

## Changing Perspectives, Writing the Future. A Project Report

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### **Abstract:**

This article delves into the heartwarming initiative undertaken by students from “Mihai Viteazul” National College in Turda as they dedicate their time and energy to make a positive impact on the lives of children with disabilities at Carine Day Center. It emphasizes that volunteering is more than just an action; it is a manifestation of solidarity and compassion towards others. These interactions foster meaningful connections that transcend the boundaries of disability.



In a world that often seems fast-paced and self-centered, the importance of empathy and community service cannot be overstated. Mihai Viteazul high school students are embodying the spirit of compassion through their voluntary efforts at Carine Day Center. Carine Day Center serves as a haven for children with disabilities, providing them with a supportive environment where they can learn, grow, and engage in various activities. The center focuses not only on meeting the unique needs of these individuals but also on fostering a sense of belonging and empowerment. Through specialized programs and personalized care, Carine Day Center aims to enhance the quality of life for its students and promote inclusivity within the community. This article explores the heartwarming initiative taken by these young individuals as they contribute their time and energy to make a positive impact on the lives of those with special needs.

Volunteering, an essential pillar of the community, is becoming increasingly important in our contemporary society. Students from “Mihai Viteazul” National College in Turda have embraced this noble mission, transforming into agents of change at Carine Day Center. In the

light of the importance of volunteering, young people have brought smiles and joy to the lives of those in need.

Volunteering is not just an action but a manifestation of solidarity and compassion towards others. Students from “Mihai Viteazul” National College have understood that every gesture, no matter how small, contributes to building a more united and empathetic community. Involvement in volunteer activities not only brings individual benefits but also has a positive impact on society as a whole.

The partnership established between Carine Day Center in Câmpia Turzii and "Mihai Viteazul" National College allowed ninth-grade students to commemorate World Autism Awareness Day.

The students involved in this project conducted an awareness and sensitization campaign in the local community regarding the issues faced by students diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders. They focused on the characteristics and specific needs for the acceptance and integration of these students into society, interviewing numerous individuals.



"At the beginning of today's activities, we didn't know much about autism, only that it is a disorder that prevents individuals from communicating. However, as we progressed, we learned more about it. Being World Autism Awareness Day, we were assigned to ask people questions about it. It seemed like a relatively easy task, but I realized how complicated it was. Few people

were open to answering to our questions, either due to lack of time or simply not wanting to interact. Fortunately, there were some willing to take a few minutes of their time to answer our questions. When we returned to the meeting place, I could experience how people with autism perceive certain noises around them. It was a wonderful experience, and I'm glad I haven't missed it." (participating student in the project)

"Many times we don't realize how privileged we are from many perspectives compared to people with disabilities. The fact that we have the right to education and that we are easily integrated into society is part of our normalcy, but unfortunately, not theirs. Today, on the

occasion of World Autism Awareness Day, we gathered with the aim of breaking down the barriers between us and them because, in the end, we are all humans." (participating student in the project).

"I found it to be a beautiful and educational activity, especially because I had the opportunity to hear what goes on in the mind of a child with autism. It was an interesting experience that I recommend to everyone!" (participating student in the project).



The values of volunteerism and friendship were celebrated within the project 4/4ForFriends, organized in partnership with the Embassy of the United States in Romania and the American Councils for International Education, which allowed the ninth-grade students from "Mihai Viteazul" National College to commemorate the legacy left by Dr. Martin Luther King. The students involved in this project travelled to Carine Day Center in Câmpia Turzii.

The head of the center presented the volunteers with materials used in activities with these children with disabilities. Additionally, the students had the opportunity to observe a session, some symptoms of autism, and the progress that the young patients make over time spent there.

The students from "Mihai Viteazul" National College created personalized presents, which not only showcased the artistic talents of the students, but also demonstrated their genuine commitment to making a positive impact in the lives of others. It reflected a deeper understanding that the essence of giving goes beyond the material aspect; it is about creating meaningful connections and uplifting the spirits of those who may face daily challenges.

