

# CASA MEA NEWS

January 2004

## HAPPY NEW YEAR!!

### 2004

The New Year is a wonderful and exciting time. It gives us all an opportunity to reflect upon the past year and to look forward to the new year. It is a time to make new resolutions to help us get to where we want to be. Where has Casa Mea been? Where it is going? What are its new year's resolutions? But most importantly, why?

#### **Where has Casa Mea been?**

During the past year, Casa Mea has focused its efforts on attaining its mission which is to provide loving group homes for orphaned and abandoned children in developing countries. To attain this mission, Casa Mea became a Texas non-profit corporation, a 501(c)(3) public charity, and a Romanian Foundation. Casa Mea also held its first annual Count Dracula Halloween Party and Silent Auction in Plano, Texas.



But the most exciting event for Casa Mea this past year was the purchase of its first house for orphaned and abandoned children in Prejmer, Romania.



### **Where is Casa Mea going?**

Casa Mea will continue to focus its efforts on attaining its mission. Casa Mea is now renovating the house which we hope will be completed by spring. After renovating and furnishing the house, we anticipate the arrival of our first babies.

### **What are Casa Mea's new year's resolutions?**

- Casa Mea will raise the funds necessary to complete the renovations and furnish the house.
- Casa Mea will attract loving volunteers to staff the house.
- Casa Mea will be home to 10-12 orphaned or abandoned babies such as those pictured here who were left in a maternity hospital shortly after birth.



### **Why?**

Because Casa Mea believes that every child deserves a safe and loving home.

### **And you?**

Have you reflected on where you have been in 2003 and where you are going in 2004? If so, have you made any new year's resolutions? We hope that wherever your reflections lead you, one of your new year's resolutions is to help Casa Mea achieve its mission because you too believe that every child deserves a safe and loving home.

We wish you a healthy and happy 2004!

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

Please send your donations to Casa Mea, 6705 Shadow Crest Drive, Plano, Texas 75075. If you send your checks payable to "Casa Mea." If you would like more information or assistance with your gift, please call Melanie Clark at 972-306-6705 or e-mail Jan Calos at [casamea@rdslink.ro](mailto:casamea@rdslink.ro)

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## CASA MEA NEWS SPRING 2004



WHERE EVERY CHILD IS  
LOVED AND WANTED

Spring has arrived in Romania and with it a new sense of hope.



Now that spring is here, the storks have returned to Prejmer and we hope that they will bring Casa Mea its first baby! Yes, Casa Mea has applied to the local child protective service for its first baby, Julia. Julia is now a three month old infant whose mother is totally unaware that she even had a baby because she is mentally ill. Julia was named by the staff at the maternity hospital and is a gorgeous little blonde, blue eyed girl.

Unfortunately, Julia is not thriving at the orphanage where she shares a very small room with nine other infants all under the age of four months. The room is very hot and she sleeps in a little bed similar to those shown here.



### SUPPORTER'S CORNER

Dear Friends and Family,

HOPE...This is the season of HOPE...when all new life is sprouting from the earth. The



winter snow has melted, the March winds have calmed, and the sunshine of Spring is warming the earth.

I joyously submit this reflection to the Casa Mea News on behalf of my sister, Jan Calos. This March I visited Jan and saw firsthand all of the MIRACLES that she is creating for the abandoned babies of Romania through Casa Mea.

The home for 10-12 infants has been purchased, along with acres of land to grow crops, gardens and a small fruit orchard to feed the children. This house needs renovations in order to meet government standards for the children. This is where you may be inspired to contribute your time, talent or financial resources.

The process of renovating the property is well underway. With your prayers, support, and funds, this will happen in record time.

The abandoned babies that I held, fed and nurtured are waiting for the doors of Casa Mea to swing wide open. Jan's heart has opened enormously, as she continues to make daily volunteer visits

Julia is fed formula every three hours, but because the staff is so busy, they cannot always hold her to give her the bottle nor can they always burp her. As a result, she frequently spits up. Because diapers are a premium, she is allowed three diaper changes per twenty four hours and only when her diaper is soiled. As you can surmise, it is no surprise that Julia is not thriving in this environment and that is why Casa Mea has requested her.

Whether Casa Mea can have Julia now or not remains to be seen because the house in Prejmer is not completed. Although everyone is working very hard on the house and the garden, including these volunteers from Canada, much work remains to be done. And this means money!



We hope that this spring you will continue to find it within your hearts to support Casa Mea in its endeavor to provide Julia, and babies just like Julia, with a loving home in Prejmer where they can grow and thrive.

