

# Moldova Education

## *Dyers offer MSW content to social workers in Moldova*

Preston and Genie Dyer returned to the Republic of Moldova Jan. 26 through March 2 to teach graduate social work courses at the Baptist College of Theology and Education in Chisinau. The city is the capital of the republic, which is one of the smallest and poorest countries in Europe.

The Dyers and others from the School of Social Work first visited the college in 2005, beginning a relationship with its administration and students. The administrators had said they needed opportunities for their faculty members to get MSW degrees, which none have. The Dyers returned this year to teach the first courses in the master's program and hope the initiative will continue and build to a full degree.

Teaching at the college is challenging because of language differences – Russian and Romanian. These categories define not the country one is from, but one's primary language. Courses at the college are taught in both languages – the first part of the week in one and the last half of the week in the other.

The Dyers had 12 students in their undergraduate class, none of whom had been taught any systematic approach to social work practice. The

Dyers taught the seven-step helping process; the practice course curriculum and skills labs; scientific evaluation, i.e., measurable objectives; ethics; and discussed diversity, stereotyping and discrimination. During the first two weeks of their stay, they taught graduate students.

The Dyers' hosts for the stay were Alex and Lucia Stepanenco and their six children, ages 4 to 20. They enjoyed wonderful home-cooked meals such as grape leaf rolls, pickle soup and apple crepes, as well as frequent "movie" nights using the Dyers' laptop and projector. Four-year-old Daniel watched "Shrek" multiple times, Preston reported.

Throughout their stay in Moldova, the Dyers kept

a blog and the following comments are excerpts from it:

### **JAN. 29**

We made it through the first day, as did the students! We met first with the dean of the School of Social Work, Vadym Burlac. The class has 10 students, eight women and two men – much like in the U.S. Several of them are social workers that we met in 2005. Four of them teach at the college and the others work in Chisinau or villages close by.

### **JAN. 31**

One of the students we met in 2005 came by our class. She is from central Asia in a country that is Muslim. She said she could not talk about Jesus, but could show Jesus' love by

serving others through social work.

We are really impressed with our students. They really get involved in the discussion and contribute great examples.

### **FEB. 1**

In our discussion about the poor today, one student said "Most Moldovans would love to live as 'poor' people in the U.S. live." We told them that there are homeless people in the U.S. and children who go to bed hungry every night. I am not sure they believed us.

### **FEB. 3**

We completed our first week of teaching and we think it was very successful. We gave each student a certificate of completion and I wish you could have seen the smiles on their faces.



*Some of the students proudly showing their certificates of completion at the end of the Dyers' class. One student thanked the Dyers for "helping me see my work with different lenses." completion at the end of the Dyers' class. One student thanked the Dyers for "helping me see my work with different lenses."*

Yesterday, students gave reports about social agencies in Moldova. They all began by giving a picture of the issues globally and then compared to Moldova. They think much more about the world as a whole than Americans do.

#### **FEB. 13**

We have a new translator this week ... he is good about letting us in on the jokes in class so we know what all the laughing is about!

Today we met with the president of the college and the dean of social work to talk about our dreams for the continuation of the master's program here. They are still in desperate need of textbooks in their languages.

#### **FEB. 14**

One of the students today asked if mezzo was the same as "group work." I realized that she had learned social work as casework, group work and community organization ... this is terminology in our profession that has been dead at least 30 years. That is how far behind they are.

#### **FEB. 15**

Teaching these students is exhilarating! They actually want to learn. We were going over the "identifying purpose and role skill" for the hundredth time, when one student finally got it. She said, "Now I see, if I don't start my relationship out in the right way in the first session, then my client will always see me as only a friend." And later she said to us, "Thank you so much for helping me see my work with different lenses."

#### **FEB. 16**

Today was our last day of class with the graduate students. When we



*Preston and Genie Dyer with their host family in Chisinau.*

finished class today, the students just didn't leave. We dismissed them three times, and still they stayed.

#### **FEB. 17**

Yesterday was an absolutely wonderful day of teaching. Preston said, "I don't think that I have ever felt more affirmed as a teacher in over 45 years as a college teacher." Student after student had breakthroughs of insight.

I have been thinking of this project as being one to get the college faculty MSW degrees so they could better teach their undergraduates. But one student, who works at the hospital, expanded my vision. She said, "I have been talking to my co-workers about the helping process and how excited about it I am. Now they want me to teach it to them."

#### **FEB. 27**

We began our classes with Russian undergraduates today. Of the 12 students in the class only five entered into conversation and others showed little interest. One student told us, "Here the purpose of social work is to

bring people to Christ." The students then debated whether a Christian would ever need a social worker, i.e., that Christians could solve their problems with God's help.

#### **FEB. 28**

What a difference a day makes. Today it was like we had a different group of students. They were being very friendly. Still they are not as interested in learning the helping process as they are in discussing how social work is done in America. Most of the students are from central Asia and really have little idea of what social work as a profession is like.

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