

THE SUNFLOWER

Newsletter of the International Children's Aid Foundation

Fall 2003

ICAF Launches Bright Futures 2: Teen *Pride* Screen Printing Employs Orphans, Teaches Job/Life Skills

It was a dream come true.

Four years ago, we had an idea that would help solve the problem of Romania's street children. "Wouldn't it be wonderful," we mused, "If we could have a program that taught job skills—and life skills—to teenagers about to be ejected onto the streets from the state orphan-ages?"

So 18 months ago we launched *Bright Futures*. It has been teaching computer literacy to 22 kids aged 16-18 in ICAF's own modern computer center. As effective as *Bright Futures (BF)* is—we have a 75% graduation rate—we realized only a relatively small number of teens could find jobs in computers. Thus we began planning BF2—a factory that will teach kids how to design, manufacture, market, and account for screen printed apparel.

We bought a downtown building in Deva and hired three managers: Stelica (production manager); Ramona, (sales trainer), and Adriana—our long-time ICAF administrative assistant, whom we promoted to design manager. The \$45,000 building (actually valued at almost \$60,000) is much larger than we need and we will begin producing an income stream when our first tenant

moves into the excess space in September.

For two weeks, some mission team members helped construct the dark room, while Mo

Bing showed Adriana how to make fantastic designs using our newly-donated CorelDraw and Adobe Illustrator software. Meanwhile, Stacey provided technical advice on how to begin the screen printing process. On the night before the grand opening, beset by problems, Stacey, Mo Bing, Eric, Jason, and Radu—our first trainee—stayed at BF2 until 2 am.

But their dedication paid off!

At 11 am on Friday, August 8, a large crowd of media, city

and child-protection officials, and well-wishers gathered at the BF2 Center to launch the program.

We decided to adopt a brand name for BF2, and chose *Teen-Pride*, which will appear on every shirt we produce. We even have a website under construction:



Team members Stacey Currie and Eric Schwank share their expertise with production manager Stelica and our first teen employee, Radu .



Sarah Rehlander models the prototype Casa Emanuel tee shirt.

(Continued on page 2)

Teen Pride Opening Makes National News!

(Continued from page 1)

www.TEENPRIDE.org, that will allow customers to contact us for custom-designed apparel or to order the individual shirts with souvenir or Christian themed designs.

TeenPride's first shirt was a souvenir of Deva, with the distinctive Citadel silhouetted against an orange sunset. A second five-color Deva shirt is also available, as is a beautiful design depicting "Casa Emanuel, Criscior, Romania."

The director of the state child protection department and the mayor of Deva (who immediately ordered 100 shirts) were thrilled at ICAF's new program and spoke glowingly of our long relationship with them. But the honor of cutting the ribbon went not to politicians but to a representative of the community God sent us to serve: 18 year-old Radu stepped out of the crowd, and in front of television lights and flashing press cameras, he cut the ribbon and de-



Radu's television interview was broadcast nationwide.

clared Bright Futures 2 open.

We received extensive press and TV coverage nationwide and within a week had started receiving orders from local companies who wanted to use our tee shirts to promote their businesses.

We thank God for His blessings, and we

thank both our volunteers and those who contributed financially for making this dream come true - and if *your* organization ever needs imprinted caps, bags, tee shirts, etc., please contact us!

Recently my sister, who is a champion gift giver, approached me with a question, "What do you want for your birthday?" Searching my mind I finally said, "I really can't think of anything." My conscience did bother me somewhat as I realized that I had not helped her with a shopping idea, but my answer began to disturb me. There really was nothing I wanted, much less needed. Oh, I'm sure I could have come up with something that I would have liked, but that wasn't what troubled me. The thought of someone spending money needlessly on me out a sense of obligation or tradition, when there are so many real needs everywhere, was the main reason these thoughts kept rattling around in my head.

