

CASA MEA
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February 2003

Dear Friends and Family,

This past year has been quite an eventful one for me. It has been a year of endings and of new beginnings; of great sadness and of much hope. And a very exciting one too!

As most of you already know, I have gone to Romania for the past two years to work in its state run orphanages. My favorite orphanage is a 270 bed infant orphanage in Brasov. It must be the old pediatric nurse in me coming out, but I absolutely love holding, hugging and rocking all those precious little ones! Over time, I have fallen in love with the babies, the Romanian people, and the country. Unfortunately, there are way too few resources to adequately care for all of these babies.

First, there is not enough staff. Each child care worker has approximately 15 babies to take care of on her shift. Can you imagine? As a result, feeding time means propping bottles. And these bottles do not contain commercially prepared formula. The staff makes the formula, fills re useable glass bottles and then warms the bottles before each feeding or, in other words, every three to four hours. To save time, the staff makes the opening in the re useable nipples large so that the babies can eat more quickly. No dawdling here, nor any burping either!

Second, there just are not enough supplies. The staff does not have the luxury of disposable diapers. They use cloth diapers which are laundered right there without the benefit of an automatic machines. Think of it...all these babies and toddlers in cloth diapers! The clothesline is a sight in and of itself! Also, there are no plastic pants so a wet diaper means a wet sleeper and a wet crib sheet. And there are no diaper pins! Yes, after all these years I finally learned to diaper a baby without the benefit of safety pins or even duct tape! Because the staff is at the mercy of the weather's drying conditions, frequent clean, dry diapers are not available. Therefore, diaper changing is a highly regulated activity rather than on an as needed basis, which is also true of clothing and bedding changes.

Are you getting the picture? Life in the infant orphanage consists of feeding and diapering all these babies. There simply is no time for such luxuries as baths, shampoos or age appropriate stimulating play. Touching, cuddling, cooing, loving also go by the wayside. Unfortunately, all of the things a baby needs to develop physically, emotionally, and intellectually are not available. It is amazing to me that the majority of these babies do somehow manage to survive! But who knows at what cost to them?

How did Romania get to this point? Romania is roughly the size of Oregon with a population of 22 million. It is a land of much diverse natural beauty consisting of the Transylvanian Alps (yes, the land of Count Dracula!), the blue Danube delta, and the beaches of the Black Sea. Despite its natural beauty and physical resources, Romania suffered economically and socially under its former repressive communist regime. Under that regime, all married women were ordered to produce five children each or be punished by severe taxes. In fact, women were even subjected to routine examinations to ensure that they were not using any contraception. In addition, the communists stripped Romania of its resources and sold them abroad in an attempt to eradicate Romania's debt. Romanians struggled to obtain what little was left. Today, the average income is approximately \$150 per month. As a result, parents had and continue to have many more children than they can provide for. In Romania last year there were 43,000 children in state run orphanages and in Brasov county there were 1650. The parents who abandon their children in the maternity hospitals immediately after birth or who take them to the orphanage believe that that they are doing what is best for their children. They know that in the orphanage, the children will at least receive food, clothing and shelter. However, what the orphanage cannot give these children is love, not even a semblance of love!

In response to this unbearable situation, I formed Casa Mea and am moving to Romania shortly. Casa Mea, a non profit corporation, is dedicated to providing these orphaned and abandoned children with a loving group home. The goal is to establish many small homes where these children can feel wanted and loved. These homes will provide the children with a permanent, loving, family environment within which they may grow to their full potential. It is my hope that Casa Mea will be able to open its first home for approximately 12 to 16 infants in Brasov County by the summer of 2004. Obviously, purchasing and possibly renovating a home, plus caring for the children 24 hours a day until they mature will take a considerable amount of time and money. Nevertheless, I am confident that the generosity of my friends and family such as yourself and the generosity of others whom I have yet to meet will support and sustain Casa Mea in its efforts to improve the lives of these precious little ones.

