity...their diligence and I hope to learn only good things from them. I really enjoy children who are open, sincere, honest and hardworking, willing to take action. I never have had restrictions on who can come to IMPACT and who cannot, if they have pleasure in coming, come for IMPACT“.

Silvia gets really motivated by the fact that children come to IMPACT and observes their progress and development over time. *„Children develop and gain trust in their own strengths, especially when they notice that they can help, that they can do something. They develop on so many different levels. The children who come to IMPACT grow a lot. At IMPACT we do something different, here they develop important abilities, they learn many things that they will use later in life. If I would have had this chance to learn these things when I was in high school, I think I would have developed much quicker“.*

Silvia found out in an indirect manner that the members of IMPACT consider her a „cool teacher“; she considers herself a support and a comrade for the children, available for questions. Sometimes, Silvia admits that her own children, teenagers themselves, are somehow jealous of the

close relationship Silvia has with the children in IMPACT; even though they participate in activities and are good friends with the IMPACT members. Silvia wishes they *„would get the hang of volunteering“.* When there was a discussion about giving up her role as a leader, the students in IMPACT told her that they didn't want to continue without her. So she continued, and as Silvia admits, *„I realize that we are at the beginning and we still have a lot to learn“.*





Octavia Mihaela Bors
Local Coordinator



IMPACT LEADERS

-students and pupils volunteer-

Cosmin and Roxana are just two of young people who were influenced by IMPACT, and at some point they both have taken an active role in the organization and facilitation of their clubs. Their stories capture in the best way how they developed as IMPACT members and how involvement in the IMPACT program helped them to develop leadership skills. But their training process did not stop when they were finished with IMPACT. They continue to put themselves in situations which encourage them to learn.

Peer leaders are deeply connected to the IMPACT program, more so than the average club member and their role in the development of clubs is very important. They often facilitate a successful transition of IMPACT members from one generation to another. In some clubs they are a real support for the volunteer leaders, and in other clubs they facilitate their own IMPACT programs. Here is their living testimony and a summary of some

of the initiatives; to show the effect the IMPACT program has on students, a movement driven by passion and commitment. When young students such as Lidia and Iulian join an IMPACT club, it is hard for them and for the NHF team to know if the program will be compatible with who they are as a person. Lidia and Iulian are just two of those who found themselves in IMPACT, who captured the vision and the mission; successfully coordinating club activity. Without the involvement and dedication of these young leaders, the IMPACT program wouldn't reach students as it does: it would not be as accessible as it is and would not connect to their learning needs with the ease and speed with which it does. So, thank you!

Octavia Mihaela Bors
Local Coordinator, Cluj Napoca



Lidia State:
“IMPACT gives you the opportunity to learn”

Student leader at IMPACT Club of “EugenPora”
 High School ,Cluj Napoca

Lidia State is a masters level student at the Human Resource Psychology and Organizational Health Faculty and is one of the oldest volunteer student leaders in the Cluj IMPACT club network. Lidia joined as a New Horizons Foundation volunteer in 2009, and in fall of 2010 began to help facilitate the activities of the High School „EugenPora” IMPACT club. In the past years she has offered stable and consistent support to coordinating teachers and had also proved to

be a good friend to the club members, who are very attached to her. She has managed, through her energy and enthusiasm to consistently motivate club members and help them deliver more complex and interesting projects. In addition to this, Lidia confesses that as a volunteer she has also improved herself greatly; developing communication, project management, facilitation, training and conflict resolution skills.

Lidia admits that it was not easy when she started leading the club. Children were blasé and very skeptical, convinced that things cannot change or that it was not in their power to change something. In time, however, they began to trust her and become attached to her, maybe because she was seen as being “one of them”. In addition, group affiliation has been developed; they began looking and waiting for each other, calling each other and keeping in contact through Facebook. All of this gave them courage and a belief in themselves, allowing them to design and deliver more complex service learning projects. One of the club members said that *“Lidia elevated us all as a group, and taught us to see ourselves as a whole; but individually she studied every single one of us (without us even without realizing it) and made us better people by challenging us to come up with ideas we were not aware of.”*

In IMPACT, the relationship with

the leader is extremely important. Lidia has noticed that young people particularly enjoy the appreciation of their teachers or their presence at events organized by them. Lidia admits that she learned a lot from the youth she was working with as an IMPACT leader. *“In the beginning, I was the kind of person who wanted to finish everything quickly and took too many responsibilities because I wanted immediate results. I would have done everything myself if I had to. Through IMPACT I have learned to step back, to present a question and wait for others to come up with ideas; sometimes with better ideas than mine or the other leaders.”*

Lidia quickly learned what distinguishes a good IMPACT leader: availability and openness for learning; particularly since she was closer in age to the club members and she could recall her own experiences. *“I felt I gave them confidence, because I knew myself in high school and I remembered that I did not know what I was capable of and I needed a mentor.”* Working as a leader has also had a visible impact on her own personal development. *“This has been very useful as I became aware of some qualities I did not know I had , and some deficiencies too, such as talking less”.*

Although now Lidia has no time to volunteer as an IMPACT leader, the experience accumulated over three years of

activity remains positive and helpful to her professional development. *“For me it was all very nice, that is why I think it lasted so long. It was the longest working relationship I have ever had, I did volunteer on other occasions, but NHF was the longest. That’s the world we live in, we do not know exactly what we can and what we cannot do, and this is exactly what IMPACT gives you the opportunity to learn. Learning through experience; this is true also for leaders.”*

