

  
**HOPE HAVEN**



**Rotary**

**District 5610**

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# **Romania Wheelchair Project**

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**PREPARED BY LINDA PETERSON, OCTOBER 20-31, 2025**

## THE MISSION:

**WHEELCHAIR DISTRIBUTION TO HANDICAPPED CHILDREN IN ROMANIA & UKRAINE**

## THE ORGANIZATIONS:

**HOPE HAVEN INTERNATIONAL & ROTARY CLUBS IN BUCHAREST & BARLAD, ROMANIA; CHISINAU, MOLDOVA; AND IZMAIL, UKRAINE**

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**TIMELINE: OCTOBER 20-31, 2025**

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# THE TEAM:

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**Mark Siemonsma, Team Leader, Custer Rotary**

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**Lindsay Rose, Daughter of Mark, Spirit Lake, MN**

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**Steve Sikorski, Downtown Sioux Falls Rotary**

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# THE TEAM:

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**Shawn & Terry Walters, Rushmore Rotary**

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**Rick Edelen, Rushmore Rotary**

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**Linda Peterson, Rushmore Rotary**

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# THE TEAM:

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**Dan & Michelle Hutt, Custer Rotary**

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**Scott & Valerie Parsley, Madison Rotary**

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**John & Carol Schneider, Le Mars Rotary**

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# THE TEAM:

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**Julie Gordon, P.T. & Dan Gordon, Denver, CO**

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**Daniel, Cristi, George, Hope Haven Staff, Romania**

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# Day 1-2: Team Arrives after 3 flights to Bucharest, Romania

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## Hotel Continental, Bucharest, Romania

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### Dinner at Hotel, Meeting the Team

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# Day 3: Bucharest: Rotary Volunteers with Social Services Staff

Work: unpack and setup wheelchairs, custom fit to handicapped children, consult with Cismigu Rotarians about future grants.



# Recipients and Families

Each child had different handicaps, requiring the volunteers to custom-fit the chair—resourcing parts from supplies and using multiple tools.



# Recipients fittings continued all day



# Day 4: Bucharest

Visit handicap orphanage Organizatia Suedeza to refit residents with upgraded chairs, to custom-fit their disabilities.



# Day 4: Volunteers recovered vinyl on custom chair

The old vinyl was removed, new pieces cut, and the recovered parts were reattached to the chair. New skills were learned!



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**Day 5: Small team fitted 3 children in one family.**

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**Genetic disfunction in 3 of 4 children. Remaining team members  
toured Bucharest.**

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# Day 3 to 5: Food and camaraderie with team and hosts

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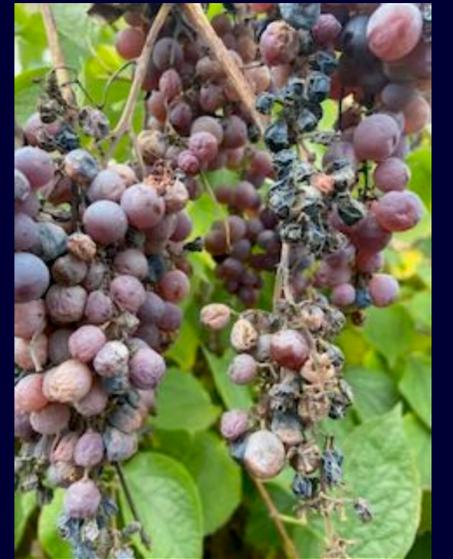
**Romanians love to make meals a reason to celebrate with ALL the ethnic foods! We visited Harp Irish Bar, Excalibur, & Caru cu Bere.**

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# Day 6: Travel to Barlad, Romania

Travel by 2 vans and car, touring winery, meeting home hosts.