There are a number of ways in which you can share your generosity with Casa Mea. Your emotional support is invaluable and greatly appreciated. Living and working in a foreign, non English speaking country will have its own challenges as will assuming the permanent responsibility for these little ones. Obviously, your financial support is also invaluable and will enable Casa Mea to fulfill its goals. In addition, your time is a precious gift.

Please, whatever you feel you can do for these children will make a tremendous difference in their lives.

Wishing you all a healthy and happy new year.
Jan Calos

CASA MEA NEWS



Spring 2003

GREETINGS FROM BRASOV

I arrived in Brasov, Romania on March 7, 2003. I was anticipating springtime in the mountains. But as all of you Mid Westerners know, March is not necessarily spring! So instead of finding spring-like weather, I found Brasov still in the grips of winter. I have seen more snow this past month than I have seen in years. At least I will have time to acclimate before I experience a full-fledged winter here where I am told it can be -37 degrees. Does this remind you of Minnesota?



Regardless, Brasov is a quaint and picturesque city, a medieval Aspen or Vale! Brasov is approximately 100 miles north of Bucharest, the capital of Romania, and with a population of approximately 300,000, it is the second largest city in Romania.

It is situated on

an extended plateau in the Transylvanian Alps and was the crossroads that linked Istanbul to the Baltic Sea. As an important crossroads, invaders frequently threatened Brasov. To protect themselves from these invaders, the citizens built a fortified wall around Brasov. Remains of this fortification are still visible today. Poarte Schei was the entrance into the medieval city Brasov and Poarte Ecaterina was the entrance in the fortified wall to St. Catherine's Monastery.



Just outside Brasov is the main ski resort area in Romania, Poiana Brasov. Also, not far from Brasov are Bran Castle, the alleged home of Count Dracula, and Peles Castle, the mountain summer home of King Carol, the German ruler of Romania in the 1800s. All around Brasov are smaller villages where a car frequently competes for space on the narrow roadways with

livestock or horse drawn carts.

Since I arrived in Brasov, I have been busy trying to incorporate Casa Mea as a Romanian foundation, find a suitable home for the children and myself, and obtain the necessary approvals from the various governmental authorities to operate a children's home.

As a recognized Romanian foundation, Casa Mea will be able to enjoy tax exempt status in Romania, purchase property in its name, and obtain custody of the orphaned and abandoned children. Not only does all of this take time, it takes money. Obviously, the Romanian authorities want to know that Casa Mea is financially able to take on the task of caring for orphaned and abandoned children.

If you are like me, you ask yourself how much can one person do. Let me tell you about a remarkable Romanian woman I have met. Her name is Cathey. She is now 20 years old and works full time as a teacher. She also attends the university where she is majoring in psychology. At first glance she sounds like and other 20 year old. But she is not any other 20 year old! A year ago she found two little brothers begging on the streets. These little boys touched her heart, and with their alcoholic parent's permission, she agreed to provide a loving home for these little boys. To her chagrin, she subsequently discovered that the boy's parents changed their minds when they realized their only source of income was now gone. Since then, Cathey has fought the police, child protective services, and other Romanian authorities to gain custody of these boys. With persistence and tenacity, she finally succeeded in convincing the authorities that these boys would be better cared for and loved with her than with their abusive parents. So at 20, she is the "mother" of these precious little boys. The boys attend school and are excited to have their very own "real" mom with a "real" place to sleep every night. Cathey is making a difference in the lives of these two boys. You and I can also make a difference in the lives of some of these children.

Thank you for your prayers, help, and financial support.

Jan Calos,
Founder & Secretary
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GREETINGS FROM THE USA

You can make a difference in the lives of these children just as Cathey is doing by supporting Casa Mea's capital fund. Currently, our primary task is raising funds to purchase a house for the children. Right now, there are 24 abandoned babies living in the Brasov Maternity Hospital because the orphanage is completely full. As soon as we have a house, we can provide a loving alternative to these infants. In order to purchase and furnish a house, we need to raise \$100,000.00. Please join us and help make a difference in the lives of these

children by contributing whatever you can toward this effort.

The Internal Revenue Service recently recognized Casa Mea as a public charity and granted it 501c3 status, which means that your entire contribution to Casa Mea is totally tax deductible.