A couple of days later I was in prayer with the Lord. The list that morning seemed unusually long as I prayed for one concern after another. I pictured the children at Emanuel Home in Criscior, Romania, and said prayers for them as their smiling faces popped into my memory. The next prayer was for the financial needs of ICAF (International Children's Aid Foundation), which are substantial, when suddenly my mind came to a screeching halt. That's it, isn't it Lord...there is a real need.

That day I hastily made phone calls to my family and the calls went generally like this: "Have you bought my birthday present yet? You haven't! Great! I know a super birthday present if you don't mind a suggestion. Please take the money you would have spent on my present and give it to ICAF. There is nothing I would like any better. You don't have to go shopping and this gift is tax deductible! No, I'm not kidding. That would be the perfect birthday gift."

Folks, they were the best birthday gifts I have ever received as an adult. Sure, I would like a birthday present occasionally, but God's idea that morning was much better. I cannot help but smile as I think of my gifts being used in the orphanage, the new t-shirt factory, Bright Futures, Bright Beginnings...the uses are endless for "the perfect birthday gift".

—an anonymous sponsor



Medical Team Holds Two Week Clinic, Treats 100's

The medical program was a wonderful success this year. Clinic was held for a full two weeks for the first time, thanks to generous donations in kind of medications, faithful work by “pill-packers” throughout the preceding year, participation of four nurse practitioners, a pediatrician, a nursing and a medical student, a prayer team, and the tireless good nature of our translators.

On our first day our team of Theresa Puckett, Renee Elmer, Chris Forward and Brian Patten with students Sarah Rehlander and Dana Mathew set up a clinic in a remote village church, where our

clients came in from the fields, weary and worn. We were touched by the stories of old people struggling to keep a farm going in the face of pain and loneliness, and did our best to give relief. The rest of our clinic hours were at our Policlinica Luca in Criscior. In the second week

Susan Lutjens took a week off from mission work in the Ukraine to see patients in place of Theresa and Renee. We treated a total of 440 clients, not to mention the staff, team members, and Emanuel kids who drifted in and out with various maladies.

Women outnumbered men two to one, and almost 300 of the patients were over 49 years old. By far the most frequent complaint was pain, mostly arthritis from years of hard labor: we documented 163 cases treated. We also treated 103 cases of high blood pressure and 63 cases of ulcer or gastric reflux. In all we recorded 857 diagnoses addressed, and in most cases we were able to offer some treatment.

Our prayer team, led by Nancy Cook and Linda Patterson, spent time with each patient



Nurse Practitioner Theresa Puckett and translator Dana in the Policlinica Luca



Renee Elmer treats chronic leg pain of an woman who works in the fields of Steia.

after their visit with the medical providers. They prayed for the patients' specific medical complaints, then took time to ask for any other burdens which the patients wanted to share. At the times when the problems were out of our medical realm – such as the abused wife or the mourning mother – they offered more healing than we ever could.

We hope to have a permanent part-time doctor in place before our return next year, as soon as funding becomes available. Meanwhile, we surely have brought some relief to the bodies and souls of a large number of people, who left without any doubt of Who sent us!



Nancy Cook and translator Miha pray for a patient in the village church of Steia.

Twenty—Nine Team Members Travel to Romania

Amid the hottest temperatures in European history, 29 people from around the world came together to serve on ICAF's summer mission teams.



Gelsey Jones shares with kids in English Club at the new Christian Center.

Most had never met one another before, but thanks to a continual exchange of email messages in the months prior to the trip, by the time they came together, they felt they were friends.

The teams stayed for the first 10 days, the second 9 days, or the entire 19 days. During that time they completed an amazing number of work assignments:

- **VBS.** The Vacation Bible School group organized daily games, songs, crafts, and spiritual lessons. Gelsey Jones and her team held VBS at our own Casa Emanuel in Criscior during the first week, and in the village of Varfurile during week two.



