

Extending a Vision of Hope Through Hands-On Christian Love

Living Letters

In Our Hearts by Jacci Knight

But the only letter of recommendation we need is you yourselves! Your lives are a letter written in our hearts, and everyone can read it and recognize our good work among you. Clearly, you are a letter from Christ prepared by us. It is written not with pen and ink, but with the Spirit of the living God. It is carved not on stone, but on human hearts.

-- 2nd Corinthians 3: 2-3 (New Living Translation)



Mircea Litean, now 12 years old, came to the House of Hope when he was only 3. One of our first four children, his blonde hair and blue eyes made him stand out from the other three brown-headed beauties. Among his many talents were yelling, eating, and pronouncing only the last syllable of any word.

My favorite memory of Mircea goes all the way back to Christmas of 1999. It was a morning full of firsts: the first Christmas at the House of Hope, the first tree (with presents underneath) our children had ever seen, and the first time I got to share the Christmas cookie-decorating tradition passed down by my mom. (It's more of a deeply held Christmas-cookie conviction, really.)

I had been given a four-piece wooden nativity scene that I set up in front of our tree, and as we gathered around I asked Mama Cati if she would tell the Christmas story. When she got to the part where Jesus was born, she pointed out that Christmas is really Jesus' birthday. Right then, Mircea jumped up and launched—solo—into the chorus of the Happy Birthday song. Cati and I looked at each other, stifled our laughter, and joined in. The rest of the group followed and we all serenaded the infant Savior and wished him "many happy years" in Romanian.

Certainly our greatest challenge with Mircea arose when we realized he had a very lazy eye. We started by taking him to a Romanian doctor, who prescribed one box of eye patches and glasses. When we went back for a follow-up, he declared there was nothing else he could do. Knowing that couldn't possibly be right, I started researching the option of taking him to Hungary, Romania's slightly advanced neighbor. Thus began a regular journey across the border two to three times a year for treatment. Mircea wore those eye patches for four years, until he had corrective surgery the summer before he started first grade. He was a trooper! I remember those trips (which actually made him feel pretty special) very well. I would always bring a Hungarian friend to translate for me, and on the way out we would teach Mircea a couple polite, Hungarian one-liners to impress the doctor. (And he always did.) By the time we reached passport control on our way home, he would be sound asleep in the backseat.



Mircea, pictured here around 4 years of age with his eye patch. Quite the little guy, eh?



Twelve years-old and as handsome as ever!

What I once loved about Mircea were his chubby little hands, and the way he would tilt his face down and look over his glasses, instead of through them. What I love about Mircea now is his compassion. He's gone from "rough and tumble" to well... rough and tumble, and gentle and compassionate. Recently our organization has been planning a trip that requires passports for all the children. A few girls have not been able to get their passports because we can't find their biological parents. When Mircea heard that Simona, one of his "sisters" did not have a passport, he suggested they all go to work and put their money together so that they could buy Simona's passport. "We can't leave without Simona," he said.

I asked his parents, Roni and Rodi, what they admire most about Mircea. They shared about a recent Bible-knowledge contest at church. They were a little nervous and not sure how well prepared he was. One of the questions was "Where is Jesus now?" The children responded "in Heaven" and "in Bethlehem," but Mircea shouted out "in our hearts!" In a rare moment of charisma in this conservative, Baptist church, the whole congregation began to applaud. (I'm telling you, this kid has a way of stealing the show!) This is Mircea—completely caught up in everything that he does—a child with a heart of gold, and Jesus living inside.

My time spent with Mircea taught me a lot. Patience, for one, after all we are talking about a little boy here; frogs, snails, puppy-dog tails and all. But I realized on those trips out to Hungary how special he was. Although he was the rambunctious one in the group, he was such a good boy. He was obedient and polite, and he won the heart of every Hungarian doctor and translator we crossed paths with. I looked forward to those times with him and he became more precious to me after each one.

Thank you for the investment you've made in the life of Mircea.





An Update from Walter Williams

April is here, with new life, as Spring explodes with a most glorious showcase of blossoms and brilliant green all around. It also brings encouragement to me as I return from spending the winter in Colorado—my first in three years. I continue to share with family & friends the Global Hope mission, stories of my relationships with the children, and with the people of Romania. The Global Hope kids are so blessed, and getting along fine. Our challenges grow as do the kids, but the cost of living here is one issue that grows at a alarming pace, and we must find ways to keep up. Romania is experiencing so many changes—positive and negative—with the EU influence. To me the city is becoming a consumer haven, and the growth and increasing costs (mainly utilities, land and rental prices, and food) continue to leave those with less even further behind.