As the students presented these heartfelt gifts to the children at the Carine Day Center, the atmosphere was filled with a sense of shared joy and connection. The exchange was not merely about delivering presents; it became a moment of genuine human connection, breaking down barriers and fostering a sense of unity and understanding between the students and the young individuals with psychomotor disabilities.

In this way, the "4/4ForFriends" project evolved into a multifaceted expression of compassion, from raising awareness about autism to the thoughtful creation of personalized presents that transcended the boundaries of a typical school project. It exemplifies how small acts of kindness, coupled with attention to detail and a genuine desire to make a positive

impact, can collectively contribute to building a more compassionate and inclusive community.

"The atmosphere during this activity was truly magical. The students were enthusiastic and creative, putting not only objects but also positive emotions and the sincere desire to bring joy to the children at Carine Day Center into each box," said the coordinating teacher.

Each package was carefully thought out, containing educational toys, drawing materials, books, and sweets, tailored to the specific needs and preferences of the recipients. The students were eager to provide not only material items but also a touch of love and recognition.

In such a project, empathy and sensitivity were as important as creativity. The students had the opportunity to understand more deeply the challenges faced by children with disabilities and to contribute to creating a more inclusive and warm environment in the community. The students not only celebrated the values of volunteerism and friendship but also gained valuable insights into the challenges faced by children and young individuals with psychomotor disabilities. The exchange of experiences, the observation of autism-related sessions, and the thoughtful gesture of sharing sweets and self-made posters with the children at the center all contribute to fostering a sense of empathy, awareness, and community engagement among the students.

"It was an emotional experience to know that by the simple act of packaging these boxes, we can bring smiles and hope to the children at the Carine Center. It is just the beginning, and we are determined to continue to engage in such humanitarian projects," said one of the participating students.

One of the most significant outcomes of this volunteer program is the connections formed between high school students and those with disabilities. The interaction not only breaks down stereotypes but also shatters preconceived notions about the capabilities of individuals with special needs. Through shared experiences, laughter, and mutual understanding, the volunteers and the students at Carine Day Center forge meaningful connections that extend beyond the boundaries of disability.

This volunteering initiative not only brought joy to children with disabilities but also highlighted the power of young people to make positive changes in the community. Students from "Mihai Viteazul" National College have demonstrated that, through compassion and solidarity, they can become agents of change and bringers of light to those around them. They have shown that education is not limited to classrooms but extends to building a more compassionate society.

The volunteering experience at Carine Day Center provides high school students with a unique opportunity for personal and educational growth. Exposure to diverse perspectives and the challenges faced by individuals with disabilities fosters empathy and broadens their understanding of the world. The skills acquired through volunteering, such as communication, patience, and adaptability, contribute to the holistic development of these young individuals.

Incorporating volunteering into the lives of high school students is about providing them with the tools and experiences necessary for personal growth and success in the broader world. The benefits extend far beyond academic achievement, influencing character development, social skills, and a sense of responsibility that will serve them well throughout their lives. As high school students embrace the spirit of volunteerism, they embark on a transformative journey that not only benefits themselves but also leaves a lasting impact on the communities they serve. In essence, the project became a journey where creativity intertwined with understanding, leaving a positive impact not only on the students but also on the broader community. As students share their experiences, insights, and newfound understanding with their peers, family members and friends, it has the potential to create a more compassionate and informed community at large. The aim is that the values cultivated within the project can inspire others to contribute positively to creating a more inclusive and understanding society. Beyond the immediate benefits for the children at Carine Day Center and the high school volunteers, the community at large reaps the rewards of this collaborative effort. The increased awareness and understanding of disabilities help break down societal barriers, promoting a more inclusive and compassionate community. The ripple effect of this volunteer initiative extends beyond the center, inspiring others to contribute to the well-being of individuals with special needs.

**Biodata:**

Daniela Incze teaches English at Mihai Viteazul National College in Turda, Romania. She has been teaching English since 2008 to primary, middle school and secondary school students. She is interested in attending courses, conferences and seminars on various topics.