

THE SUNFLOWER

Newsletter of the International Children's Aid Foundation

Summer 2005

Casa Emanuel Welcomes the Pethtels

When "Coach" Gabe Pethel accompanied a group of enthusiastic high schoolers from the Wesleyan School in Norcross, Georgia to Romania for spring break, 2004, he didn't expect the impact of the journey to have the effect that it did.

Says Gabe, "The mission was sent to serve under the care of ICAF to interact with the children of the orphanage, teach English to local high school students, lead musical worship, lead Bible study, and renovate the local Christian Center. In the process, many strong friendships were developed, and God seemed to be saying, "You are needed here."

Upon his return to the United States, Gabe felt saddened by the fact that he was leaving behind the precious orphans at Casa Emanuel. Gabe's wife, Dana, adds, "We talked and decided that we wanted to help the children in a larger way. After much prayer and petition, we agreed that our family would look into serving as house parents at Casa Emanuel."

This was truly an answered prayer for our ministry—for years we have seen a need for a continual guiding presence on site, espe-

cially for the teenage boys who have no role model. The Pethels' many friends recognized that this would be a perfect fit, and have loyally supported them since their departure for Romania last fall with monthly pledges to help with their expenses, and prayers for their success.



Dana, Gabe, Caleb and Logan Pethel days before departing for Romania.

"As house parents at Casa Emanuel, our responsibility is to help love, guide, teach and discipline 19 orphaned children, and, of course, do likewise with our own two boys. Mix this in with learning the Romanian language, buying groceries in the market, keeping in touch with family, supporters, and friends back in the U.S., home schooling Logan and Caleb, and teaching English classes on Friday nights, and the job can become overwhelming quite often," reports Gabe. "On top of this, we are working to develop a team atmosphere among the four educators, ourselves, and the Romanian administrators of Casa Emanuel."

This was not always easy, especially during the dreary, cold winter months when everyone was confined indoors by the harsh Transylvanian winter. Relief came with a return visit from the Wesleyan School for "spring" break. Even though the weather was still cold and damp, spirits rose. "It was good to see things from their perspec-

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tive rather than our own for a week,” reported Gabe. “Where we saw difficulty, they saw opportunity. Through the Wesleyan School team’s visit, we realized that we didn’t need to solve every problem in the ministry. We simply needed to continue meeting, doing the work we were given to do, and encouraging fellowship. God could take care of the rest, and He would build the team as it needed to be built.”

“The words of Hebrews 10:24-25 came to mind: ‘And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together.’”

“Sometimes life can be difficult no matter where we live and work but if we don’t give up on meeting together we will find that the sloppy conditions of the winter seasons are part of the process that leads to the beauty of spring.”

You might wonder how Logan and Caleb are adapting....Both enjoy going to school two days a week, have learned to chatter away in Romanian with their new friends, and especially love riding their bikes on sunny days around the streets of Criscior.

After nearly a year, the Pethels can look back with satisfaction on many victories, large and small. The Emanuel kids all have come from traumatic backgrounds, and need the care and understanding that come from a constant presence and loving guidance. With patience and one-on-one attention, the kids are gaining self-respect and confidence, and coming closer to understanding God’s love as they see it through the witness of our missionary family.

If you would like to follow the Pethel’s progress, you can go to www.pethtelmission.org.



Gabe with educators, and kids

ICAF is alive and flourishing!

It was good to hear from many of our sponsors, inquiring if they had missed an edition of the Sunflower. At the same time, it increased the sense of urgency that we communicate with you to let you know what’s going on with our ministry! We have been organizing a HUGE mission team for this summer, and overseeing our other operations, and sadly couldn’t squeeze out the time to give birth to a newsletter – good to know that you’ve missed us, and we promise to communicate more often!

Some of our members from Chicago have volunteered to take up the pen and ensure that we communicate with you more frequently. Two New Jersey volunteers have offered to help acknowledge your gifts - Thanks, guys!