Let me see if I can explain the long-term vision: The European Union pumps billions of Euro into this system, i.e. needed road improvements, infrastructure, new business opportunities, etc. As they do, the cost of living rises. Eventually, salaries will balance out to accommodate the increased costs, but it could take years for the economy to stabilize—and how long can some wait? This is a pressing issue. Global Hope is just one of many private children homes struggling to maintain operations.



Simon Roman, 8, works alongside Walter to help finish up a summer project.

Sometimes it is hard to bring rational thought into all that overwhelms. In this day of Internet, cell phones and cable TV, we are not fooled by anything—or are we? We want the facts—the bottom line. The facts are that some 70 thousand children are still abandoned in Romania, and that this issue continues to be hidden or covered up to look better on paper.

"Official" reports hardly describe the light, or the darkness, that exists in the eyes of so many children in the streets, or that gets lost in transition in some state-run facility. They don't come close describing what it is like, day to day, for these children! That can only be known through building relationships, and a choice to participate. So what a blessing it is to occasionally see the system work! To see children being placed in foster care and privately funded homes like Global Hope! This is when God shows us His fruit, and lives really do change when a child is given the gift of growing up in a loving family environment.

I want to open a few opportunities for Global Hope supporters to fund special projects; projects that promote self-sustaining, traditionally Romanian efforts that include the children. For example, working in gardens is something Romanians have always done to help keep food costs down. And as the families work together, they find many other blessings of satisfaction. Here are a few opportunities to give:

♥ Gabi & Dorel (house parents) have asked for help in buying baby turkeys (chicks) and the money needed to feed and care for them. They did this last year, with their own money, and have filled their freezer with meat. They've also begun to prepare a patch of land for carrots and other vegetables this spring. They estimate the start up costs for their home-grown projects to be around \$600.

♥ Roni and Rodica Stepan, house parents from Casa Ana, are both motivated to continue their education. Roni is now a certified Social Assistant, and after he completes this year's credits, would like to return for his Masters degree. Rodica, as well, would like to achieve her Master's in primary and secondary education. The costs are very high for them, around \$1,600 per year. They would be blessed with any amount given towards their future education, and thus the kids benefit also.

♥ House parents Visu & Ane Minzat live in our oldest house. This summer we hope to raise funds for repairs to the foundation. Most homes built 30 years ago or more did not insulate well, and often not at all. Moisture is rising from the ground up through the walls of the house. In short this creates a slow decay of the old brick and mold finds it's way inside, leading to potential health issues for the kids. The minimum estimate is around \$4000 to pump insulation in the foundation and replace interior walls where needed.

Please consider and pray about some specific ways you can support the mission that God has blessed Global Hope to be a part of. Thank you to all our faithful supporters who continue to give in so many wonderful ways.

Please inquire with any questions about these projects and more! E-mail me at tileguy@mac.com

Walter Williams, full-time Global Hope missionary, has been serving in Romania since 2004.





Together, We Can Make This World a Better Place

The Heart's Cry of a Romanian House Dad
by Raul Stepan (Translated by Jacqui Knight)

Children are children because they have parents. Some are told, even after they are grown, "You may be taller, but you're still my baby!" Yet for others, their parents left long before they could even say, "ma-ma" or "da-da." They, too, remain "babies," or children at heart; abandoned, orphaned and institutionalized.

Child abandonment, a grave social phenomenon, is above all things a painful story; a destiny marked by the lack of a father and mother's love. "Learn to be lonely," they tell you. At first, the answer might appear to be an institution, or an orphanage. However this answer doesn't meet individual needs and aspirations, but instead leads to the loss of a child's individuality altogether. And this is where we must intervene.

Through our work, and your support, we have assumed the role of helping children in their physical, emotional and spiritual growth. Of course, with or without our help, these children will grow up and leave home. But preparing them for that day is a responsibility that we all share. By reaching out to abandoned children you are not only helping them, but you are making a difference in the world you live in.

Family-model homes are the dream of many foreign, non-profit ministries in Romania. Unfortunately, not all of them have received the same blessings we (at Global Hope) rejoice in, nor did they have the support of the local authorities that govern the abandoned children in our country. Most did not think it was important to collaborate and partner with these authorities, nor did they have any desire to. But in Romania, just like everywhere else, so much depends on people, networks, and partnerships. (As a result, many efforts like that of Global Hope by other foreign ministries have failed.)