One of the IMPACT club members recalls the first interaction with Lidia: *“After the first day Lidia came to our group as a leader, there were two things about her that particularly stood out; her sociability and her enthusiasm. I am sure that Lidia was one of the main factors that helped us in our personal and group development, which is now more united than ever. Lidia’s presence and guidance were essential for our group, which often came close to disintegration. Besides teaching us essential things for a group, Lidia was always close to us, to all members. She had a relationship of friendship more than one of coordination-subordination, which is one of the things that underpins good understanding in a community no matter how large or small it is.”* (IMPACT member)



Iulian Minea:
“I’m not the boss here ”

Leader at IMPACT club „SpiruHaret” High School, Bucharest

Iulian first heard about the IMPACT program three years ago from his co-leaders at New Horizons Foundation VIATA Camp.

“I found it very interesting because they talked passionately about IMPACT, as they were already leaders in clubs. And despite the fact I knew very little about it, I wanted to try it. Everything seemed to be very nice, and I’m glad I was offered the chance to be a leader, because this program is very cool.” For now, Iulian, who is a graduate from the Faculty of

Letters, is employed in the service sector, but Tuesdays are dedicated exclusively to IMPACT activities.

For Iulian, VIATA camp represented a defining experience, and as an IMPACT leader he tries to make use of his experience and to help others develop themselves. *“VIATA Camp substantially changed my way of thinking and I thought that if I have changed, then there is a possibility for me to help others change too. I try to help them to become better people, and to make use of their full potential.”* Beyond just a desire to help, a leader *“must inspire trust. He has to be a role model for them, in the sense that the way he speaks and behaves at the club should be copied to a certain extent. He has to act more like a friend, be that kind of person from whom one can ask for advice”*. There is a key dimension for personal development that Iulian associates with the experience he gained in VIATA camp, one he wants to share with others. It is to trust: trust oneself and others. Additionally, even though there is no worldwide model for what defines a good leader, a leader must certainly have this defining quality: he must find delight in working with young people. *“He should enjoy what he is doing, and not perceive the club in terms of a job or an obligation....in other words do it with pleasure, to teach young men.”*

Iulian was nervous when he started

his activity at „SpiruHaret” club a year ago, a club that had been active for three years. Relaxed and friendly relationships with other leaders and the club members themselves helped him to integrate quickly into the IMPACT family. *“At the beginning I was a little afraid, I did not know exactly what to do, I was very nervous. The members proved to be cool and I felt myself a part of the collective quickly enough. Now we are OK, I would say even friends”.* Very quickly he was thrust into leadership and he managed to overcome a very difficult moment when some new members felt themselves alienated from older members and wanted to quit. Iulian convinced them that they all have much to learn from each other, and it is important to continue together. In the beginning, the club members viewed him as some sort of authority. *“They saw me more like a boss, but then we talked and I explained that I’m not in charge, I am only a guide trying to give them advice; the final decisions belong to them. As time passed, we got to know each other better and I think that now I’m more like a friend for them....I told them that I am open for every subject, and sometimes we stay after the club and talk about things that do not have anything to do with the IMPACT activities, I am asked for advice”* Although the club members continue to seek his opinion and consent in

everything they do, the relationship between them is certainly based on friendship and closeness. When Iulian was absent for a while because of health problems, IMPACT members would send him messages asking him to come back. When he returned, he was received with cheers! *„I am like a friend to them, but when a decision has to be made, they always call or send me a message asking for my opinion. I told them that decisions belong to them, I can only agree or not and give them some advice here and there, but in the end they are the ones who matter, they must decide.”*

Finally, Iulian’s collaboration with the IMPACT program had positive effects on his further development by catching the volunteering virus. *“I can say I did not volunteer before, but since I started working with IMPACT I understand better what it’s all about. Now I want to do more and more volunteering. I became more relaxed and feel at ease with new groups, even outside IMPACT. I have started being more responsible ...much more responsible”.*



Cosmin Fineas :
““IMPACT program is the most beautiful I’ve ever seen (...) IMPACT marks you for life”

Junior leader Lupeni High School, Lupeni

COSMIN FINEAS is a grade 11 student and a junior leader at club „Nihil Sine Deo” in Lupeni, a very involved person and someone who is motivated to do positive things and make a difference in his community. He enjoys being an example for other IMPACT members. He found out about IMPACT through a friend and he was immediately attracted to the experiential

methodology and adventure games used by IMPACT as teaching tools. After only one year he had the opportunity to assist a leader from another club with a project and he greatly enjoyed serving his community in this way. Now Cosmin is a junior leader and facilitates IMPACT activities for his fellow club members.

Cosmin has full confidence in the IMPACT program and in its methods, and he talks with a surprising level of maturity, considering his age. *“IMPACT is about involvement, it could involve everyone, depending on the time invested and the availability of each person..... it is the most beautiful program I have ever seen”*. A particular advantage of the IMPACT program is that it uses human skills and local resources; *“I think it’s a very interesting instrument, if you handle it well.”* As an example, he says, *“if someone has a difficult temperament, you gradually give him more tasks and he becomes more responsible and tempered. The only limit is the motivation: for the man to believe he wants to do something.”*

The IMPACT club has its own particularity based on the special relationship between participants and leaders. *“You see what you can become in IMPACT, and this motivates you to continue and gives you moral satisfaction for doing something for others”*. Young people have unique resources; notably

their energy and enthusiasm. This has to be carefully cultivated and utilized, and IMPACT is good at doing this. Cosmin thinks that his fellow club members and youth in Lupeni are extremely intelligent and perceptive, *“an incredible resource of ideas”*.

