



A Gathering Center for the Community: Hope Center in Albania Brings People of All Ages to the Lord

As the Ambassador for Mission Possible the last few years of my life I have had the privilege of working alongside the Mission Possible teams all over Russia and Bulgaria, getting to know the work and building relationships with our workers and children. I was excited to receive this telephone call: "Addie, it's time for you to go to Albania to see the work Mission Possible is doing there." "Of course, I would love to go!" I clicked on Google Maps to see exactly where Albania is located. "Ahh, there it is, right next to Montenegro? Kosovo? Macedonia? North of Greece – finally, something I could recognize."

I arrived in Albania on a Monday afternoon and was met by Besa Shaplllo who has been Mission Possible's Albanian director since shortly after the Communist regime changed in 1992. She met me with a sweet-smelling rose,

a cultural practice for welcoming people. Besa was an English teacher but after a 'chance' meeting with Ralph Mann, the founder of Mission Possible, she became a Christian and has dedicated her life to bringing the Word of God to children and families all throughout Albania.

One of the ways MP Albania spreads the Word is through a children's magazine called Miracle. It is published seven times a year and distributed to schools throughout the country. The content is Christian truths and morals and the readers are encouraged to write in, ask questions, and start Christian conversations, an amazing thing in a country where 80% of the population is Muslim. Bible clubs have been launched for Miracle readers as a result of great response to the magazine.

On Tuesday Besa and I drove to Bathore, a poor village just outside the capital of Tirana. Here Besa introduced me



to the Hope Center, a three-story building used by Mission Possible. As we approached I was surprised at the number of people milling around. I wondered if it was because a visitor was coming (me). I was assured with a smile that the Hope Center is a gathering place for the community and this was quite normal. Fantastic!

The ground floor was full of mothers taking a class on safety in the home. Another class of women was learning about personal health care. They sang songs for me and told me how the classes had helped them become better wives and mothers. There was one room set aside for sewing classes and another was full of 3 and 4 year-olds attending kindergarten.

Upstairs a young man named Ardian was leading a youth meeting. The room was filled to capacity and the children were listening intently to him teach about creation. Not so long ago Ardian was one of these children himself. Being a resident of Bathore he had spent much time at the Center. He had expressed a desire to grow into leadership, and after some training he was in his first day of teaching, which is what I was witnessing. He is doing really well and his plan is to continue the leadership training so he can help lead the youth camp this summer.

All these activities bring people from the community to a Christian environment where they hear the Gospel and see Christianity lived out. A church has been established for those who have become Christians. It meets in the same building.

I left Albania regretting that my time there was so short. I can see the relationship between the Mission Possible team and the people of Bathore. I can see trust and friendship, good teaching, and God's love. Where would these people be and what would they be doing without the ministry from this center of hope?

By Addie O'Connor
Ambassador for Mission Possible



In the photos: Hope Center building; kindergarten; youth meeting; one of the women's classes

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- Pray for the young people in Bathore that they may get deeper into the Word of God.
- Pray for the Miracle Clubs kids as they learn more and more about God and what He has done for us. Pray that the Miracle magazine can be a great tool of education and evangelization for the children.
- Pray for our newly launched computer and tailoring classes in the Bathore Hope Center.
- Pray for the little children in the daycare and for their teacher, that she may be a great example in their lives.

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