- **Bright Beginnings.** Under Linda Westlin's leadership, our early childhood education program educators learned valu-

able new therapeutic methods. They also provided support and training to the educators, and Brian Patten, our pediatrician team member from Australia, performed medical evaluations and treatment recommendations to many at-risk children in the Hunedoara state orphanage.

- **Casa Emanuel** is doing well. We just welcomed a new 12-year-old girl (Andreea) into our home, and detailed, confidential private interviews were held with every child to understand their needs, concerns, and conditions.
- **Medical Clinic.** "This was our best-ever medical team," said Chris Forward. "Each year we learn from the past and improve."



Resident educators Gabi and Magda with some of our youngest kids at Casa Emanuel.

The dental clinic opened—and had patients waiting to see our dentists all the time. Meanwhile, the doctor, nurse practitioners, and medical/nursing students were kept busy seeing hundreds of grateful patients, both at our own free clinic and at the day clinic we ran in the remote village of Steia.

- **English Club.** A large crowd attended English Club every day, and delighted in this opportunity to practice and learn the language with Americans. By the end of the trip, many team members and students ex-

Accomplishing Great Work During 2003 Mission

changed email addresses with promises of continuing their friendships.

- **Construction.**

Those interested in using their building skills (and those whom Cliff roped into helping!) were kept busy preparing a new walkway at Emanuel, putting locks on bathroom doors, building a device for Linda's *Bright Beginnings* therapy, and constructing a large darkroom at the *Bright Futures* Center.



- **The Men's and Women's Bible study groups** met during the first week and were small but well-received gatherings
- **Bright Futures 2** opened—after some nerve-racking days—and the team designed and printed our first shirts in this wonderful new mission.

So as this story is being written on the home-bound flight, what lessons have we learned? There are several:

If we apply the first rule of mission trips—**be flexible!** - sometimes supplies are late or things just don't happen the way we planned but use the opportunity to look for a creative solution.

Put God in charge. When things seem to be going wrong, stop and pray for His intervention and for understanding of His will. (Of course, we

should really do that at the *beginning*, long before problems occur!) **Relax and have fun.** Focus on the impor-



tant reasons we are here. It was wonderful to see how the stress of running a work group at 2 o'clock would disappear at 4 o'clock when the team member could be found playing ball with the Emanuel kids, or singing praise songs under a shady tree.



By the time you read this *Sunflower*, we will have set the dates for for Spring Break and summer 2004 mission trips. If you are interested in coming, call David a 856.988.1738 or drop him an email at ICAF@aol.com.



Bright Beginnings Makes Breakthroughs with our

Our Bright Beginnings early childhood education program in the state orphanage at Hunedoara continues to thrive. It is providing undeniable evidence to even the most skeptical orphanage officials of the value of intervening on behalf of the youngest and most vulnerable Romanian children. While most abandoned and orphaned children begin school hopelessly behind their peers who were not kept confined to cribs without interaction, even the special needs kids in our program have amazed psychologists and doctors who once deemed them “irrecoverable”.

We have learned that whenever God closes a door, there is always another one opening to provide for His children. So when Bright Beginnings director Gary Brosvic was unable to continue in his position due to a family crisis, occupational therapist Linda Westlin shouldered the task, and it seems that she was in the right place at the right time this summer.

Our team represented a wide variety of backgrounds, interests, and skills this year. Linda worked with two experienced pre-school teachers, Laurie Beek and Debbie Aretz. Pediatrician Brian Patten and pediatric nurse

practitioner Theresa Puckett assisted with diagnosing and evaluating the special needs children and offering important information to the former director of the orphanage. A visiting American missionary employed by the Division of Child Protection, Dennis Budnick,



Pertuta learns to imitate the sequence of sounds she hears on the headphones.

offered insights into the Romanian orphanage system.

The team’s main focus was to provide continuing training of the five exceptional young women who are ICAF-hired “educators” that work with the 48 babies and 25 special needs children. These educators, Pamela, Corina, Marinela, Otilia, and Dana, work enthusiastically and tirelessly to better the lives of the children, and anxiously await their yearly chance to learn and improve their skills.

