



KI Reporter

"Together we can make a difference for a better tomorrow"

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Special Issue

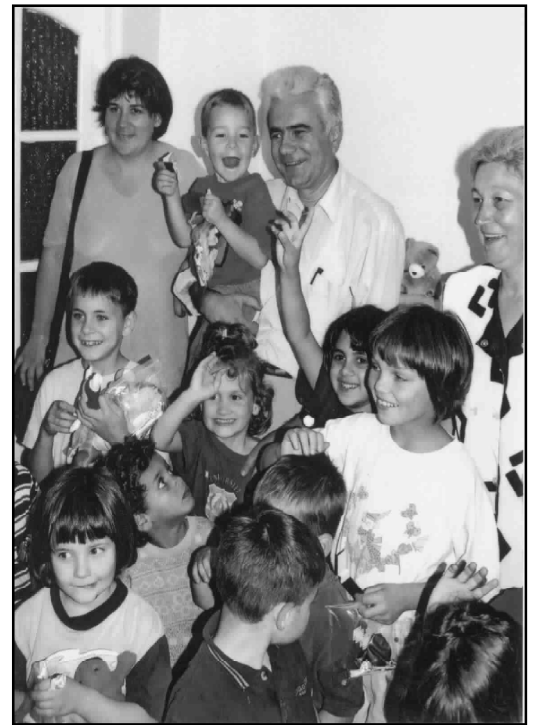
Romania's Orphanages: There is Hope

Over the past decade Western media has depicted a very sad and desperate situation regarding Romanian orphanages. Generally speaking, these reports are very accurate and in many cases the situation appears quite hopeless. Overcrowded, understaffed and poorly funded orphanages are where most Romanian orphans can be found. Infants left to themselves 20 hours a day, toddlers rocking back and forth for hours on end, and teenagers who wildly clamor for attention are reality in most Romanian orphanages. It is very sad and hard to know how a positive, lasting change can be brought into such darkness.

In the midst of this, however, hope does shine. This hope comes when Jesus is brought in. Many Romanian Christians, holding to the conviction that it is their obligation to care for abandoned children, have established Christian orphanages and are caring for children in a different way. Instead of viewing children as a job, they are viewed as an opportunity. Instead of neglecting the children, they are given genuine love. Instead of letting the children raise themselves, the caretakers nurture and care for them as they grow. These orphanages are more like families than institutions.

A classic example of the difference Christ can make in an orphanage can be seen in the Casa Otniel. Subsequent to the 1989 revolution which overthrew the communist dictator Ceausescu, the people were again granted the right to open and operate private orphanages. Therefore a man named Adrian began the process of opening an orphanage named the Casa Otniel. The construction of the orphanage building was made possible through funding from The Netherlands. 19 children were brought from government-run orphanages to live in the Casa Otniel. On-going operational funding for the Casa Otniel has come from The Netherlands, from Kidstown International's sponsorship program, and from various other sources. The following excerpts are taken from a report from Adrian and give a great inside look at the progress of this orphanage:

"The year 2003 was a blessed one for the orphanage. At the end of the year we can say, as Samuel did, "Eben-Ezer" (until now, God has helped us). We recognize His mercy mostly because last year we had a long and hard winter, a short and dry spring and a hot summer. These weather conditions compromised a large part of the harvest. All of these circumstances brought serious challenges to the financial budget of the orphanage, threatening Otniel with shipwreck. But God took care of us, showing in time of trial that He remains the "Father of the orphans". Glory to Him!



The #1 need of children is love.

KIDSTOWN International

Our organization is committed to supporting orphans in Romania. Our goal is to receive these children in love, provide for their daily needs, encourage their hopes for the future, and let each child know that God loves them. Your contribution makes you a partner in caring for these needy children, supplying resources to equip them to meet life's challenges.

There is Hope (continued)

In the orphanage there reigns a positive atmosphere. The children grow, learn, develop, build aptitudes, contour their character, and prepare themselves for life. We make investments in them, as much as can be done, considering some have different levels of mental retardation (due to neglect and abandonment before coming to the Casa Otniel). The children's education is done in the light of the Holy Scriptures. The personnel (caretakers) are Christians who start each day with a time of prayer, singing, and Scripture readings. The children also study the bible daily and when possible view Christian educational videotapes, watch Christian TV programs, listen to Christian radio, and go to church on Sundays. The children continue to learn to play different instruments and we already can talk about having a small orchestra. For Christmas they sang at the school festival and were a real success.



Providing a stable, loving, Christ-centered environment is of utmost importance to the staff at the Casa Otniel orphanage.