# Day 7: Barlad, Romania

## Touring hospital elevator Rotary project, Sunday outdoor market.



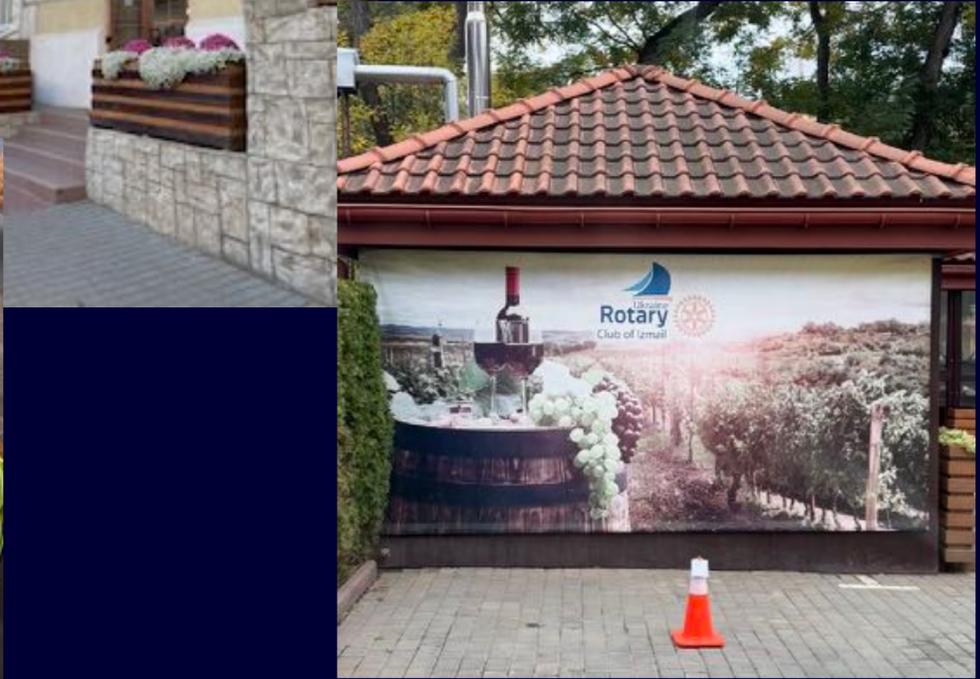
# Barlad Hope Haven new facility, lunch, Rotary club dinner.

Facility will stock and maintain chairs, host recipients from area.



# Day 8: Travel to Izmail, Ukraine

Passport checkpoints, air raids, dinner. Our team was honored for our bravery to visit and commitment to their wheelchair project.



# Day 9: Izmail, Ukraine

Cleaned chairs, custom-fitted handicapped children to chairs, interviewed for video.



  
**USAID Rotary**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

**USAID-ROTARY HEARTS OF EUROPE**  
Providing wheelchairs & disease prevention training in Ukraine

GG2001299  
Rotary Club of Izmail  
Sioux Falls Rotary West

Support for this project was provided by  
USAID and The Rotary Foundation



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# Teamwork.

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The team worked together to make the chairs clean and fit.

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# Rotary Club dinner, video.

Izmail Rotary started the grant 6 years ago. Our team helped them wrap up the grant. Video taken during our workday was shown that evening.