Thank you from all of us at Casa Mea.

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, please call Melanie Clark at 972-306-6705 or e-mail Jan Calos at [casamea@rdslink.ro](mailto:casamea@rdslink.ro).

to the abandoned babies in the maternity hospital and to the infant orphanage in Brasov, Romania. The doctors, nurses and staff know Jan by her loving smile and her helping hands. There isn't a baby at either of these places that escapes her tender touch. It fills me with pride to be her sister.

I entered this world of babies at the hospital and the orphanage with my heart and arms open. Each day I held babies, like Cristina who smiles, coos and giggles at the slightest attention. Luminta, (meaning "light" in Romanian) graced me with her warm grin and charming personality every day. Little Levente (pronounced Lay-van-tay) looks like the little Buddha with his big chubby cheeks, and he blessed me with his beautiful brown eyes. Laura, is a beauty queen at 4 weeks old! She touched my heart in a matter of seconds, shortly before she was rushed to the children's hospital with pneumonia.

These babies taught me so much. I learned about the incredible strength of spirit and HOPE that these babies possess. In the midst of their meager surroundings of cribs everywhere, propped bottle feeding for each infant, disease, unclean environment and medical practices, these children struggle to survive with minimal human contact and certainly the minutest teaspoon of love. Yet, they looked into my eyes with HOPE that I would love them, connect with them, hold them and touch their lives for just one tiny second...and be an advocate for them in their time of need.



I poured my heart and soul out to each child I held, blessing boy or girl for the gift of their life.

Just as there is HOPE for the flowers that are starting to sprout this spring, there is HOPE for each of these

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incredible babies as they strive to be loved and nourished.

Casa Mea, through the direction of its founder, Jan Calos, offers these children HOPE. HOPE for a home where love is shared with them constantly; a home where they will know in their hearts that they belong.

I invite you to be a part of this project of HOPE and donate financial resources today for the renovation of the house which will be Casa Mea (my home); a home where every child who enters its portal is loved and cherished.

This experience inspired me to share my HOPE with each of you...and to share my love, prayers, and financial support with these beautiful Romanian babies.

Won't you join me in this adventure of HOPE?

Let's make MIRACLES happen today for these children.

Thank you for your generous support.

In Love and Hope,  
Mary Tatone

# CASA MEA NEWS

SUMMER 2004



WHERE EVERY CHILD IS LOVED & WANTED

## NEWS FROM BRASOV

This is Julia, Casa Mea's first abandoned baby! She is such a pretty baby with fair skin, reddish brown hair, and brownish green eyes. She has the most beautiful smile and blesses us with it all day long! She is constantly jabbering and already sleeps through the night! Ever since Julia was born at the maternity hospital on January 12, 2004 in Brasov, Romania, Casa Mea has attempted to give her a home. After all these months, Child Protective Services finally gave Casa Mea custody of Julia and we are all so pleased to have her!



When Julia arrived at Casa Mea on June 4, 2004, she weighed only 10 pounds and was severely anemic. She had already been diagnosed as "retarded" based solely on the fact that her mother is profoundly retarded, although her development to date is normal. We at Casa Mea hope that with the love and attention we provide, Julia will develop into a normal, healthy individual. But regardless of the outcome, Julia now has a permanent, loving home with us at Casa Mea.

Many other children like Julia await such a home. When Child Protective Services awarded Casa Mea custody of Julia, they asked how many more children we could take! Unfortunately, because our house in Prejmer is still unfinished, we do not have the capacity for more children in my small one bedroom room apartment in Brasov. In order to complete the renovations to our house in Prejmer, we need your financial support. We hope we can count on you to help us give Julia and children like Julia a loving home.

## NEWS FROM USA

Casa Mea is now on the world wide web! Check us out at [www.casamea.org](http://www.casamea.org). The site is still being developed but we hope within the next few weeks it will be completed. If you wish to contact anyone at Casa Mea you can email us at [jan@casamea.org](mailto:jan@casamea.org). We hope to hear from you soon!

Please mark your calendars for the **Annual Count Dracula Halloween Party** which will be in October in Dallas. The exact date and time will follow in the Fall Casa Mea News.