In relation to his personal development and self-growth, involvement in IMPACT has had great influence on him, he has been able to make use of his skills and abilities and put them into practice. When it comes to trust, Cosmin believes that it is more about quality of his trust, in the sense of localizing *“reliable sources”*. Interact with someone, get to know them and make an accurate assessment of how trustworthy they are.

There were many emotional moments in IMPACT for Cosmin in those three years, such as when he saw the results of projects that he worked hard on. He had to write a project all by himself and learned the most when he received critical feedback from a leader; he had a moment of rebellion, but managed to overcome his pride and learn the relevant lesson. From his point of view IMPACT methods seem brave, visionary, very practical, and particularly attractive to young people. The main qualities of a leader, according to Cosmin, are to know how to communicate and to be ready for change, in himself and others.

Cosmin strongly believes in non-formal education, he clearly states that it has to be built on the formal system; complementing it. He is aware of the values he learned at IMPACT, especially bravery. In addition, he believes that values are transmitted from the family towards IMPACT, but vice versa too. All this interaction creates new values, but also a responsibility that is not always easy to carry: *“There weren’t only sunny days”*. Cosmin feels motivated by the results he has achieved and seen and advises all young people to get involved.

He thinks that involvement with IMPACT has long term effects, *“somehow there remains something in their soul, and in the future they will motivate themselves if they need to. IMPACT marks you for life”*. Cosmin himself wants to remain involved, no matter of the profession he will choose because he wants to help those who want to change things. In the same time he modestly recognizes:

“I did not always have courage, I got involved because others were involved too ... I wanted to be with the people in there. IMPACT existed and I was at the right place. Practically, I am a product of IMPACT and I’m glad for that.”





Roxana Chebac:
“IMPACT is at fault for why I want to further volunteer”

Volunteer EVS (European Voluntary Service),
 KuressaareNoortekeskus, Estonia

ROXANA CHEBAC defines herself as a product of the IMPACT program: *“My way of being and my lifestyle is a product of those seven years from 2005 to 2012.”* Everything began in 2005 when Roxana attended her first IMPACT meeting: *“I fell in love with the way meetings evolved and we grew up from one meeting to another, we were more*

united, we formed a team. And then I never stopped going, no matter if I was a member, a leader, a contributor or an observer, I never stopped joining IMPACT meetings.”

A decisive factor for Roxana’s affinity with the program was definitely the trust in the leader, Maria Budean, a religious teacher, who knew how to attract and motivate her. *“I was fully confident, and I think this is the most important when interacting with an IMPACT club, to trust the leaders and somehow let them carry you... because a leader is there not just to facilitate a project...a club leader is there to guide and to help you grow personally, to broaden your horizons in all areas...not just in volunteering.”*

Meanwhile the IMPACT club became an intimate and warm place, that Roxana, like most IMPACT members associates with a family. *“To me it is another family, there are some people in IMPACT I have known for seven years, they helped me grow up and also when I had problems. It does not really matter from which club you are, if you are in IMPACT, yes, you’re a part of one big family.”*

Looking back at her experience and the experience of others, Roxana intimately observes the changes through

which a member of IMPACT passes: *„in the beginning she is confused, a little proud, she is very confident that she can do anything and that nothing will change her way of being the best....but during the IMPACT meetings realizes how special she really is and that the values she has inside are more important than those she is showing”.* She herself went through a long process of personal development, a decisive moment was the transition from the status of member to that of junior leader. *“I found it quite difficult because I felt myself a member of that club, older than the others, and it was hard for me...especially because I was no longer the person who participated in the games, but the one who coordinated them. Step by step I started to adapt.”*

For Roxana, as for all with a calling to be a volunteer, volunteering *“has become a lifestyle, once entering your blood, it never leaves. If you have the opportunity to attend IMPACT meetings, you feel like you want to keep on going because they wake you up, expand your horizons, provide you with new possibilities how to spend your time... and later I was aware of the impact I can have on people.”* Passion for volunteering is only one of the things Roxana shares with

other members of the large IMPACT family. „We share, I want to believe, a passion for volunteering. I met many IMPACT volunteers from Iași, and also from other parts of the country, and the majority of us have that same sparkle in our eye when we talk about IMPACT. Especially those from the 2006–2007 period, because it was hard at first ... and I believe we also share the desire to change something...I think that's the strongest point.” Moreover, volunteering has become an integral part of Roxana's personality, as she testifies: “everything is so ambiguous in what concerns myself that I no longer know which is my volunteer side; it's just me, no matter if I'm Roxana or the volunteer; in IMPACT I've learned good things, values and principles that I now apply”.

Roxana welcomes the opportunity for personal development given to her by the IMPACT program, but also the joys and unique sensations experienced with each activity and each project. “It is nice to know that you helped change something and you see that things are going well, you see a smile of a child that you helped, or that of an old woman to whose existence you brought something, not only today but it lasts until tomorrow too. It is a feeling that cannot be

defined, I do not know what it is, sometimes it's pride of being able to do this... but it's a pleasant feeling, not a selfish or conceited one, it's the joy of being part of a community, knowing that you have done something to improve it....all of this only IMPACT has awakened in me. I think IMPACT is at fault for why I want to further volunteer, its only it's fault. “





Alexandra Ioan
Project Manager

COMMUNITY SERVICE LEARNING PROJECTS IN THE IMPACT PROGRAM

The projects implemented by IMPACT clubs address a wide range of problems and situations in the communities in which young volunteers operate, and this follows from the examples of good practice described below.