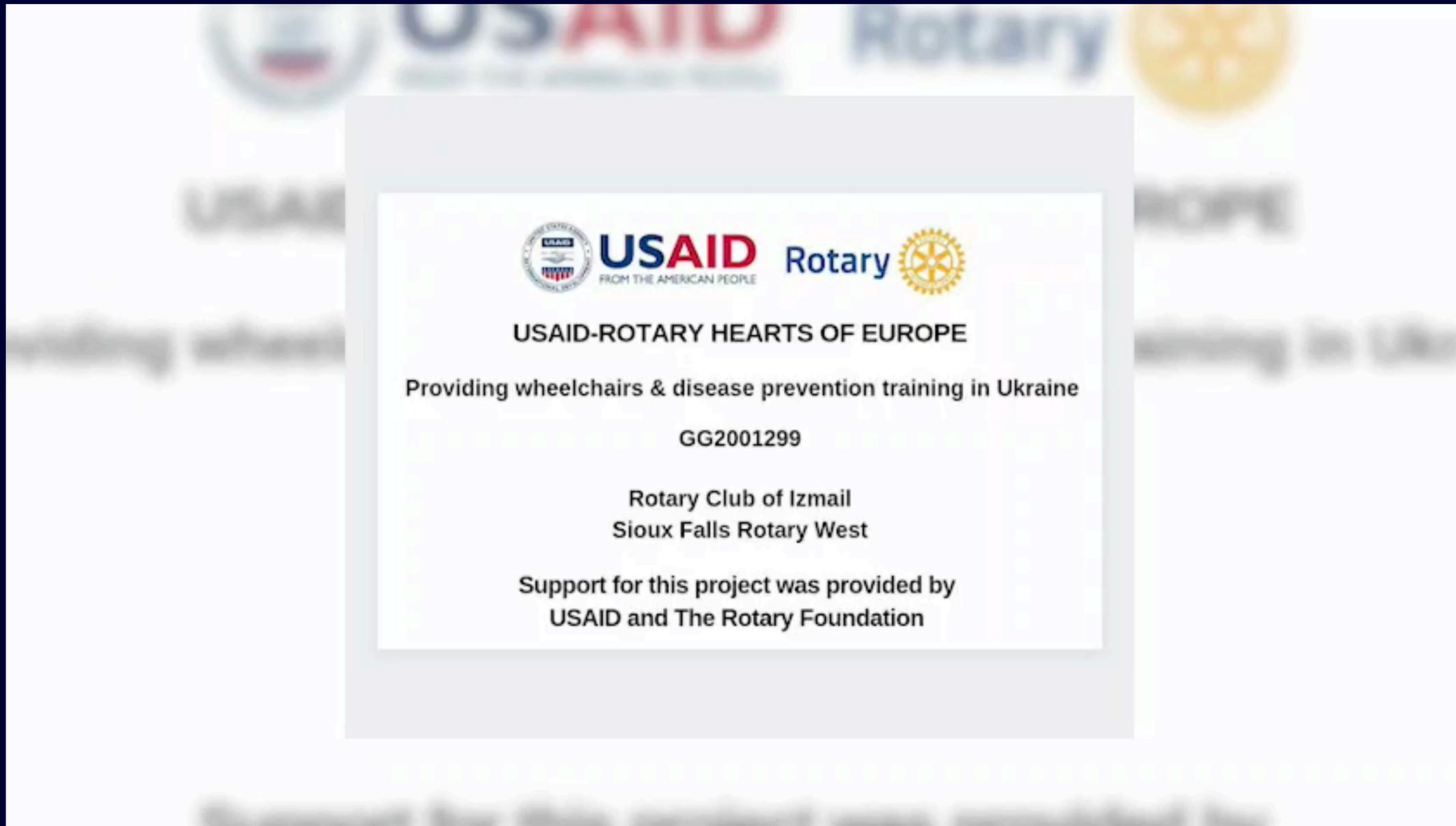
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# Video by Izmil Rotary

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## Wheelchair project was a Rotary global grant.

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# Day 10: Travel to Constanza, Romania

Moment of Remembrance across Ukraine at 9 AM everyday. Fording the Danube by ferry. Ice cream while waiting at check points.



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# Day 11: Sunrise at Black Sea, Travel to Bucharest

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**Team relaxed at Hard Rock Cafe. Enjoyed chocolates! Packed up.**