A key emphasis was on an intensive Therapeutic Listening program ([www. vita-links.net](http://www.vita-links.net)), which combines sound therapy with postural and breath control activities. Many of the special needs children have difficulties including modulation (arousal level, attention, self-regulation), postural control, motor planning, bilateral coordination, fine motor control, spatial relationships, body scheme, communication, and social skills. Therapeutic Listening addresses these areas by offering organizing sensory information to



Some of the Bright Beginnings Team: Front: Dennis, Linda, Marinela, Dana. Back: Translator Dana Fagadar, Otilia, Cornelia, Debbie, Pamela, and Laurie.

Special Needs Kids with New Therapeutic Listening

establish a foundation for emergent skill. Listening (not just hearing) is an active and voluntary process that directs the attention of our entire body, and contributes to our understanding of the world around us. At Hunedora, six children were selected to receive 2 hours of daily occupational therapy for 3 consecutive days each, over the two-week period. Some children continued to receive shorter periods of daily therapy, while other children were seen for just one visit to help the educators solve a particular problem.

The educators see the special needs children as a group, so Linda and Debbie brainstormed to change the structure to allow more one-on-one time with each child. By the second week, the educators were feeling more comfortable with the new approach and had positive feedback for the team. Debbie's suggestions and comments from a teacher's perspective were helpful and encouraging to them.

The new program is recommended for children like our special-needs group: it was fascinating to watch the small steps of progress as each child became



When they see their beloved Bright Beginnings educators come into the room, even the smallest babies smile and prepare for love and attention.



be
more

Breath control by blowing bubbles while receiving auditory stimulation via special headphones. This child's IQ had been casually estimated at 37, yet he was proven to be capable of far more.



ICAF Educator Otilia practices what she has learned.

aware of his or her surroundings and more interactive than before. We have high hopes that it will make it easier for them to learn and function like their normal peers, thus rescuing them from a future in an asylum for the "irrecoverables".

We thank all those who have contributed to help us continue to keep our educators at work in the orphanage: because of your donations, these kids have been taken out of just such a home and given the possibility of a future with dignity. Because of you, the abandoned babies will hear a loving, familiar voice every day and know that they can count on someone to be there for them—something no child should be without!

The helpless put their trust in you: you are the defender of orphans.

—Psalm 10:14

Our Dental Office Opens Year-Round!

My second year in Criscior, Romania treating the dental needs of the children of Emanuel was an incredible blessing. The clinic, after 1 year, has state of the art dental equipment provided completely by donations from dental supply companies and dentists throughout New Jersey. We also were fortunate to acquire a dental x-ray machine through these donations, which is being installed at the clinic. This will bring in income when it is used by patients referred from dentists from a wide area around Criscior, and be offered free for those who cannot afford to pay.

This summer, I was joined in the clinic by a Romanian dentist named Ana who will be working at the clinic full time in September and Atti Bakai, a 5th year Romanian dental student. I am excited that Ana will be in Criscior full time so the children can have comprehensive dental care all year.



Ana and Jimmy with translator and relieved patient Danny Marta after a difficult extraction.

We accomplished many different procedures of dentistry in the one week that we were able to work. Approximately 18-20 extractions, 25-30 fillings, and 7 root canals were completed.

Every child at Emanuel was treated and I observed the decrease in the level of anxiety, fear that they had while receiving dental treatment which was seen as the week progressed. They were very nervous in the beginning and finished with limited fear. Dental care

is such vital need for the children and it is amazing to watch how the Lord provided for this need at Emanuel Orphanage.



Jimmy Occhipinti and student Atti Bakai gently clean the teeth of one of our Emanuel kids as Dr. Ana observes.