We couldn’t make it without your loyal support, and we need each one of you and more with the inflation that is out of control as Romania comes nearer to entrance in the European Union. Thanks for sticking with us, and please keep thinking of us!

“All things work together for the good of those who love God and are called to His purpose.” —Romans 8:28

Wesleyan Returns to Romania for “Spring” Break

For the second consecutive year, 19 middle- and high school students and teachers from Wesleyan School in Norcross, Georgia, chose ICAF for their spring break mission team.

The weather could not have contrasted more with last year’s balmy temperatures and sunny days; snow, ice, and frigid temperatures remind all of us that “spring” break was a misnomer.

But this dedicated team of wonderful students came not for the weather, but for the work (except when they had to defend their national pride in the daily Casa Emanuel snowball fight ambushes!).

Each day began with personal devotions and Bible study – searching for peace and the discernment to recognize and fulfill God’s will that day. Then the group split into teams. One taught English in several classes at the Brad middle-and high school. They developed real relationships with their cross-cultural peers, and each Wesleyan student handed out personal invitations to kids with whom they “clicked” to join us later at the Christian Center.

Meanwhile, the other half of the mission team was far away at the Hunedoara State Orphanage. ICAF’s Bright Beginnings early childhood development program is there, and one of our long-time goals has been to stimulate the babies’ attention by decorating the dull yellow walls and ceilings. The Wesleyan team painted colorful caricatures and happy designs in cheerful colors in three large rooms.

In the evening, both groups returned to our new Faith Christian Center in Brad. Evidently, the invitations worked! On the first night almost 50 local teens showed up – and by week’s end it was up to 80. Christian music, testimonies, personal sharing, and English Club helped further strengthen the bonds of fellowship – and provided Reuben, our Christian Center



One of the middle school classes visited

Director – with a wonderful base upon which to grow this ministry to those seeking spiritual guidance and enrichment.

It was an exhausted team that slept most of the way home to Atlanta, but the work they did, the conduct they demonstrated, and the lives they touched, will be long remembered by ICAF and our Romanian partners.

Prayer: An Essential Part of Clinic

*“Let us approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.” ---
Hebrews 4:16*

In last year’s mission trip to Romania, we had prayer warriors who prayed with each person who came through the medical clinic in Criscior. The number was about 400 people. That means that the prayer team had the privilege of raising each one of these people and their problems to God, who is stronger than any problem they have.

When a person comes into the “prayer room,” they are met by a team member and a translator. After a quick glance at their medical problems and brief questions about any other life concerns, we begin.

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Bright Beginnings Continues to Build on Contributions from the 2004 Team

Our Bright Beginnings program is rebuilding after facing possible closure 1-1/2 years ago. This program is expensive to run, and we could no longer support the 15 educators we employed at that time. God provided the means to continue a modified Bright Beginnings program on a "survival" level with 5 educators caring for the same number of babies and special needs children at the state orphanage in Hunedoara. This year we thankfully have been able to add 2 educators to our staff, for a total of 7: Dana, Otilia, Marinella, Adriana, Corina, Emilia, and Eliza. They work in two shifts to care for the 40 babies (several weeks old to 16 months), and 28 special needs children (3 to 16 years old).

Last summer's Bright Beginnings mission team consisted of Linda Westlin (pediatric occupational therapist), Debbie Aretz (teacher), Rebecca Aretz (high school student), Brian Patton (pediatrician), Sharon Perkins (nurse), and Heather Ewbank (college student). Linda arrived 4 weeks before the rest of the team, in order to spend an extended time in the state orphanage evaluating the status/needs of the children & then train the educators accordingly.

Over the past year, the special needs children unfortunately did not get the one-on-one time they desperately needed from the educators because the state workers took a "break" every time the educators began to work with the children. The result was that 2 educators tried to somehow work with 15 or more children at one time! We have now corrected this situation by establishing a detailed schedule emphasizing individual time with each child, at the appropriate intervention level (ranging from intensive to comfort care).