The complexity of community service learning projects or social entrepreneurship projects implemented by IMPACT clubs increases with the accumulation of experience in program activities. These clubs in some cases are able to influence the decisions and actions of local authorities. In addition to the positive contributions that projects bring to communities, they are the main learning tool in the IMPACT program, giving young people valuable experiences.

Even if the project is focused on social issues or a project includes a component of social entrepreneurship, IMPACT members are fully committed to the cause they claim. They demonstrate that they not only have a word to say, they actually do. The lasting relationships forged between young people and their project beneficiaries proves once again that IMPACT volunteers grow with the communities they represent and that step by step they become the active and involved citizens that we want.

Alexandra Ioan
Project Manager, New Horizons Foundation



The project “Life has priority! We thought that if you do something that can be seen on television, drivers will learn to reduce speed and keep in mind this is a school zone”.

Agricultural School Group Halânga, Halânga, Mehedinți

The „ProImpact” Club from the Agricultural School Group Halânga (Mehedinti) was established in October 2009 and since then has conducted numerous community service learning projects. Examples of their projects include “Giving, you win a friend” (food packaging for needy families) , “Spring begins with you” (passed out trinkets to women from their commons on March 8th) or two innovative „green” projects: “Respect

nature! Healthy living “and” Eco-step towards a green future “.

A year ago, pupils of the Agricultural School Group Halânga were involuntary witnesses to an unfortunate event: one of their school peers died in front of their eyes in a car/pedestrian accident. The factors leading to this were the poor visibility for drivers in the school area, the speed of the automobiles, and the unmarked street that most pupils frequently crossed to reach a small food kiosk. All pupils were shocked by this event, but the IMPACT club, together with their lead teachers Anita Diana and Jenica Dunărișu decided to do something about it; this is how their project “Life has Priority” was born. “We thought that if you do something that can be seen on television, drivers will learn to reduce speed, and keep in mind this is a school zone.”

IMPACT youth, with support from the Traffic Service Police, have devised and managed to implement an information campaign about the problems on this particular street. Police stopped the cars and IMPACT members gave drivers leaflets explaining what happened to their friend and asking them to drive responsibly. Although not all drivers reacted positively, some were irritated by the fact they were stopped in traffic without doing anything wrong, the campaign helped drivers understand it’s important for school children and drivers alike because they both are directly

affected. IMPACT members wanted them to know that their project was attempting to raise awareness regarding the risks associated with lack of visibility and speed. Two other positive effects of this successful project were the fact that the kiosk across the street closed and was re-opened inside the school, and that IMPACT succeeded, with the support of an outside company, to install a crosswalk and have a signal light placed at the crosswalk.

The children were very proud of their achievement. Many of the youth in this IMPACT club come from broken families with socio-economic problems and minimal family education; some live in boarding houses and hope to finish school and find a place to work. A number of these youth had significant behavior issues and prior to IMPACT involvement were part of a negative peer group, some are just simply extremely shy and struggle to find words to express themselves, they have never taken the lead on any project. Many children wanted to leave school in order to help their families, but once they started high school they met a community of youth-especially the IMPACT family. After 2-3 years of teamwork they have improved their communication skills and openness to others; but perhaps most importantly they have begun to imagine a future filled with projects, dreams and desires.

The socio-economic differences between

these students and those who have intact families, material wealth and access to resources such as the internet are significant and real. IMPACT is a great opportunity to learn more about their world, to open their horizons and build a minimum of confidence in themselves and in the opportunity to have a better life. For them, being a success story is an extraordinary event; seeing the completion of such a large, involved and significant project such as this one is a game-changer, and hard to get used to!



Project „Together for Caianu“:
„Following the trip, students from Caianu wanted to begin an IMPACT club at their school, they wanted to do something important“

„Onisifor Ghibu“ High School, ClujNapoca

In 2010, IMPACT club members proposed to establish in the school community garden space a spot where they could hold outdoor classes. To obtain the necessary funding, they participated in a national project competition organized by a



Romanian company; however, they were not among the winners. Because of their strong desire for the “outdoor classroom” they came up with the idea to organize a charity festival.....thus was born *Ghibstock 2010*. The festival was a success and the IMPACT club raised the necessary funds to implement their project. *Ghibstock 2011* and *Ghibstock 2012* followed, each edition financially supporting specific projects proposed and designed by the club members.

In 2011, the second edition of *Ghibstock* featured varied attractions such as: concerts, a climbing wall, paintball, hand-made fair, temporary tattoos, caricature drawing, facepainting, a dog exhibition, drama, outdoor movie screenings, graffiti demonstration, championship frisbee and

small stands offering food and drink. Club members estimated over 1000 people attended the fair and more than \$2500 USD was raised. The IMPACT club utilized the money raised in 2011 to organize a drop-out prevention program for 20 at-risk children from the village school in the small village of Caianu. The aunt of one of the IMPACT club members had informed them these students were planning to drop out of school.