## **VOLUNTEER'S VIEW by Vicky Ridley**

### **Casa Mea – providing hope to the orphans of Brasov**

During the early 1990s, the horrors of Romania's orphanages were well documented in the Western press and aid flooded in to help the many thousands of abandoned children. However, more recently it appears that a curtain has been drawn over the issue and both the Romanian and Western governments seem to have 'forgotten' about the problem. With little up to date information available, it was difficult to know what to expect when I first visited a Romanian orphanage. In a way, it was pleasantly surprising –certainly much improved to the horrendous images from a decade ago. But still, an orphanage is no home for a child and there are many problems facing the youngsters who are forced to grow up in such institutions. Today, western volunteers such as myself are still keen to come to Romania and work in the orphanages but often feel frustrated that they cannot do more to aid the helpless babies and toddlers.

### **A Dream**

Shortly after my arrival in Brasov, I met Jan Calos who introduced me and several other volunteers to "Casa Mea" (My Home). Casa Mea owns a home which is situated in the small town of Prejmer, 17km from Brasov. The house is beautiful with plenty of potential. It is currently undergoing an intensive renovation programme so that it meets Health and Safety regulations and Jan is always searching for eager groups of volunteers wishing to help. Not minding a bit of dirt and hard work, I joined a keen group of people and set off to Prejmer. Arriving at the property, Jan showed us around and described her plans for each part of the building. It is a large, rambling old building with much character. Bright white, with a vine growing along one side of the house, we were all instantly drawn in to the appeal of the place. With basement rooms, attic space and many out buildings Jan has a multitude of ideas. She envisages a play area in the central courtyard for young children, while the barn can be converted into an area suitable for basketball or football games to entertain the older children. The house is situated within a large plot of land and the hope is that Casa Mea will be able to cultivate its own supply of fruits and vegetables and that animals will graze the land some day.

### **Getting stuck in**



After the tour it was time to get to work. Old brick floors needed lifting, so armed with tools the banging began and bricks were dislodged at an alarmingly fast rate. With a bit of teamwork, a human chain was established and bricks shifted from the inside of the building to an ever increasing pile in the courtyard. Walls required demolition, so volunteers wishing to vent their frustration were equipped with hats and glasses. Again it was not long before clear progress was visible and the wall started coming down. For those wishing to take a break from the more physical work, a task of sorting through the several sacks full of clothes that Jan had been sent for the



orphans was accomplished. By now it was definitely lunchtime and a chance to talk to Jan more about her future hopes for Casa Mea.

Chatting to Jan, it was evident that she already has a clear vision for the project. Eventually she wishes to have up to twelve children living at Casa Mea. Any more and she feels that the family feeling will be lost and it will become more of an institution. For staffing Jan explains that there will be a local lady to do the cooking, cleaning etc, a few long term volunteers who would stay for between 1 and 2 years as well as volunteers staying for a couple of weeks – all of whom will be able to live on site. With so many babies in the orphanages it would seem difficult to decide which children to provide a home for but Jan says that, “we would like to take babies directly from the abandoned babies unit at the hospital who would be unlikely ever to be adopted by a Romanian family.” Casa Mea aims to provide a home for these children, as close to a traditional Romanian lifestyle as possible. Casa Mea will be their home from infancy until adulthood.

Following a leisurely lunch, it was back to work. Down in the basements, more brick floors needed removing along with piles of rubble and stones. Sonny, the property manager of Casa Mea, a local Romanian overseeing all of the renovation work, gave us lessons in shoveling and wheelbarrow maneuvering skills! As the afternoon drew to a close and energy levels in the volunteers began to diminish, our efforts were certainly noticeable. A large pile of bricks and stones stood proudly in the courtyard and walls that existed a few hours earlier were no longer there. Every volunteer felt satisfied that they had spent a day really making a difference and were all eager to return to help this worthwhile project develop.

### **Supporting Casa Mea**

Looking around the property, there is still a fair way to go until all of Jan’s visions are fulfilled. With optimism, she hopes that much of the renovation work will be completed by September, but Casa Mea has already accepted its first baby. Julia was born in January and is not thriving in the orphanage. Her mother is mentally unstable and is not aware that she gave birth to a child. The father of Julia is unknown. Jan explains that this is the sort of baby that Casa Mea wishes to help. “It is unlikely that Julia would ever be adopted as prospective parents could be concerned that Julia will be like her mother.



Of course, all of Casa Mea’s progress relies upon the generous donations from supporters of the charity. Although Jan is fronting the operations in Romania, other patrons of the charity are hard at work in the USA raising money and publishing the aims and objectives of Casa Mea. Currently, work is focused on establishing the house in Prejmer, but ultimately all of the Board members hope that Casa Mea will grow and flourish, enabling more homes to be built. Jan and the team are keen to hear from anyone interested in the work of the charity. Whether you wish to spend a day helping with renovations (highly recommended), donating money or perhaps caring for the children at

Casa Mea please e-mail the team at JAN@CASMEA.ORG. Casa Mea aims to become a home “where every child is loved and wanted” – a world away from a life in an orphanage.