Approximately 10 of the special needs children are receiving a daily "massage" of their face/shoulders/arms/hands to address their tendency to self-abuse. Since there is no playground on the grounds of the state orphanage, the ambulatory children who can make the challenging climb are now being taken to a local playground as weather permits. Our hope is to raise enough funds in the future

to allow ALL the children to have playground equipment readily available to them.

Debbie was invaluable in guiding the educators during small groups with the special needs children. She offered insightful and encouraging feedback to them. She also had a soothing way with the babies. Her daughter, Rebecca, was wonderful with the babies and spent many hours feeding and playing with them. Our new baby playroom, complete with mats, was the first time we had been allowed to work with the babies on the floor. Many of the older babies lack transitional movements and delayed fine/gross motor skills because they have previously only been allowed in the cribs or someone's lap!



Brian examined many of the special needs children and made recommendations to the staff doctor. One particularly critical case was a 3 year old girl who was not eating - she weighed 9kg (20 pounds), & Brian felt she was in grave medical danger if she did not gain weight within 1 week. Linda,

Sharon, and 3 of the educators patiently worked with this child & she is now gaining weight (10kg at last report 4 weeks after our trip). Brian also examined the babies, especially since there are now more medically-involved babies in the unit. His contribution was extremely valuable.

Sharon initially did not know where God wanted her. Working in an infertility clinic as she does in the States didn't provide an obvious answer, but God always has a perfect plan & she fit in beautifully with the Bright Beginnings team! Heather lent her background in special needs to help run the groups and provide feedback to the educators. She was able to make a connection with one of the babies that avoids social interaction. Every team member made a difference in the lives of these orphaned children. It is awesome to see God work through our team members! It was a rewarding and humbling experience.. God is at work in Romania, and this was an exciting advance for our program

Dental Clinic Re-Opens, X-ray Equipment Up and Running!

Faced with a financial crunch across our ministry, and dental clinic revenues that were 32% below budget, we closed our dental clinic last December. It was a difficult decision, but our dentist knew our accountability policy and we could not continue to place the rest of our mission – such as Casa Emanuel – at risk because of the clinic’s consistent cost overruns and revenue shortfall. We are pleased to bring you good news, however. We have hired a wonderful young dentist, Alin Buda, and an experienced dental assistant named Plescuta Lucica. Both are members of local churches and are excited about having an opportunity to minister to patients’ dental and spiritual needs.



The new compensation structure reduces the risk to ICAF on the cost side, yet allows both Dr. Buda and our mission to share the profits. “In the past, we did a poor job of promoting the clinic,” admits ICAF country manager Lutu Iuga. “Plus, patients would often show up and find the dentist was not there. We will not make that mistake again. First, we

have erected illuminated signs around town advertising Criscior’s only dental clinic. We’ve printed hundreds of brochures and distributed them through the mayor’s office – and the local newspaper has carried stories and our advertisements. We have the only dental x-ray machine within 45km [28miles] in one direction or within a 3-hour drive in the other. So we have promoted our state-of-the-art x-ray machine to dentists in surrounding towns, and they are thrilled to send us their patients for x-rays.”

Criscior is a very poor town. People from miles around have either no access to a modern, clean clinic – or they cannot afford to go to one. ICAF’s policy is to charge a modest fee for service – but to always treat the patient, regardless of their ability to pay. But just as vital as our role as a community dental ministry, one

of the greatest benefits of the re-opened clinic is the care we can now deliver to the 19 children at Casa Emanuel – and indeed, to any child in any orphanage.

Please pray for Alin and Lucica and the success of our “Luke Clinic”.

Alert: Dr. Buda desperately needs dental supplies in general – and an ultrasonic cleaner, which costs €1850 (\$2480). Please use the donation form on in the back if you can help, or call James Occhipinti, DDS at 732.227.0043. Thanks!

