

## Wessex Shoebox Scheme 2021

Considering that schools and community groups in our district are still responding to the Covid pandemic, we enjoyed a fantastic collection this year with over 18,500 boxes from 47 of the clubs who normally participate. In addition to the shoeboxes we collected 36 cartons full of clothes, blankets and toys that had either been knitted or sewn by groups of ladies around the district, who spend all year making them for our scheme.

We sent three truckloads this year, one truck each to Moldova and Romania with the third truck taking boxes to Albania and Montenegro. In total for each country, we sent 5389 boxes to Teka Tirgu Mures Rotary in Romania, 5307 boxes to Chisinau Rotary in Moldova, 3907 boxes to Ulcinj Rotary in Montenegro and 3837 boxes to Korce Rotary in Albania. I have received great feedback and I would like to share the response from Montenegro, as an example of the gratitude expressed by all the recipient clubs:

*Dear Mr. Geoff,*

*I hope this e-mail finds you well. I would like to wish you and your loved ones all the best in the New Year 2022. We would like to inform you that we have successfully delivered all the shoebox packages that you have sent to us. We delivered the packaged to children in kindergartens, elementary schools, children with special needs, children in social care, children in Orphanages, to Red Cross of Montenegro, Rotary Clubs of Montenegro, etc. This year, the Ambassador of UK in Montenegro, Mrs. Karen Medoks has visited us, and she helped us hand over the shoebox packages to some of the children. Also, we were very honoured by her as she was our guest speaker that day at our regular Rotary meeting.*

*We would like to express our gratitude once more to you for all your help and support for making it possible even in these difficult times. All your packages brought so many smiles to children across Montenegro! Hope we will see you soon.*

*Best regards, Elvir Zecevic President of RC Ulcinj*

Some photos from Albania



I think that response and the photos confirm why our Wessex Rotary Christmas Shoebox collection is such an important and valuable project. We should remember, that for nearly every child receiving a gift there is another child here in the UK experiencing the joy of charitable giving and thinking of someone less fortunate than themselves. Our scheme is not just an international scheme delivering aid to those less fortunate, but it is also a huge community effort giving our children a valuable learning opportunity. In total, with 18,500 children receiving a precious gift there are a similar number preparing and giving, which means there are around 36,000 children directly benefitting from participating in our scheme. Those children are our future, all we have to do is to find ways of supporting and encouraging them, as well as those generous ladies who have worked tirelessly through the pandemic for our benefit.