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Subject: Update on the end of year activities

Dear Friends,

Greetings in the Lord!

I wish everyone a blessed and useful Lent. Here are a few updates that I would like to share that took place at the end of the year of 2009. I should have sent this email out earlier but I didn't. Please forgive me. I ask for your continued prayers because they do help me out in many situations.

With gratitude and love in Christ,  
Christina Semon

### First Annual Romanian Benefit Dinner for the St. Dimitrie Program and the Protection of the Theotokos Family Center

A little piece of history was made for both programs in December. That event was a benefit dinner. It was at a local Romanian restaurant in Cluj-Napoca. We were expecting sixty-five people to come but because of the wintery weather that day about forty showed up. Since many Romanians have not been to such an event many compared it to attending a Romanian wedding. Entertainment during the dinner was Christmas carols sung by a talented group of young men. The two presenters of the night were a staff member from each program. They used power-point presentations to show pictures of both programs' services.

We enjoyed a Lenten fish dinner. I sat next to a husband and wife who were visiting Romania. They also spoke English and I was able to talk with them during the dinner about the programs.

By the end of the night I felt that the staff was happy with the outcome of the first benefit dinner that they had put on. There were many positive things that happened but there were some things that we could do better. If God blesses it we hope to do a second one.

### Romanian Colinda (Christmas Caroling)

On Christmas Eve many Romanians go Christmas caroling to family, friends, neighbors, hospitals and businesses. My language teacher told me to be ready because many people would say Christina come caroling! She said I would have a list of people to go caroling to. But I didn't take her too seriously because I thought I did know that many people. Her advice did come true.

Anyhow, I was home for Christmas eve with the lady that I live. She said that she wanted me to experience a Romanian Christmas and not to be alone. That was very thoughtful of her. I thought of giving something to my neighbors who are nice people. They make me feel like I belong to the community. We talk to each other as we pass one another in the stairways and on the side walk. So I thought banana bread would be a nice gift. After baking eight loaves, the lady I live with and myself went Christmas caroling to the neighbors. This opportunity to offer a little something made my heart and soul fill with joy and openness. It is easy to isolate yourself because you don't have many friends or family nearby you but, I thank God that He gave me the strength to give to others and to develop our friendships.

Later that evening after we got back from caroling in our apartment building, we had Christmas carolers at our door. The carolers were part of the St. Dimitrie Program staff. We offered them juice and desserts. We talk for a little while and they asked us

if we wanted to join them in caroling to the other staff members. We did join them to continue the caroling and when we went to each apartment the others decided to also come caroling. On the tables of each apartment were usually soda, fruit juice, sweets, and some prepared food if the guests wanted it. It was half past midnight when I got back home. But also on the streets were many other people Christmas caroling.

I had another experience and opportunity to go Christmas caroling at several hospitals located in downtown Cluj, with the parish of St. John the Theologian that I regularly attend. Our group was big around 12-18 people. Most of the hospitals looked the same in the interior and exterior. Usually, we entered a long hallway and that was where we stayed to sing three Romanian Christmas carols. I hymned along as the others sang and while we sang little by little the patients who can get out of their beds came out to the hallway to listen to us singing. Also, while we were singing, our priest and two others went into all the patients' rooms to give a little icon and fruit. At one hospital floor, one man expressed through words and tears the joy he felt by others coming to rejoice with them the birth of Jesus Christ. After we finished we would quickly go to the next level and do the whole thing over again.

### Boxes

On Saturday January 2, 2010, I got a phone call from the driver of a large van that our boxes will arrive on Sunday January 3, 2010. It was a nice gift for the New Year. My heart leaped for joy that the boxes arrived. For two months I told myself that the shipment is in God's hands and He will take care of what should happen with them. At 6:30 in the morning I was helping unload the van. Total number of boxes was forty-six! We did not do anything with them until Monday.

Monday morning we put our heads together to come up with a plan to tackle the boxes. We were a team by opening one box at a time. Making sure we wrote down where it was from and then we sorted the items into piles. Now we have them sorted and put into big plastic bags to keep them organized so that they are easy to move around. They are now ready to be put together for use by children and their mothers to help keep them warm.

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OCMC Missionary to Romania

Glory to God for all things!

Visit the Christina's website at: [csemon.ocmc.org](http://csemon.ocmc.org)