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One of the first people was Sofia, who had visited us last year. Her husband was an out of control alcoholic. Her family was in chaos. Then there was Mirabela – she had been living with her son and daughter in law, and they had literally thrown her out. She then went to live with her mother, who died nine months later. Her mother left the house to Mirabela’s daughter, who wanted to sell it and move far away – without her.

Then there are those weighed down with sadness. Constantine was driving a car when it was in an accident his only two children were killed. This was four years ago and he cannot forgive himself. Ana, who is 26, lost her parents 3 weeks ago. The elderly couple: she is blind, he becoming more and more demented, and has only one leg. They live alone, in fear of the future.

Some of the illnesses were common: headaches, rheumatism, high blood pressure. Some were unusual: “spasmofilia” (lack of calcium), strange skin diseases, psychoses. Everyone was glad for the prayers. The Lord was working mightily. You could feel His spirit in the “prayer room”.

It is a gratifying job to spend time praying for another. Many times the “pray-ers” received as much as those with whom they prayed. Please pray for the people of Romania – our brothers and sisters in Christ. Like us, they need prayer.

---Linda Patterson

A Final "President's Pen"



Well, all good things must come to an end, and so this is my *last* "President's Pen". I have resigned as president of ICAF, and the Board has found a wonderful replacement in the person of Debbie Bowen.

First, let me address the reasons for my decision. International Children's Aid Foundation has been my passion and consuming interest since we founded it 15 years ago. But as the founder and person behind many of the programs that ICAF now operates, ICAF had taken over my life! Not only is that not healthy for one person's business and family life, but it not is healthy from the organization's standpoint for one person to wield so much influence.

I am proud to have guided ICAF from its inception and through its growth stages, but now the organization is mature, I strongly believe a new leader with new vision and new ideas can inspire our Board members and volunteers to even greater levels of accomplishment. Debbie Bowen has both walked the walk and talked the talk. She has incredible skills in both diplomacy and organization development---and she served the Lord for almost a year as a missionary with ICAF in Romania last year. She continues to spend about 6 weeks in our Romanian ministry three times each year.

The Board's search committee was unanimous in selecting Debbie as the new ICAF leader, and she has already assumed the title "Executive Director," which, like all of us, is a voluntary, unpaid position.

I will remain on the Board, responsible for our Bright Futures program, and am excited at being able to help develop our TeenPride screen printing project to even greater levels of success.

It has been an amazing journey. Fifteen years ago, Chris and I sat at home one Friday night watching 20/20 when they showed the dreadful conditions of children in Romanian state orphanages. That night, through the tears, we said, "Somebody should do something..." and so many people did! I have visited Romania 60 times, seen seemingly insurmountable challenges overcome through the power of prayer, witnessed hundreds of ordinary, caring, generous people put their minds, their wallets, and their backs behind our mission, with the result that we today have a truly Christ-centered ministry that makes a real difference to everybody it touches.

It has been quite a journey, and I have been richly blessed to have been at the forefront of ICAF's first 15 years. Now I ask you to show Debbie and her Board that the best is yet to come! She needs your prayers, your financial commitment, and your volunteer efforts to serve those whom Christ calls us to serve.

May God continue to richly bless ICAF's ministry.

David C. Forward

"May our Lord Jesus Christ, himself and God our father, who loved us and by his grace gave eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word."

--II Thessalonians 2: 16-17.



INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S Aid FOUNDATION

www.ICAFKIDS.org

I know ICAF's ministry can only continue with tangible, tax-deductible support.

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Signature: _____ Phone: _____

*Do not merely listen to the word and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.
James 1:22*

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!



INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S AID FOUNDATION

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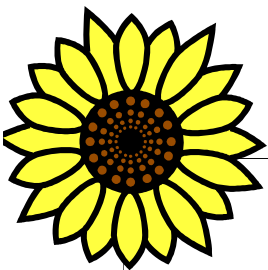
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