Dear Friends,

Although you won’t know it by the weather, the summer is behind us. We look back on the surprising new friendships we made over the past few months and the community initiatives that made the season special and us especially optimistic about Bulgaria’s future.

Speaking of surprises, two graduates of our journalism fellowship program write about finding community in unusual places.

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A Bulgarian-American collaboration

For Sarah Harralson, the Purpose of Music is Healing

Sarah Harralson knows about being a good community member. Yet, she never expected to be at a community building festival in Bulgaria, much less so to be headlining at one.

Barney Esville is not your typical country musician. He comes from Bulgaria, and by day he heads community affairs for the city of Veliko Tarnovo.

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A Bulgarian's Successful Bid for Country Music Fame

Beyond words

This photo from this summer’s lineup of community festivals is a powerful reminder of how important bridge-building is. Bridges connect riverbanks, people, and entire communities— in addition to being fun places to play (with safety features included)!

The Collective Foundation’s Rivers of the City festival helps to bring communities together by restoring derelict or little-used places and transforming them into welcoming spaces for the community to use. It partners with local organizations, businesses, and individuals. Below are the City Festivals that took place in Sofia, Varna, Veliko Tarnovo, Gabrovo, and Stara Zagora.

This photo is from the Rivers of Sofia 2023 festival. For more community highlights from the summer, visit The Collective’s Facebook page.

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On the power of community

A Trip to Greece Offers a Surprising Lesson on Community

In the small Greek village of Kastro, Mihail Ivanov found long-lost family members and a connection to the community of humankind.

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Kindness & Support Are What Holds Communities Together

Three girls from three small Bulgarian towns reflect on finding friendship and community among fellow Bulgarians abroad.

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