

2010 Trip

My 2010 trip to the villages of Shkrel in northern Albania was more relaxed than last year, but I still filled my three weeks with worthwhile activity.

I was able to conduct Conversational English classes in Boga, Vrithe, and Xhaj. I visited each school three times. I was very impressed with both their level of learning and their eagerness to demonstrate their English. After I left, some former English students and AAI scholarship recipients: Alfonc Rakaj (currently studying at Oregon State University); Donika Rakaj, recently graduated from High School in Shkoder; and Angjelin Olaj, a third year English major at the University of Shkoder took over the classes. Kristina Milaj (first year engineering student at Oregon State University in the fall and an AAI scholarship recipient) hopes to do the same in Vrithe.



In addition, two fathers in Boga have agreed to send their daughters to high school. I believe that this is a big success, and I have arranged for them to stay in a Catholic dormitory in Shkoder near their high school. These are the first girls from Boga to actually live away from home to attend high school. This is a huge step, one that I've been working toward for ten years.

In a meeting with the School Directors, it was determined to continue with the small monthly book stipend for school libraries, and then to focus our scholarship money on bus fare for high school students who commute to the new high school in Dedaj. AAI is going to try to find the resources to put a fence in front of the Vrithe school, as the car traffic is increasing and goes far too fast for a "school zone", a concept that has yet to reach into the mountains.