[Born in 1985, Victoria Ridley is currently taking a year off before going to Durham University in England to study Biological Sciences. Her year off began as a volunteer in Romania. The pictures are courtesy of Bridget Wickert of Illinois, who is a frequent volunteer at the orphanages in Brasov.]

## **YOU CAN HELP**

Our current needs include:

1. Financial support to complete all the renovations to the house and to furnish it.
2. Financial support to purchase a car so that Jan and Julia do not have to be dependent on the crowded, hot Romanian public buses.
3. Your frequent flyer miles to attend fund raisers throughout the US (please specify a specific Casa Mea Board member when you donate your miles).
4. Multiple fund raisers for Casa Mea. If you plan the event, Casa Mea will provide a speaker, if you wish.

## **CONTACT US**

If you would like more information or assistance with a particular gift, please contact us at Casa Mea.

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**THANK YOU!**

# CASA MEA NEWS



Fall 2004

WHERE EVERY CHILD IS LOVED & WANTED

## NEWS FROM BRASOV



We would like to dedicate this newsletter to all of you: to those of you who spent your vacation volunteering at Casa Mea's house in Prejmer, to those of you who supported us financially throughout the year, to those of you who have donated much needed children's clothing and household accessories to Casa Mea, and to those of you who have supported us all emotionally. Without all of you, none of this would be possible. Thank you and we hope we can count on your continued support.



And a special thanks to Sonny and Mimi who are daily teaching us the Romanian way!



## NEWS FROM USA

Please mark the following dates on your calendars:

**October 16, 2004 Annual Count Dracula Halloween Party** benefiting Casa Mea at 6705 Shadow Crest Drive, Plano at 8:00 p.m. Costumes optional.

**October 30, 2004 Spaghetti Dinner & Silent Auction** benefiting Casa Mea at St. Casmirs' Church, 930 Geranium Ave. E., St. Paul, MN at 3:00 p.m.

## VOLUNTEER'S VIEW by Lars Mueller



We were a church outreach team of 11 people from Reichenbach, East Germany. There were four teenagers; Sophie from Holland, Elise, Janine and Jacob, and seven adults; Nicole, our leader from the USA, Alison from England, Petra from Romania, Andreas, our pastor, Clemens, Michael, and myself. After about 29 hours

on the road and an overnight in Hungary, we finally arrived in Brasov.

### **What did we do in Romania?**

Almost every morning we went to Jan's place. She is an American lady who sold everything she owned in the States to buy a property with a house in Romania. The project is called "Casa Mea," or "My Home." There she wants to give about 12 abandoned children a family-like home. At Jan's place, we took out old electrical wires, took off plaster, and scraped off old paint.

### **Why have such a project?**

Now there are about 150 children living in one orphanage alone in Brasov (aged three and under). About 10 to 15 children share a single room. There is not enough staff or supplies (each child is only allowed 3 diapers a day). To see the children in their beds, where they spend most of their time, reminds you of a prison. The children long to be held, touched, and played with, which shows how much love is missing.

We spent most afternoons in this orphanage to give as much love as possible to these children. It's heart breaking when you have to go and leave the crying children in their loneliness. You wish you could take them all with you.

Due to the sad situation these children are in, I think it is very good what Jan wants to do with her project – to give at least some children a home. **That is what I want to support and that is why I came back to spend the month of September with her. I am now helping to build "Casa Mea" – "My Home."**

(Lars is a 24 year old electrician who is a great handyman. We really appreciate his help!)

### **YOU CAN HELP**

Our current needs include:

1. \$250 a month to support Julia, our first abandoned baby.
2. \$50,000 to complete the structural renovations to the house in Prejmer.
3. \$6,000 for central heating at the house in Prejmer.
4. \$5,000 for thermopane windows and doors at the house in Prejmer.

### **CONTACT US**

If you would like more information or assistance with a particular gift, please contact us at Casa Mea.

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**THANK YOU**

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# HAPPY HOLIDAYS



*FROM ALL OF US AT CASA MEA  
TO ALL OF YOU*

*Thanks to your generosity throughout the year our little abandoned Julia is now in a loving home rather than an orphanage. We ask you during this special season of giving to please help us provide a loving home to more abandoned babies.*

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