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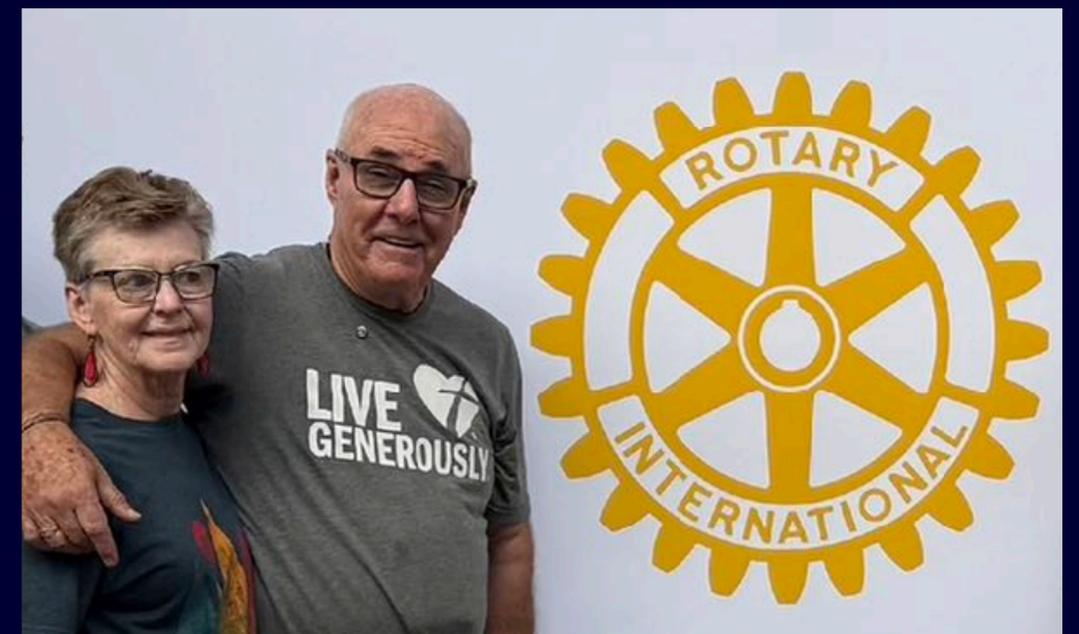


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## Day 12: Returned home, project takeaways:

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**Scott & Val Parsley: Helping people is the greatest life-changing work. Thanks to Hope Haven and Rotary District 5610 we were able to help others. I was also so very touched by the Ukrainians optimism and gratefulness for our help. Working on wheelchairs with other Rotarians I'd never met before blessed me twice: making new friendships with team, and the children receiving wheelchairs and their families.**



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## Project takeaways:

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**Linda Peterson:** I learned we could help handicapped children without having skills with wheelchairs. My heart was filled with emotion and satisfaction, especially seeing my ancestors' country of Ukraine.

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**Rick Edelen:** What a wonderful trip we had, we were able to serve many children in Romania and Ukraine. It was very powerful to see the smile on the kids faces and the appreciation the parents had for all of us. The parents were all very thankful for their new wheelchair.



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## Project takeaways:

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**Shawn Walters:** It was really satisfying to help ease the worries of the parents. It was clear that they devote their lives to their disabled children and a new chair seemed to help calm their anxiety a bit.

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**John & Carol Schneider:** I am so impressed that Rotarians around the world can network together to Do Good in the World. And also be so welcoming and supportive of our cause.

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## Project takeaways:

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**Dan Hutt:** In România and Ukraine we saw frightened children carried in by weary parents. After work with trained Hope Haven staff and Rotary volunteers from our district and the host countries, the children left with wheelchairs and smiles, and all they left were the smiles on our faces. I'll always remember the smiles!

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**Michelle Hutt:** The people of Izmail are so strong, resilient, amazing and beautiful is my sense. Somehow they still weave together threads of hope and joy in their daily lives. We leave with our hearts aching and hoping for them.



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## Project leaders and experts:

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**Mark Siemonsma & Steve Sikorski:** As our long-standing Hope Haven leader Mark, and volunteer Rotarian leader Steve, they guided our team to achieving the goal of fitting wheelchairs to kids. We appreciate and thank them for their dedication to Romanian and Ukrainian families.

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**Julie & Dan Gordon:** Thank you for having Dan and I join your Rotary trip. It was inspiring to get to know all of you!



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Questions? Comments?