Starting this year (2008), a new effort is being made by many caretakers in our community to align ourselves with new organizational and administrative plans set forth by the Child Protection agency in Romania. It's time to join forces to find a solution; to construct a better world for the children we care for, raise and educate! We all have worries and hardships; and we all have our own dreams and goals, shaped by the whims of this world and our own experiences in life. The answer is hard work, and taking responsibility—all of us. Together! For the children! These children are no different than we are—only their problems



Paula, who lives at Casa Anei, and Cristina from the House of Hope.

are different. All children desire the same things: to have a family, to be understood, and to dream of a better future.

What is stopping us? The same things that always have: fear of change, envy, selfishness and opportunism, the reluctance to call things as we see them—as really they are. Our desire for personal and collective comfort keeps all of us from getting involved in the ways God has called us to. It's time to get past these things. It's time to come together and overcome whatever is holding us back! It's not too late. Our goal is the same: good things for our children and their futures.

Raul Stepan, a.k.a. "Tata Roni" and his wife, Rodi, have been serving Global Hope as house parents since 2001. They have 10 children.

A Note from Oana

Translated by Jacqui Knight

In previous newsletters, our house dad, Roni, has shared with you about their nightly gathering to read the Bible as a family. He is very proud to announce that his daughter, Oana, 16, has decided to get baptized this month. Here is a short testimony from Oana:

I'm happy to be part of a family that seeks God, and that takes time to read the Bible together. This year I studied Acts, and 1st and 2nd

Corinthians. Although I have a Bible study with other teens at my church, it's good for me to read it with my family. I learn new things because after we finish reading we go back through the text and "analyze" it. When I need help, they address the things I don't understand. I learned a lot from the Corinthians about how I ought to act,



Oana, from Casa Anei, will be baptized this Spring.

show love to those around me, and share the Gospel with them. I also learned about marriage, and the reward I will receive if I live according to His Word. In Acts, I especially like the story of Paul and his passion for the gospel and for Jesus Christ. I know these things will help me in my life, and it is a blessing to have someone to explain them to me, and to help me grow. I am going to be baptized, and Mama (and Doina!) are answering the questions that I still have. Through our time studying the Bible together, I gain understanding and learn how to live life for Christ.



Looking for a new sound and meaningful message to add to your playlist?

Jeff Caylor, musician and songwriter from Colorado Springs, offers a snapshot of the human heart in his debut album, *Okay*. For every album sold at jeffcaylor.com, Jeff will donate 10% to Global Hope! Go to jeffcaylor.com/heart to order your copy of *Okay*. And while you're there, drop Jeff a line to say "thank you!"



"...the album dips its toe into several genre pools to complement the subject matter of Caylor's thoughtful, contemporary lyrics." ~ CCM Magazine

"...this debut, if you'll forgive the word play, far surpasses its title in every way. 5 Stars/ 5th Best CD of 2007 ~ ChristianityToday.com

Don't forget to let your friends know about this special opportunity! www.jeffcaylor.com/heart



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CUSTOMERS WANTED

Lawn-Mower Fundraiser

2nd Annual

HELP WANTED

Wash & Tune Up

Bring your lawnmower in for a complete wash and tune up! We'll be doing oil changes, blade sharpening, spark plug replacement, and power washing.

Suggested donation is \$35, or a \$50 donation for mower pick-up and delivery!

Saturdays

April 12, 19th & 26th
8 am - 4 pm

Family In Christ Church
on the west side of Sheridan
just north of 112th
Westminster, CO

For more information contact Ike Elliott at 720-227-0230

Volunteers Needed

We still need volunteers to help us maintain the mowers, do in-processing and out-processing, and collect payments.

And don't forget to tell your friends about this easy opportunity to get their mowers revved up for Spring!

Mission Trip 2008!

Each of you has been blessed with one of God's many wonderful gifts to be used in the service of others. So use your gift well. 1 Peter 4:10

If you've never participated on a mission team, we urge you to consider it. If you've served before, we'd love to have you join us again. We have one confirmed opportunity for your consideration.

■ **Vacation Bible School Team (June 25-July 9)** - This team conducts vacation bible school for the younger members of the Global Hope family and other children from the local community. We anticipate that this team will also have opportunities to visit and serve in several other state facilities during their trip. You'll be blessed by the opportunity to minister to these youngsters.

Mission trips to Romania have proven to be powerful, enriching, and transformational experiences for those answering God's call to serve.

For more information about joining this team

please contact Will Johnston at wiljohnston@earthlink.net or contact Global Hope by phone at 720-887-4673.

Kenya Update!

Jacci Knight will travel to Kenya April 8-16, 2008, to visit the Hope for Orphans Rehabilitation and Education Center. Please pray for safety, wisdom, and discernment for this first step in a new relationship.