The club organized a 4 day educational trip with the aim to teach the at-risk students through personal example and participation in structured group experiential activities. The stated goal of the project was to teach values such as trust and community spirit, thus helping them change their attitude toward school. The whole trip was organized by the IMPACT youth, who took everything into account. They staged active learning games to show these students that school can be “fun”, talked about nutrition and what the children eat, what they did at bedtime and what they needed to do to be safe and have fun. Each IMPACT club member was paired with one of the at-risk students and played a big brother/sister role. They divided into four groups, each specializing in a discipline such as biology or literature. Finally, they worked together on

a project using everything they had learned over the 4 day experience. IMPACT club members made each child gifts, badges and a „diploma”; the students from Caianu were very excited. The latter were very impressed by what IMPACT members made for them, and friendships were created that continued after the project was completed.

This IMPACT club project had positive effects on both the club members and the children of Caianu. Following the trip, Caianu pupils said that they would like to begin an IMPACT club at their school and do something positive for the school. They told the students from IMPACT: *“you are so cool and so united as a group, and we want to be too, and we want to do something for our school!”*

Thus was born another project *“Colors for Caianu”*. The idea of the project to transform an unused building in the schoolyard into a locker room came from the 20 students in Caianu. This is such a powerful success story because of how this project was born from the initial project; this process was a collaboration between IMPACT members and the Caianu children.

In the *“Colors for Caianu”* project IMPACT students helped coordinate the



youth from Caianu. Club leader Anda Culișir observed: *“Exactly what I do with them at IMPACT club, they were doing there”*. They agreed on what needed to be done and how to do it. Together, they resolved the daily transportation issues, they asked neighbors to help them to clean up the vacant building, cut logs and turned them into benches, installed wooden floors and whitewashed walls. Finally, they drew a large frame on one side of the building and made a mural featuring all of their painted hands. It was real teamwork and joy and satisfaction in a job well done was widely shared.

The unique feeling of helping someone gave the IMPACT members from

Ghibu the motivation to continue and to want to do more : *“the way they feel about the club keeps them together”*, said the club leader, Anda. *„If you give them credit they will show that they can do more.”* Anda is a charismatic leader, they all feel attached to her, they admire her and enjoy working with her. Thanks to Anda, the atmosphere of the club is relaxing and motivating, most of the time!

Recently, children from Caianu called their mentors from IMPACT to say they saw on television some children from an orphanage. They had the idea to make some *pies palaneș*, as they call them, to sell at Ghibu high school and raise some funds to help these children. In 2012 at the third edition of the *Ghibstock festival*, children from Caianu had their own stand with *pies pălănețe*. The generosity and involvement of the Cluj Napoca IMPACT club did not return empty; the students from Caianu learned that despite the fact that they do not have everything they need, they can still offer a lot. This is one powerful story of the effect of the IMPACT model.





Project “One Crayon, One Brush, One Smile”:

„In school we learn different sciences; here we learn to be better!”

Student Group “Vasile Sav”, Roman, Neamt county

Club IMPACT „Musatinii” from Roman, is an active club, with over 30 members, run by leaders Ungureanu Marilenasi and Plosnita Lacramioara. The members of the club have activities and projects that help them connect to the community they live in, pay attention to other people’s problems and become more responsible and more involved.

One such project, and a very

emotional one for the club is “*One crayon, one brush, one smile*”. With this project IMPACT members have offered gifts to children from Nistria school (year I-IV) and to children with incurable terminal diseases from the Fundeni hospital in Bucharest. Along with toys and sweets club members assembled for in gift packages for the children there is also a story book “*The story of Easter*”. This book was designed by members of the Musatinii Club.

The idea of creating a story coloring book started during an activity in Valea Ursului. This was an earlier club project where they gave presents to impoverished children; toys, sweets and some coloring books. They noticed that one girl started coloring her book immediately, while all the other children were concerned with sweets and toys. *„When everybody had toys, gifts and they were singing carols, I saw a little girl who said ‚JAU! A coloring book!’ upon opening her present. All of a sudden, there was as if a barrier was around her, nothing could perturb her....she*



took her colors and she colored the entire book. That was when I thought to myself that kids need something besides toys and clothes and I think that was the problem that I had identified: opening the children’s eyes to see reality. So, we in IMPACT thought that the little ones should be occupied also by books, not just toys and sweets.” It would have been too simple to buy books; IMPACT members thought it would have a greater impact if they wrote the books themselves. When they returned home they shared their idea with their families. One of the IMPACT club member’s brother is an Art student, and he offered to help them make their idea come true, a children’s book with images to color.

Seeing as the budget they had available wasn’t enough to buy presents for all the kids they had in mind, IMPACT members came up with an ingenious idea to collect the necessary funds. Using part of the financing received from New Horizons Foundation, they printed out books and created handmade greeting cards that they auctioned and sold. With this fundraising project they were able to raise \$140 USD and then used this money to print 60 coloring books that were given to the children in Nistria and Fundeni Bucharest hospital. This was such a successful project that

the following year, Musatinii printed another book, *“Voyage through Europe”*.

All the effort made has had positive implications on the entire group: *“we felt happy to help others”* but also *“motivated to go even further”*. Additionally, it made them think about others, as one IMPACT member confesses: *“when I saw the kids rejoicing....we have everything and they lack so much”*. The IMPACT leaders have been impressed by the reaction of the club members: *“I saw children crying because of emotions; it’s a great thing because in general society says that the young people that are our students are insensitive, superficial and lack common sense”*.