Thank you.

Kevin Calos, President
Margi Henning, Vice President
Melanie Clark, Treasure

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CASA MEA NEWS

GREETINGS FROM BRASOV

Fall 2003

So much has happened this summer in Brasov! We are all very excited and hope you will be too!

In July, Casa Mea became an official Romanian foundation. This enables Casa Mea to purchase property in Romania and to accept orphaned and abandoned children.

In August, Casa Mea found a 4000 square foot house on 1.25 acres of land in the little village of Prejmer, just northeast of Brasov. We are currently negotiating the purchase of the house and hope to be in it by November.

The house itself has seven rooms, two bathrooms, a good attic, and a basement. In addition to the house, there is another building, which consists of a two-car garage and three more rooms.



The property also has a large barn with stables for animals, a chicken coop, a huge garden, a hay field, fruit trees, and a small grape arbor. We believe that this "country" property is a great place to rear children and will allow Casa Mea to raise most of its own food. The size of the property will also allow Casa Mea to add additional buildings in the future if the need arises. Once we are settled, we invite all of you to come and visit us here in Romania!

After we are settled in the house, we will petition the Romanian Child Protective Services for our first babies.

There are so many babies who need a loving home. It is unbelievable!

Here are some of the children who currently need a loving home:

There is Gabriela. She is blond and blue eyed and a very energetic and inquisitive baby. She was rolling over, sitting up, and grabbing for things long before her contemporaries. Gabi, as she is called, has chipmunk cheeks and the cutest smile you have ever seen. She got her teeth fairly early so her smile reveals her cute little teeth. She is a true survivor! When she finishes her bottle and is still hungry, she pitches a fit until the staff at the orphanage brings her a second bottle. When someone picks her up and plays with her and then puts her back in her crib, she gets on her hands and knees with her bum in the air and her face in her hands and sobs!



Unela is a porcelain doll! She is also blond and blue eyed, but very tiny and petite. She supposedly was the product of a late, self-induced abortion. She was born alive and extremely premature which accounts for her petite ness. She is easy-going and always happy. And although she looks so feminine, she loves

to give everyone raspberries! Totally unbecoming for such a little lady!

Denisa and George are twins. George is a big strapping baby boy who has a smile for everyone no matter what is happening around him. On the other hand, Denisa is very small and will not be ignored! If anyone talks to or holds George, she has a little temper tantrum! Both of them are absolutely gorgeous!



Andrea is a newborn who was abandoned by her mother at the maternity hospital right after birth before she was even named. Therefore, the staff at the orphanage named her Andrea, after the director of the orphanage, of course! She has large, coal black eyes and is chubby! She is chubby because she always wants to eat and will suck on everything and anything! Anyone who holds her ends up

soaking wet because she will suck on your clothing, your fingers, cheeks, anything you will let her!

Raul is the quiet, silent type! He is a dark bruiser with a dimple in his chin! He is sure to be a future football player or boxer! And like all big guys, Raul is very content and complacent as long as he gets his bottle on time! Raul's mother is a 14-year-old orphan who lives in an orphanage for older children in Brasov. No one knows who his father is.

Alexandru's mother brought him to the orphanage when he was 6 months old and weighing only 10 pounds. He is a lady killer with his big dark eyes, long eyelashes and an ever present smile! He is very sickly with chronic malnutrition, anemia, eczema, gastric reflux, and chronic infections. Despite such an unfortunate start in life, his little face lights up the minute anyone speaks to him!

These are only a few of the babies who have been abandoned or orphaned and now live at the state run infant orphanage in Brasov. And there are 25 more babies who have been abandoned and who are currently living in the maternity hospital because the infant orphanage is full! Don't you agree with Casa Mea that all these little ones deserve a better life? If so, we hope Casa Mea can count on you to help provide a better life for them.



