

Missions outlook

Bringing God's love to a war-stricken land of hate



Over the last decade, the former Yugoslavia, now known as the Balkans, has been in constant conflict, battle, and turmoil due to territorial fighting, ethnic cleansing, and religious hostilities between the Croats (Catholics), Serbs (Orthodox), and Bosnians (Muslims). In the midst of all the mayhem, Christianity is growing as new churches are rapidly being planted in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

On June 10 the General Council of the Assemblies of God sent 45 students from Evangel University, Central Bible College, and the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary to the Balkans for a two-month Pentecostal Practicum. After the first week of staying at the Osijek Evangelical Theological Seminary the group split into 10 teams that were sent to different cities throughout Croatia and Bosnia to work in various ministries.

According to Dayton Kingswriter, the dean of the Balkans 2001 Pentecostal Practicum and the director of the A/G Commission on Christian Higher Education, "Students and leaders developed close relationships with the pastors and supported them and the churches

with much prayer and hard work." Students participated in a variety of ministries including children, youth, and street ministry; min-



AGTS student Melissa Hartin ministers to a little Gypsy girl.

istry to Gypsies; church construction; Royal Rangers camp; English lessons; computer classes; guitar, voice, and piano lessons; preaching; leading worship; ministry in

orphanages and refugee camps; one-on-one witnessing; library work in two Christian colleges; vacation Bible school; coffeehouse ministry and home visitation.

"Prayer and fasting became an important tool for effective ministry while fighting spiritual darkness and strongholds," said AGTS student Valerie Arguello. "Our eyes were opened to the spiritual warfare when a roomful of Muslim children started to manifest demons as our team prayed over them."

Realities of poverty and prejudice pierced into the hearts of some teams who visited Gypsy villages that had no running water or electricity. Many villagers lack sufficient medical care, have no means of transportation, and are uneducated. They are outcast by the surrounding people groups. Although the Croats, Serbians, and Muslims wage war among one another, they all unite in their feelings of contempt toward the Gypsies.

God placed 26-year-old computer programmer Melissa Hartin, from Alabama, to work side by side with 44-year-old former NASA employee Ebby Anayamba, Ph.D., who is a single mom from Kenya, Africa. Both missions-minded AGTS students related to the Gypsies in different ways. Hartin understood the Gypsies way of life because her great-grandmother used to be a Gypsy before coming to Jesus. Anayamba could relate to the discrimination factors because she, too, is a minority. Together, they shared their testimonies and presented the gospel.

"It was a great summer practicum, and I thank God for the opportunity to have been able to participate in it," Hartin said. "I realized to a fuller extent the devastation of the war. To me it is sheer madness and insanity to see what people can do to each other. God desires for people to be reconciled. The only hope to stop the cycle of hate and killing from one generation to the next is for people to give their lives over to Him."

Students were impacted by relationships they built. AGTS student Cheryl Adcock said, "One man told me, 'As a father, I'm going to ask you not to come back because it's really hard here. But as a Christian, recognizing the need, I beg you to come back.'"

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AGTS students Brandon Gardner, Valerie Arguello, and Cara Tracy build relationships with the young and the old in Bosnia-Herzegovina.