The people from IMPACT Musatinii are a united group. What do they believe they have in common? The *“desire to help others”* but also that of *“making a change”*. An IMPACT member is a *“motivated, responsible, creative, vivid, trustworthy person”*. Just like other fellow colleagues from across the country, the youth from Roman feel the difference between IMPACT and school: *“we are more open here. We can state our opinion without being judged, there is no competition in this group like you find in schools. In school we learn sciences, here we learn to be better!”*.

Just like other IMPACT members,

Musatinii have proven their compassion for children in distress as well as their entrepreneurial spirit through their success story; showing how “selling” a product can help fulfill a social cause. More than that, they built something through teamwork, they put a lot of soul into what they did and they brought a lot of joy to the hearts of some needy children.



The project “Help us help” :
“We are, what’s the name....the exception, the rebels, the people that make society become more involved throughout history.”

National College “Mihail Kogalniceanu”, Galati, Galati county

In July 2010 right after the floods in the Danube Delta members of the IMPACT „Here and Now” club from the Mihail Kogalniceanu National College considered how they could help victims of the floods. The first thought was to fundraise to help those affected: for clothes, toys, food and other items. Looking back, the IMPACT members



admit that things maybe happened too quickly, but maybe that’s why they felt motivated and managed to do what they set out to do. *“The project was put together on the run, because when the floods began we had already been working on a different project. Everything about this project was spontaneous. We heard what happen, we thought about a course of action and executed it quickly.”*

What the young people in Galati did was a classic IMPACT response: they quickly identified and reacted to a problem (not necessarily one of their community, but a social issue) and identified the necessary resources. *“Nobody had any idea about what we had to do or how to do it. So we just decided to go door to door and ask people to donate whatever they can for the children victims of this terrible*

to door and ask people to donate whatever they can for the children victims of this terrible event. Some people were excited, some people weren't, other people were offended; all in all it was a complex experience."

To get money on the street via a direct approach isn't an easy method of securing funds, especially for young IMPACT members who have little connection to the people they were asking for donations. The experience left a deep mark on them and encouraged them to pay attention to the people around them.

Despite all of the difficulties, the IMPACT members weren't discouraged and managed to collect \$828 USD in just a few days. Was this the end of the project? No, the next part of the strategy took on a more personal approach; each IMPACT member was assigned a particular child. They only knew the name of the child they were assigned and they had to prepare a relief package of food, clothes and whatever else they needed. With their packages ready they then went on a one day trip to Ceatalchioi village; here they were able to meet directly with the beneficiary of their project. They were very proud of what they had done accompanied also by the shock of what they saw there in the village and even



a bit sad because they couldn't do more. This experience has certainly reinforced their passion for volunteering and their ability to help whenever they can. "When you volunteer you feel a lot better because you help other people. I never expected anything in return... and I like this part of me, and that is to be involved in helping without expecting anything. Also this program helped me socialize more because it is hard to find many people to get along with and call them your friends, but through volunteering when you work tat-a-tat with so many people, you really can connect."

This project has been a valuable learning experience for IMPACT members to come together as a team, focused in their attempt to convince people on the street to donate. IMPACT projects like this one in Galati remind us all of the importance of

community and what it means to be a citizen of a community. "The only thing we can do is give a fishing pole to somebody. What that person does with it is his choice. We just do it, not necessarily to change the community, usually the community changes itself. We are, what's the name...the exception, the rebels, the ones that make society become more involved throughout history."





Diana Certan
Chief Operation Officer

IMPACT COMMUNITY INITIATIVE FOR YOUTH CLUB

The New Horizons Foundation IMPACT program development was for me an accelerated learning experience and one of the best professional decisions made; giving us the opportunity to grow together. I'm honored to write this introduction for the IMPACT Clubs section. I am glad to find on the nomination list „Decebal” IMPACT club, as this is one of the clubs I coordinated on the national level (2006). It's a joy to find it in the success stories of the program after six years of existence and two generations of numerous big hearted, dedicated young volunteer leaders.

The stories of the club below are impressive and I'm sure that these are not the only ones. Young IMPACT members that have wanted such a club have insisted to open it – for instance the Sabaoani club; a club that demonstrates that the program works even

in rural areas despite low resources. Harsova Club is another success story, appreciated for how much the local community members are involved. But what is more important is that beyond these stories are great people who make these things happen; even more so they develop IMPACT. Romanians, I take this opportunity to thank you from the bottom of my heart for the effort, dedication and many sacrifices that you made.

Diana Certan, Chief Operation Officer
New Horizons Foundation, Bucharest



Decebal Impact Club:

"We are a success story because we understood from the start what IMPACT is: 1. community involvement, 2. fun, 3. personal development"

Technical College "Decebal", Drobeta Turnu Severin, Mehedinti county

IMPACT „Decebal” Club is one of the oldest clubs in the country, opened in 2006 under the coordination of the priest/professor Sebastian Hoge. Today the club is run by a devoted young leader, Professor

Vasile Busuioc who takes pride in a good reputation in school, active participation and of his dedicated IMPACT space. In this space, situated in the backyard of the school, over 25 members gather on a daily, not only weekly basis. Here, they often listen to music, drink lemonade they frequently made themselves, and of course, to set up a new project.

