

JULY NEWS from the IOBST family: Notes from **Josiah** in ALBANIA



Week 1 I'm doing great here, in the middle of Tírana, Albania! There are a few people here I met last year, and I made lots more friends (from multiple countries)! This week we have been helping with and participating in the "Ice & Spice Summer Camp" for teens. Next week we will be doing ministry for three groups of people: inmates in a ladies' prison, children with Down syndrome, and Roma (gypsies). We've also been doing lots of things in the national ministry headquarters here.

Week 2 Most of this week I've been going by reserved/private bus to Elbasan, a town an hour drive away from Tírana. We are helping out with the first week of a month-long VBS [Vacation Bible School] for Roma children (and teens). On Monday a few of us went to another building to help kindergarteners graduate (and to play with them outside), and to prepare bags of food which were then given out to elderly people to feed them during July and August (lots of the people in Elbasan are really poor). With the actual VBS, we all help with songs at the beginning and then go with a group of kids or to one of four stations. I have been doing crafts with a few other people. The people who do not go to Elbasan stay in Tírana and are sent to prison (I was only there on Tuesday, I was "freed" afterwards) and to the Jonathan Center, where they help kids with Down syndrome.



Josiah really enjoyed this summer's MK2MK mission project. We just got him home again after five very busy weeks away! He said

that his favorite part of the ministry was getting to talk with people one-on-one after activities like the "Everything" drama. *Thank you praying for him!*

Week 3 VBS was great! We left Tírana last Saturday by bus and took a day trip to Macedonia. We went to a town near a lake called Ohrid and to a castle there. Then we moved to Lezha. We are doing another Summer Camp for teens, like we did the first week in Tírana. I've met lots of cool people, and learnt a bit of Albanian.



Yes = **Po** No = **Jo**
Thank You = **Faleminderit**
Hello = **Përshëndetje**
Goodbye = **Mirupafshim**
Milk = **Qumësht**
Some delicious food:
Suflaqe, Byrek

Week 4 Having a great time here! We've been in Lezha about two weeks now (we say goodbye and go to debrief Monday morning). Today was the last day of ministry. We've had a great time with Albanians here, doing fun activities hosted by a local church and going to the beach and mountains! We also got to do street evangelism twice. I'm the drunk guy in the "Everything" drama, and we are going to Montenegro tomorrow, by the way!



Photo Credits: Josiah portrait by Andrew C
Albanian flag by Caroline G
Student ministry & "Everything" photos by Josephine L

JULY NEWS from the IOBST family: **Phoebe and Thomas** in Algeciras, SPAIN

Happy Week (by Thomas Iobst)



Phoebe and Thomas spent the first two weeks of their summer vacation helping a local church here in Algeciras with “Happy Week,” a summer day-camp for 3 to 13-year-olds. They had participated in this Vacation Bible School before, but this was their first time volunteering.

For the first week, they worked full time to help make all the decorations and clean up.

The second week was the actual day-camp VBS. Each day they helped sweep up after the daily craft, helped escort the kids to and from cars (volunteers transported children who needed rides to the church), and generally just helped look after the students.



The theme of the day camp changes every year, and this year, the theme was the “Wild West.”

Every year, a team from Ireland comes to help sing songs and teach the kids about God and different stories in the Bible (in Spanish!).

The end of the VBS week was Sunday, so it was the church service. Many of the kids brought their parents, and they all summed up what they did that week, including reciting memory verses and singing the songs. All in all, it was a wonderful two weeks.



Allen Recounting Operation Transit Work in Motril, SPAIN

For two weeks in July, I led an Operation Transit distribution team at the Motril port (nearly four hours up the coast from where we live). Our group included another American man, an Englishwoman who lives in Scotland, and a Spanish woman who normally leads distribution at a different port. We were encouraged by travelers' receptivity to both the physical books and the digital versions. We were also thankful that one of our team knew some Arabic and had some good conversations with North

African families on the port. *I offered the materials to a family man driving out of the parking lot, and he eagerly accepted both the “paper” packet and the USB. His wife, next to him, looked on with interest and took custody of the materials while he drove. Their young daughter gave me a big, braces-bedecked smile from the back seat, and said, “Gracias!”*

It was great working with our host church in the city, and with several of the church members who do weekly port outreach year-round. It was a wonderful experience to be able to worship with this congregation on Sunday morning. I am still thankful for our team, and for how, despite coming from different places and different backgrounds, we all learned to love and accept each other.



Deedee is editing everything, writing everything else, working hard, and praying... Including posting more frequent official OT Prayer Updates (with even more ministry prayer requests and stories). We are also preparing to visit the USA in August, and to start looking at college options with the kids. **Thank you again for all your prayers, support, and encouragement!**

Serving with you, *Allen and Deedee*