For both educational and economic reasons we developed a farm with two cows, pigs, and chickens. The farm is going well. We have milk production of about 12.5 gallons per day. Part of the milk is to sell, which in turn helps cover other expenses. We have slaughtered pigs, chickens, and two calves for meat. The hens supply us with eggs. We have 3.7 acres of wheat, and 2.5 acres which we use for pasture for the cows. Special funding helped us develop a mini irrigation system. Around the orphanage property are raspberry bushes and apple, pear, apricot, cherry, plum, red currant, and acacia trees. The children are involved in working on the farm. The land surrounding the orphanage is used to cultivate vegetables and strawberries. The vegetable garden is divided up so that each child has a small portion to cultivate and care for. During growing season, we have a contest to see who has the most elaborate plot of land. The winner receives an encouragement reward.

Even with a small budget, we were able to create recreational activities for the children. Twice they went to a camp in the mountains. We also took the garden contest winners on a trip to Bucharest. The children went sightseeing, travelled on the underground metro, and visited the zoo. We visited a medieval castle and other historical places. We had an unforgettable time.

We try to stabilize and balance their souls in different ways and we would like to cleanse the effects of the emotional damage they sustained before they came to us. We have started an effort to find the children's natural parents, if they are alive, or the nearest relative. We put the children in touch with their siblings and with the place or house in which they were born. We succeeded in finding Cosmin's mother who had grudgingly looked after him in his first years of life. The meeting resulted in a flurry of tears. Ema met her parents after six years of being apart and spent two weeks with them. Angela, being so nervous, threw up when she saw her mother. With each child it is a different story, filled with disappointment and sorrow which awaits comfort. We live dramatic moments with these children when we enter into their sometimes unhappy worlds. They have their own frustrations and look for refuge when they cannot face hostile times. When they are alone, they start to swing, to suck on a finger, to wet the bed during the night, or to look far away at the skyline trying to find an anchor for their souls. The caretakers have a big opportunity to make a positive impact in the children's lives. It is a hard job, trying to dam the river that gushes from their souls, torn open by the sins of their parents. I suffer about how deep people can fall. I wish I could be of help for their restoration, but only the Gospel can do that. Sin has deformed their thinking, behavior, has destroyed their willpower and has changed their destiny. This impacts us greatly and we hope that at least the children from Otniel will have a better chance.

We thank you for the sacrifice you're making for this purpose! We are grateful, and eternity will reveal the fruit of your effort!"

Orphan Selected for Scholarship



Catalina's hard work is paying off.

Catalina is a young lady who lives in the Casa Sperantei orphanage in Timisoara, Romania. She, along with two of her brothers, came to live in the Casa Sperantei in 1995 after their mother died. Catalina comes from a family of five siblings, and the two oldest siblings stayed to live with their father. From the beginning Catalina integrated very well into life at the Casa Sperantei. She started to attend school and was a good student, earning the honor of top academic student four years in a row. It was in school that she began to learn English. She supplemented her formal English education with English cartoons which she watched at the orphanage. In Catalina's opinion, it was from the TV that she really learned the language.

In 1999 Catalina accepted Jesus as her Savior and her life as a Christian began. She continued her educational studies at a local Christian school.

In 2002 the European Union and the Romanian government organized a skills contest for the children living in Romanian orphanages. Catalina wanted to compete in this contest in the area of English knowledge. She proceeded to win the contest at the local level and then went on to win two prizes at the national level. Both the president and prime minister of Romania congratulated

her. Catalina and those who won in other skill areas were rewarded with a trip to Brussels, Belgium to attend a parliament meeting. Catalina subsequently was interviewed many times on TV and in the newspapers.

During this time, a lady from Alabama came to the Casa Sperantei to visit. She heard about Catalina and her recent achievements, and offered to help Catalina obtain a scholarship to a university in the United States. Catalina was very happy with this proposition and in 2003 sent in her application. In February of 2004 Catalina received word that she received a scholarship to Jacksonville University in Alabama. She plans to begin attending the university in the fall of 2004. Congratulations, Catalina!

Please Pray

As you read this newsletter, and in the days ahead, please pray for the following needs:

- Pray for the leaders of Kidstown's orphanages, that God will give them wisdom, love for the children, and favor in the eyes of their local communities.
- Pray for the children in the orphanages, that they will heal emotionally, be physically healthy, and that they will come to know Jesus as their Savior.
- Pray for the Romanian government, that they will re-open international adoptions so that many children may be adopted into loving families.
- Pray that God will guide the ministry of Kidstown in 2004.
- Thank God for how he has provided for the orphans in Kidstown's orphanages through all of our sponsors and donors.

Thank you for praying, caring, and supporting!