Members of the club said, *„In the beginning we didn't think much about it. We thought of it as a school club. Then we stopped being a club, and became a sort of family. Some came here every break, soon there was even an IMPACT coffee shop open to all students".* The money collected from selling coffee and lemonade was invested in the projects designed by them. One of their current projects is *„Vertical spirit—building a climbing wall for high school students and younger'. „We wanted to guide them toward more productive activities and distract them from bad habits, like smoking."*

Besides the coffee shop IMPACT members have another business: jewelry and greeting cards, traditionally sold to their colleagues for the first of March holiday. Other original programs were implemented like *„Giving Free Hugs"* or the *„Living Library"*; a unique program in which IMPACT members

„became" books for their schoolmates in order for them to find out more information about their club.

Their secret? *"We take work more as play. We work but we have fun at the same time."* For the teens from Decebal IMPACT Club has clear meaning; *"IMPACT means friendship, personal development, activities, communication, a life style, a place in which we are heard...we have opinions and the professor is no longer in charge, we are".* In other words *"we are like a family. Despite occasional misunderstandings, we are together for better or for worse; we forget about our problems, we laugh, we gain knowledge, we make new friends"*.

Knowing the club exists, and especially the IMPACT Coffee shop, high schoolers are excited to come to school. They themselves confess: *"In the morning when I wake up I say today I have IMPACT from 2 to 4. Nobody calls me. IMPACT is on the program, IMPACT stays on the program. I can say that IMPACT club has had great influence on our lives".* One of the visible effects in the development of these young people is what they call *"growing up in a nice way".* IMPACT makes them pay close attention to their surroundings and gives

them confidence in their own strengths. *“Before I came here, I thought it wasn’t worth it, but then I discovered what great people the club has that make things work...Decebal Club members all attest to this too.”*

„We are a success story because we understood from the start what IMPACT is: 1. Community involvement, 2. Fun, 3. Personal development.”

IMPACT members from Severin recommend to young people their age from other schools in the country to wholeheartedly choose volunteering *“because it helps them grow and develop.... prove it can be done differently and not the least; for my brothers and sisters from elsewhere to smile with an open mind”.*



Club IMPACT “You Are Somebody”, Sabaoani (rural area):
“The time in IMPACT is a long term investment and I think it will help us throughout our lives because it will teach us to care about others.”

Theoretical High School “Vasile Alecsandri” Sabaoani, Neamt county

IMPACT club Sabaoani is one of the more active clubs in the rural areas of Romania. It has a high number of members and two dedicated leaders, Boloca Luminita and Martinica Cecilia. It is well-known and popular in the local community and has the support of

City Hall and local institutions. *“Locals know that there are volunteers in their village and that they can count on their support. People heard of IMPACT and look at them with much regard; for some of our projects club members knock on people’s doors and were received warmly and supported their activities.”*

The club was founded in 2009 and is called *“You are the one”*. As current members say the club’s name refers to *“the importance of each individual. You are somebody, you could make the change”*. The club is currently involved in a project *“Prepare Better for Life”*, a project that targets high school students and informs them on hazards such as alcohol, drugs and tobacco and makes them aware of the importance of nutrition and exercise.

One of the recent projects the club implemented was *“Dear Grandpa, Dear Grandma”* and for this they used funds they had collected during another activity. They organized a cinema at the village Cultural House where they sold homemade popcorn, cookies and collected money from ticket sales. These IMPACT members also organized parties with different themes such as Halloween, The 80’s and Valentine’s Day. Through these events, they collected enough money to provide food and other necessary

items for the elderly poor of their village. The project was one of the most emotional for IMPACT members as they created a relational connection with the seniors: *"We went and talked to them and they thanked us from the bottom of their hearts for lifting their spirits for a period of time. They also talked about their youth so it was very mutually beautiful experience".*

Sabaoani IMPACT members describe the profile of an IMPACT member as: *"a sociable person, willing to get involved, oriented to development and creating responsibility".* An IMPACT member is a person full of energy that rubs off. *"Our coordinating professors told us that they enjoy coming to IMPACT because they get a sense of enthusiastic youth."*

Young people from IMPACT clubs take joy in what they do together, but also rejoice in the opportunity to do something outside of school, meaning non-formal education. *"We don't learn information like robots, but see the time spent with IMPACT as a long term investment....I think it will help us throughout our lives because it will teach us to care about others."*

Leaders are always by their side because they understand that being an

IMPACT leader means *"equality with one's student, it means support, it means total communication, openness...it means my possibility as an adult and as a professor to mold the young generation not only on the benches of the school, but in a different manner as well, making them gain knowledge which is extremely useful and necessarily in their lives".* Besides, leaders themselves feel motivated in what they do by the enthusiasm of the club members. *"I am still with IMPACT because I'm constantly drawing positive energy from my students, I have the possibility of going out in the community and helping people and thus I am offered with the possibility of helping these children reach their potential."*



IMPACT club „Echo of the Volunteer“:

"In IMPACT I feel that a lot of people just awoken from a deep sleep and now they are preoccupied with all sorts of problems. They participate more and more and not only in IMPACT, but also in their day to day life"

Theoretical High school "Avram Iancu" Cluj Napoca

IMPACT club „Echo of the Volunteer“ was opened 2 years ago from the passion of two ex-IMPACT members (Daniela Nemet and Irina Ghita) who were still students; the school where Irina moved

to had no club. Despite difficulties and slow progress, in time the club there developed nicely and had devoted members who created some interesting projects.