GREETINGS FROM THE USA

There are many different ways in which you can personally help provide a better life for these babies. At present, Casa Mea is without a President of the Board of Directors. Unfortunately, Kevin A. Calos resigned as President of the Board due to a business relocation to the Northeast. Although we will miss Kevin, we thank him for his hard work on behalf of Casa Mea and wish him much success in his new endeavor. If you are interested in filling this vacancy on the Board, Casa Mea would welcome your commitment.

Casa Mea is planning its first annual fund raising Count Dracula Halloween party! It is scheduled for Saturday night, October 25th, at 7:00 p.m. at Melanie Clark's house located at 6705 Shadow Crest Dr., Plano, Texas 75093, 972-306-6705. Costumes, especially Count Dracula costumes, are welcomed though not required. There will be traditional Halloween fare, drinks, games, ghosts, and goblins, plus an auction. Several Romanian women are currently gathering donated Romanian crafts and handiwork for the auction. Whatever your business, if you have food, drinks or door prizes to donate for this Halloween party or items for the auction, Casa Mea would greatly appreciate them. But whether you have any items to donate or not, a cash donation would also be greatly appreciated. Please mark your calendars and plan to attend, and be sure to bring all of your friends and family.

Casa Mea will now need to furnish the house in Prejmer. It will need many things from expensive items such as a refrigerator to not so expensive items such as dishtowels and kitchen utensils. Therefore, any amount of money you can donate will help.

For every cash donations you make, ask your employer to match it!

If at this time you are not in a position to financially support Casa Mea, there are a number of other ways in which you can support Casa Mea.

You can make your employer or your church or your school aware of Casa Mea's mission and ask them to "adopt" Casa Mea as its special charity. Then as a group, you and your colleagues can plan activities to raise funds for Casa Mea.

If you do not feel that you can approach your employer or church or school, then you can simply spread the word of Casa Mea to your friends and family. Send your family and friends the Casa Mea News and/or tell them about Casa Mea's mission.

You can host a fund raising party in your home. All you have to do is invite some of your friends to your home for hors d' oeuvres, or a barbecue, or whatever type of party you would enjoy and, in exchange, ask your friends for a contribution to Casa Mea.

Casa Mea needs your frequent flyer miles to conduct fund raising presentations around the US.

The layout, printing, and mailing of fund raising brochures, newsletters, and videos are costly. If you have an interest in this area or know someone who does, Casa Mea would be grateful for the donation of the design, printing, and mailing of its fund raising materials.

Casa Mea can always use office equipment, computers, printers, and supplies. If you personally, or your business, has office materials it no longer needs, please consider donating them to Casa Mea.

Each and every one of us has a unique gift or talent. Casa Mea asks that you donate your unique gift or talent to it! If you are a musician or a seamstress or a computer wizard or a shopper, or whatever, Casa Mea can use your talent. If you are a musician, give a recital or create a CD and donate the proceeds to Casa Mea. If you are a seamstress, Casa Mea needs bedding, towels, baby and children's clothing. If you are a computer wizard, Casa Mea can use your computer skills. If you are a shopper, hunt for those bargains of household items, toys or children's clothing at store sales or garage sales and then donate the items to Casa Mea.

Even if you think you do not have any unique gift or talent, we all have time for those things that are important to us. If Casa Mea's mission is important to you, we can use your time! We need individuals to research and write grants and explore corporate and civic giving opportunities. We need party planners, secretarial help, speakers, and any number of other volunteers.

Casa Mea 's mission is ambitious and will take a considerable amount of creativity, time, and money. Nevertheless, we at Casa Mea are confident that you will reach into your hearts and find your very own special way to support Casa Mea.

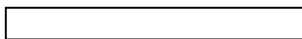
Remember that all of your donations to Casa Mea, with the exception of your prayers, are tax deductible, including your time!

Thank you from all of us at Casa Mea and from all of the children who will be loved and wanted because of your support!

Please send your donations to Casa Mea, 6705 Shadow Crest Drive, Plano, Texas 75093 and make your checks payable to "Casa Mea." If you would like more information or assistance with a particular gift, please call Melanie Clark at 972-306-6705 or e-mail Jan Calos at casamea@rdslink.ro.

Thank you all for your prayers, help, and financial support.

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