One of the great blessings of the trip for me was treating a few emergencies from the village of Criscior. They were so grateful to us and I believe meeting these needs in the future will be used by the Lord to lead people to Him. The clinic is such a great testimony to the power of the Lord and what he can accomplish through us. I look forward to the future of serving the Lord and watching His great power and love meet people's needs and heal their hearts.



Meet Dr. Ana Sturz—Our New Dentist!



In Romania, trips to the dentist tend to be traumatic, painful experiences. Very few people bother with checkups or proactive procedures such as tooth cleanings, so for them to see a dentist they must be in serious pain. Once in the chair, the “bedside manner” is often surly, and painkillers such as Novocaine are only available for those able to afford hefty bribes.

During the past year, while we have endured the countless visits from bureaucrats and paid endless fees necessary to open a dental clinic, we have also been searching for



a dentist. We were so fortunate to have been “adopted” by Dr. Olt, a dentist in Deva with decades of experience and a heart of gold. Dr. Olt formed a search committee of the highest caliber and began a nationwide hunt for exactly the right dentist to staff our

new free year-round clinic. He even paid for the advertisements. Integrity, professional ability, compassion, tenderness, and a strong faith were all attributes we considered essential.

And they found what we believe is Romania’s *perfect* dentist!

In August, Dr. Ana Sturz spent a week at Casa Emanuel with our visiting mission team—and the kids, the staff, and the team fell in love with her. She started work with ICAF’s Clinic Luke in September.

Ana spent some of her childhood in France and speaks fluent French and English. She graduated from Bucharest’s Religious University and despite her desire to become an actress, her parents persuaded her

to enter the dental profession. She became a qualified dentist in 1998 and since then has been on the staff of the Military Hospital in Bucharest. This is the nation’s most prestigious medical institution and is reserved for those in the highest echelons of politics, the military, and society.

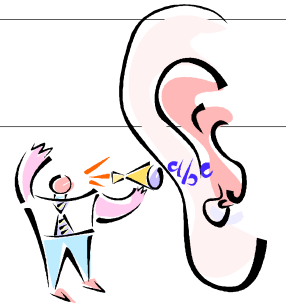
But in her heart, Ana felt the tug to make a difference to patients other than generals and politicians. When she saw an advertisement in a professional journal for the Clinic Luke, she applied immediately. “My opinion is that this clinic is a very good idea,” she says. “ICAF does such a great job with children here. I really admire them. Now I feel I have everything I need in a job—which is rare in Romania. I am excited about the challenge. I love working with children, and after my government experience it will be so wonderful to work for a humanitarian organization.”

In her first days at Clinic Luke, Ana won over the children—all of whom received complete checkups and needed treatments. Team member Jimmy Occhipinti, a New Jersey dentist, spoke glowingly of Ana’s professional and human qualities as the two worked together every day from early morning until late evening.

ICAF needs \$6,000 a year to run the Clinic Luke—the only dental office in our town, and the only x-ray unit for 40 miles. What a blessing we can now be to the thousands of impoverished people who will find cutting-edge dental care, Christian compassion, a smiling demeanor—and *bribe-free painkillers!*—at our Clinic Luke.

“And he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.”
—Luke 9:2

From the President's Pen....



"Can you hear me now?"

That question, which is posed during the TV ads of a major U.S. cell-phone provider, has entered our vernacular. It joins other time-tested questions, such as "Are we there yet?" and "Where's the beef?" that are strategically placed in humorous lines by comedians and public speakers.

I have sometimes wondered whether it might be a question that God asks, too. When He sees the problems affecting society, where even Christians think nothing of abandoning sacred vows, or ignoring His explicit commandments, could He be calling down to us saying, "Have you learned nothing in 2,000 years? Can you hear me now?"

Truthfully, my application of that metaphor was the *second* thought that came to mind. The first was more personal, more urgent. I must admit to even uttering the question with a tinge of desperation when it came to me.

