

Sports and English camp in Svilengrad, Bulgaria July 2011



This years' adventure began for some feeling totally empty and finished, while for others it was missing connections, arriving late and losing luggage for a number of days. Regardless of the getting to Bulgaria, as we joined with the church in Svilengrad that opened their arms so widely and so full of love, it was getting to the sports field on Monday morning at 10 am and seeing those faces full of excitement and smiles ready for a week together that put the past behind us and opened a week of much blessing. As those faces looked up and beamed at us, we realised the effect that you can have on a child's life, even for as short a period as 5 days it can impact them for a lifetime! Those 5 day camps over the past couple of years have left a sweetness in them, which their faces expressed as they excitedly bounced around hugging those they knew and learning the names of those they were going to get to know. We will never know the full impact till we view it all in heaven with God's eyes...oh what a day!

We realised this time that some of the older boys were no longer with us, but there were a number of brothers and sisters now big enough to come along. It was a pleasant surprise when one of the older ones dropped by in the middle of the week to catch up. He was now working and married. The icing on the cake came as we sat to share some of what God had been doing and Desi, our translator, spoke up. With having the language she had communicated in depth with a number of kids. As they shared their struggles she encouraged them and shared what God placed on her heart. A gentle smile crept over her face as she shared of one of the kids calling her from time to time for about 3 months after last years' camp. "When they were struggling they would call and how thrilled I was to hear one say that he and a friend would go off together and pray instead of going drinking". That is when you see God did something and

all that running around on the sports field in the hot sun, did more than simply make us sweat! Please continue to pray for each child that came along and whatever it was they took home, that God would multiply it and use it.

This year it was another child that Desi had the opportunity to openly share with. He thought it was really cool that he could not read or write, but as they spoke she warned him of the fact that he now has the opportunity to learn and encouraged him to make the most of it and at least to learn the numbers so no one can cheat him later in life. Sometimes we overlook how valuable schooling is. What a great lesson for the younger ones on the team and in the church, to see learning is a gift.

Josef did a great job of getting the kids into teams to play soccer. It was good to see some of the smaller kids get a chance to play. Seeing them watch Josef play made it easy to guess who their hero was! Other kids wanted to play with Brigitte or Becky as they went over the English words for fruit while throwing the Frisbee. It was Karl's 'slack rope' walking that was new this year and it was fun to watch Leon, Lara, Leni, Abigail, Nadya and Jason helping some of the children to make it to the other side. I think we all tried it out at some stage over the week.

The surprise for us came on Monday afternoon when it was time for English. Normally we have had around 25 kids, but around 35-40 smiling faces turned up and oh were they excited! It did not take us long to realise that we needed smaller groups and a lot more structure to be able to handle the afternoons in a profitable way. Heather and Jason did a great job with the youth as they studied English each afternoon and David and Luke concentrated on keeping order. The Punchinello play, which we divided over the days, was watched with anticipation from the children and it was a great way to use all the skills of the team as the story unfolded. Even the youth from the church joined in to play it on Sunday.

It was a great week together and even though it was hot and we were tired, the joy of the children refreshed our hearts.

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