

SU Croatia – newsletter

10th anniversary of the DPB House

It is ten years since DPB held the first summer camps in Severin. Since then, over 150 summer camps and weekend retreats have been held there, organised by DPB and SEND International.

The original small house and garden was extended over the years and gradually transformed into what it is today. Looking at old photographs, it is hard to believe it is the same place!

The house is important, but the people who have passed through it are even more important. They include thousands of children, young people and adults, who have participated in events organised by DPB and Send International, and many volunteers, who have freely given of their time, effort and prayer support for the ministry.

At a celebration held in early September to mark the 10th anniversary of the DPB House, we had the opportunity to listen to testimonies given by campers, parents and volunteers. We heard about changed lives, decisions to follow Christ (often made around the campfire), and the blessings which came through serving others. We also saw how some campers have now become leaders, on camps or in their local churches, married and started families, and even become missionaries abroad.

One such person is Rebekah Berković, who practically grew up alongside the DPB House. Today, after studying for a theology degree in South Africa, she is working in a Bible School just outside Bangkok, Thailand, where she teaches the students (and lecturers) English and is involved in outreach ministry in the city. She could not be with us on the day, but she sent her testimony and asked us to read it to those present, many of whom were moved to tears by her words .

Rebekah Berković

I remember the day we bought the SU house (I was 11) and when we went to see it for the first time. It was such a tiny house, just a couple of rooms, filled with cobwebs and dust, surrounded by overgrown bushes and weeds. It was cold and dark, and it wasn't at all clear to me why this house had been bought. Now I thank God that the leaders at the time saw something in it which I couldn't see – God's great plan.

I went on every work group and camp I could. I watched that little house in the woods being completely transformed. I remember details as though it was yesterday – opening up the attic and creating the upstairs rooms, choosing different colours for the flooring in the bedrooms, cutting down the trees and bushes, digging out the hole where the beach volleyball court is today, laying the red paving stones of the front path – I remember every minute.



Celebrating 10th anniversary under the new archery shelter

And while the house was changing and more things were happening there, my life was changing too. During the next few years in Severin, I met so many different people who affected me in so many ways. I remember we used to wake up early and go behind the house, to sing, gossip or flirt. It was cool to be late for the evening meeting and be given a daft punishment. We protested over bedtimes and got up in the middle of the night to squeeze toothpaste on the leaders' faces. We walked in the castle grounds, swam in the river and more than anything, got to know each other, ourselves and God.

Sometimes it is hard to put into words just how much Severin changed my life. At first, I did not know God, and it was not particularly my goal to do so. But the leaders changed that – my mum, Anica Kerep, Željko Lovrec, Martina Donadić, Katarina Prkut (as she was then) Daniel Wurzburg, Jolanka the fantastic cook, Steve Meeker, Senka Florjanić and so many others. I saw God in them and wanted to know him for myself.

In Severin I learned to read the Bible, play games for the sake of joining in, not just winning, to expand my lungs and breathe deeply, and to laugh. I learned that we are all different, but equal, that each of us is valued and special and loved – I can say for sure that I learned what love is in Severin.

Not everything was wonderful. I learned about myself, too. Gradually, I realised I had faults, weaknesses and sins. For the first time, other people rebuked me and tried to explain why I couldn't do exactly as I



wished and say exactly what I thought. I remember getting detentions and having to go for «a little word». At first it was hard, as I didn't understand why the leaders and my friends needed to correct me. Later I understood they did it out of love, wanting the best for me, believing that God had great things for me and my life. Poor Steve Meeker bore the most responsibility for chastising me (well, I was a teenager) but he did it so much love and respect that it changed my life.

In Severin I came to know God and realise that he had great plans for my life and the lives of my friends. I needed years to accept everything He was offering, but when I did, I did it whole-heartedly. I truly believed that with God, nothing was impossible. From the beginning, he knew my dreams and ambitions, however crazy they were. He convinced me that nothing was too crazy for him. My first huge step of faith was moving to South Africa for three years. That is a whole new story – but it would never have happened without Severin. My second, even bigger step of faith is happening right now, in Thailand, in a totally different world. Some people think I'm crazy; some think I'm brave. I agree with them all, but I would add that I am a child of the King and in His name, we can do anything.

My stories about Africa and Thailand will have to wait for another occasion.

I want you to know that God sometimes works slowly, but thoroughly. He never does small things, though we may think they are small. He sees us as we truly are and wants us to develop, be cleaned up, stretched. He wants us to know how much strength we have in Him. We all discover these things in different ways. Me? I discovered these wonderful truths growing up in the SU house in Severin.

The CREW

During this decade, we had many leaders on summer camps, but also assistant leaders, i.e. young people aged 15 to 18 who helped out. This year, these young people were offered a new challenge – to serve on the CREW. The programme leaders were thus able to focus on their ministry to campers, while the Crew took charge of the practical details concerning equipment, cleaning, etc.



Crew members helped in the kitchen, kept the house clean, and worked in the grounds.

They made sure the sports instructors had everything they needed before activities began, and cleared up afterwards. Some were also involved in the worship and drama during the evening meetings.

Most of them served for three weeks, but they were not only serving in a practical sense. They also met every day for Bible study and prayer. They played games with a purpose, to get to know each other and God better, and learnt from each other and the Crew leaders.

Thanks to their input, the programme leaders had more time to rest between activities, particularly on the free days between camps, and the house and grounds have never looked better!

Most importantly, this kind of service was an important step for them in their walk with God. One girl, upon returning home, decided to be baptised, and surely many people will agree with Petra when she says, “The DPB House has had a huge influence on me, my life, and those around me! This year was one of the best, because I was part of the Crew, and this definitely gave me good connections with many new people and campers, and helped me develop my relationship with God. It also brought me closer to people I already knew. Of course, it meant a lot to be part of a group who were always ready to support me.” We hope and pray that in the coming years, Crew members will have similar stories to tell.