Both Daniela and Irina were interns for the VIATA Camp, a decisive experience for their education and for their desire to continue with IMPACT. *“Camp really changes you, it takes you out of your comfort zone, and raises many challenges which you have to accept no matter what. You see you are capable of much more than you thought.”* So when they both got to a high school where there was no IMPACT club they thought of starting one themselves. *“I felt I was doing nothing and I needed an activity”, says Irina. “In the 10th grade I realized that there were other people who had been to VIATA Camp so I went to speak with them. Me and another girl tried to open an IMPACT club in high school but she dropped out halfway and that was when I asked Daniela to help me out. It was decided then that the two of us were going to be the leaders of this club”.*

Daniela and Irina try to do their job well to help IMPACT members grow and receive the trust they received.: *“We try every time to encourage them, to state their opinions and when we notice that certain*

people take too much of the conversation, even without realizing it, we try to get others to talk as well.” The positive effects didn't take long to show: *“they opened up and showed more self-confidence and that's a really good thing. Basically IMPACT wouldn't be anything without projects because in a project you apply everything you learn while debriefing.”*

The girls noticed that the members who wished to be more involved grew the most: *“in the beginning they didn't seem to know what the projects were about but now they are the ones coming up with the ideas and ask to do projects. In IMPACT I feel that a lot of people just happen to be there and they are preoccupied with all sorts of problems. They participate more and more and not only in IMPACT, but also in their day to day life”.*

The last project of the club was *„Through Art, Against Cancer”* and the story of this project began in the fall of 2011. Members of the club really wanted to do something for hospitalized children. Thus the idea was born to re-design the consulting room of the Department of Oncology Oncopediatry at the hospital in Cluj-Napoca. In order to fulfill their plans they applied to a grant competition – IMPACT Romania and alongside the competition, on Halloween

they organized a fundraising charitable party *“Pumpkin Carnival”*. This past spring, along with the hospitalized children and with the help of an Art student they painted the walls of 6 rooms with beloved cartoon characters. They worked hard on a consistent basis for 2 weeks; they did a good job and brought a lot of joy to the children. It was the team effort of the IMPACT members working together that brought a lot of this joy.

Club members from *“Echo of the Volunteer”* had learned together some very important lessons about change and personal development. In Irina's words: *“The change starts with you. First you have to change you and then you can try to change something in others. I think IMPACT reaches this target of changing people for the best”.*





IMPACT Club Maxim:

"We never thought that we could change something in this town. But over time, we have seen the capacity we have to change through activities, to understand the world and otherwise, through each game played we learned things that we used in our projects"

High School "Ioan Cotovu" Hârșova, Constanta

IMPACT Club "Maxim" is a local "mini-celebrity" and its activities and projects in the community are recognized and

appreciated throughout the city. Club leaders are Daniel Tepes, Dorina Toma, Crina Ostaci and Geanina Mărgineanu. The club receives support from the local community (Mayor and City Council, Police, Parents Association, Culture House, Church) and the unconditional support of the administration of High School Ioan Cotovu for all its activities and projects. The club interacts with many people from the community as it does not limit its activities to those only within the school.

Current members often join the club because they were attracted by the last activities, out of curiosity, or from a desire to get involved. *"When I wanted to do something, or to meet with some friends and I had no where to go....I wanted to be part of my own group where all of us have common interests, and this was not possible everywhere, I came here. In IMPACT we can do whatever we think necessary and our activities coincide with the needs of society."* In IMPACT club they learn that they can help others and themselves. They learn to relate to others, to behave and how to act in different contexts. *"We never thought that we could change something in this town. But over time, we have seen the capacity we have to change through activities, to understand the world*



and otherwise, through each game played we learned things that we used in our projects." They also learned to be more attentive to the idea that a community itself can find solutions to its problems. *"We are learning from our personal issues, which in fact are not only ours, they also belong to the community. For there are solutions, but nobody does anything."*

For one of these problems they tried to find a solution and to set up a youth club, *"in the past, the club members wanted to be stronger. Even if the club members meet once a week, we thought to let others like us; students who do not drink and do not smoke to meet all together somewhere. And so came the idea of the project, to make a youth club for our high school....for those who neither drink or smoke."*

Another successful project that became known around the county was centered on the issue of human trafficking. One methodology used to address this issue was the methodology of Forum Theater. This program had a great impact on both the teenagers and parents who attended or participated in the performance. *“At first we just wanted to issue a warning to naïve girls about a community issue. We chose Forum Theater to sensitize them, to make them recognize that the problem exists. We knew that we reached our goal when children and parents from other schools asked us to repeat the performance, which we did. Later, we joined the National Campaign to Fight Human Trafficking Campaign—,Open Your Eyes’. We also presented the piece at the seaside.”*

Club members realize there are advantages to being in a small town, they are visible; but on the other hand, they have challenges because they don’t have access to the the same resources as clubs from a big town. Most members said they found in IMPACT this understanding: at IMPACT they not only listen, they also hear each other. They also found respect. *“In school you look like a stranger, here you are valued as a person, not only as a student.”* Some of them recognize

that not everyone believes that volunteering is cool. On the contrary, when they had a project to „green up” a local park, many people laughed them. IMPACT members are people who truly understand the value of volunteering.

To their fellow countrymen, IMPACT club Maxim Hârșova sends a message in this ad hoc verse: *“Dear students in Romania/Do you know what joy is? Let’s all go to IMPACT/for a clean future! Come get involved with me/you’ll sure look good! I trust you, our club supports you”.*