ICAF's ministry has grown exponentially this year. Our budget has gone from \$118,000 in 2002 to \$227,000 in 2003. God placed on our hearts the need for the TeenPride screen printing shop to teach job skills for street kids, and during the same year, we opened our free dental clinic and the new Christian Center in Brad. These were such clear calls from Him that we knew we should proceed on faith...and so we have opened all three—with wondrous results.

But paying for them is causing the high blood pressure in these parts!

The grant money we had counted on has not come through—except for two gifts of \$7,500 and \$14,100. Our greatest strength has always been individuals who include us in their charitable contributions—sometimes as a monthly pledge, sometimes as a lump sum. But while we do have more sponsors than ever before, the income for the year to date (to October 1st) is less than half what we need for the year.

Which is what made me think about the question. This newsletter goes out to almost 1,500 people. Over and over again we hear glowing reports from

those who receive it, saying how wonderful the work we are doing is. But of the 1,500 to whom we have faithfully mailed *The Sunflower* for years, fewer than 100 ever contribute to our ministry.

Which makes me wonder, *Can you hear me now?* Perhaps we have failed in our attempt to communicate our message and our mission. A sales manager sitting next to me on the flight I am on was just bemoaning the fact that his salespeople too often lose the sales because they tell their prospects about the products' features—but are afraid to ask for the sale. Have we similarly failed by filling *The Sunflower* with nice stories—but not asking you directly enough to keep the dream alive? In the spirit of complete honesty therefore, let me use my remaining words with this most direct and heartfelt appeal:

ICAF needs your financial support now or our ministry will collapse.

We are such good stewards of your gifts that our total overhead/fundraising/administrative costs are less than 5% (the national average is 21%). Our programs are making incredible differences in the lives of abandoned and orphaned children—and we are ministering in ways like no other organization.

This is our "hump" year. Once we have paid for the buildings and equipment, not only will our budgets drop in half, but our need for fundraising will decrease as Bright Futures II and the dental clinic reach self sufficiency.

Our faith is still strong. We know what we are doing is pleasing in God's sight. We speak—and listen—to Him daily and He gives us such strength. But this call is to YOU. If you have never given to ICAF before, this is the time you can make a real impact. Will you make a one-time gift, or a monthly pledge to help us before the year end? Page 11 gives you the options to make that gift. This is the call. *Can you hear me now?* Thanks for answering.

David C. Forward.



INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S Aid FOUNDATION

www.ICAFKIDS.org

I know ICAF's ministry can only continue with tangible, tax-deductible support.
Here's how I want to help:

Please check as applicable and mail this form, with checks payable to ICAF, to
14 West Lake Avenue, Medford, NJ 08055-3249

- _____ A gift of \$1000 \$500 \$100 \$_____ toward ICAF's ministry to be used for (please check):
- _____ Bright Futures _____ Bright Beginnings _____ Emanuel Home _____ Dental clinic _____ where most needed.
- _____ I'll sponsor a Bright Beginnings child for \$25/month.*
- _____ I'll sponsor an Emanuel orphanage child for \$25/month.*
- _____ I'll sponsor the dental clinic for \$39/month*
- _____ I would like to join an ICAF mission team. Please contact me.
- _____ I would like ICAF to present its ministry at my church or other group.
- _____ I would like information on including ICAF's ministry in my will.
- _____ Other designation:



**I prefer to pay each month by (check one):*

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_____ A secure payment from my checking account. You will still receive a receipt for donations. Charge and automatic check pledges can be changed or canceled at any time. A \$1 fee will be added to each automatic check donation by the handling company so that ICAF receives your full donation. Just attach a voided unsigned blank check to set it up.

Please print name: _____ e-mail: _____

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Signature: _____ Phone: _____

Thank you for becoming a part of the International Children's Aid Foundation: we pledge that we will make the most of your donation to help children of Romania!



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Permit # 51
Medford, NJ

Newsletter of the International
Children's Aid Children's Aid Foundation
Fall 2003
Volume 4, Issue 2

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