

## Progress in Romania

**S**ince the Board of Trustees of the Catholic Health Association (CHA) established the Fund for the Nameless Children of Romania in September 1990, many projects have been planned. Although progress on some projects has been slow due to a scarcity of building supplies and one project has been canceled in favor of an alternative plan, most projects will soon be improving the lives of the Romanian children they will touch.

Early this year David Sauer, CHA's vice president of administrative services, and Robert E. Fredricks, MD, chairperson of the fund, again traveled to Romania. They had previously visited there during the summer of 1990. This time they went to talk with Romanian government officials about the sponsorship of a center for handicapped children at a Bucharest hospital. Sauer and Fredricks found that, although the country is still in dire economic straits, other modest improvements have been made. Most notably, the people are more optimistic and hopeful that better days are ahead.

### CLUJ HOUSE

At the recommendation of Caritas Internationalis, in 1991 CHA purchased a house in Cluj, Romania, to house six Sisters of the Mother of God and 12 to 15 children (10 years of age and younger), all of whom are disabled. The sisters' goal is to help these children, who have been in state-run institutions and orphanages since birth, learn to function in small group settings. The sisters hope that the formal education and social training will allow the children to be reunited with their families.

The house is now in the process of being remodeled. The sisters have purchased all the building supplies and have signed contracts for completion of the renovation.

The sisters have begun to receive training from child-care experts in Poland and Germany on how to care for developmentally disabled children. Later this spring they will begin selecting

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children to live in the house. CHA is reserving funds to provide operating support for the house for up to five years. The association is also calling for U.S. sisters to volunteer to work with the Sisters of the Mother of God at CHA's home for children in Cluj, as well as to help reorganize and redevelop the congregational structure and organization.

### FUNDS REDIRECTED TO BUDIMEX HOSPITAL

CHA set aside funds in 1991 for a proposed multilevel care facility that would house 125 children and 25 staff in Bucharest. The project, which was to have been sponsored by CHA, Caritas Bucharest, Caritas Vienna, and the Romanian government, has been canceled. No funds were spent.

This money will be redirected to Budimex Children's Hospital, Bucharest, which has begun building a center for handicapped children designed for diagnostic services, inpatient and outpatient general medical and surgical care, rehabilitation, and social services for the families of handicapped children. The foundation and supports are in place for a two-story building; however, construction was forced to stop for lack of funds. That was when the Romanian government stepped in. Government officials believed it made more sense to fund the completion of this project rather than help sponsor the start-up of the facility proposed by CHA and Caritas Bucharest.

In exchange for CHA support, the hospital will provide services for children currently housed in other state-run institutions and orphanages and to establish ongoing training of medical staff by U.S. and Western European medical experts. Sauer and Fredricks found that Romanian health-care providers need updated training in areas such as basic medical and surgical techniques, child care (especially for handicapped children), and general medical practices. When an agreement is reached, CHA will authorize funding for the Budimex Children's Hospital project.

### DOWN'S SYNDROME DAY SCHOOL

CHA has also agreed to fund for three years the operating costs for Romania's first day school for children with Down's syndrome. The money will cover salaries for six teachers and a driver and fees for special consultants. The school can accommodate 16 children from 1 to 3 years of age.

In the past most Romanian children with Down's syndrome were abandoned or placed in state-run orphanages, receiving no developmental training. The school's goal is to integrate these children into an existing Romanian preschool. Children are now being chosen for the school. School officials have arranged to acquire equipment, and Caritas Internationalis has given the project coordinator the funds to attend a three-month training program in France.

Caritas Bucharest will pay the project coordinator's salary. The coordinator is a physician who will be the community liaison, identifying children in need of such a program and providing transportation and other community support services.

### MEMBERS' SUPPORT

CHA members have to date contributed \$2 million. Those who wish to do more to generate support from their local communities can obtain public service announcements (PSAs) from CHA. PSAs for television and for radio are available in 30- and 60-second formats. The television PSAs show photographs of the nameless children of Romania and describe the bleak conditions in which they exist. The announcements, which are just being introduced, were originally developed for the Catholic Medical Center of Brooklyn and Queens, Jamaica, NY. St. Joseph's Hospital, Savannah, GA, recently decided to use them also.

A videotape of ABC's program "20/20," which showed the plight of the nameless children of Romania, is also available from CHA. Members may wish to show this to local business and civic organizations as a way to raise funds for the children.

### CHA'S PLANS

CHA believes it will eventually need to fund a portion of the operating expenses for the Budimex Children's Hospital project beyond its initial support. The association also sees a need to provide funds for the training of medical and social-service personnel and nurses in up-to-date

*A Romanian boy recovering from hand surgery demonstrates his progress to orthopedic surgeon Alexandru Pasamosca, MD, and Rev. A. Cobzaru, director of Caritas Internationalis.*

methods of care. The Diocese of Bucharest is developing a modern school of nursing, a project complementary to the needs of the children and one CHA can endorse. CHA looks forward to the opening of the children's house in Cluj and the school for children with Down's syndrome, as well as the completion of the Budimex center for handicapped children. —Michelle Hey

*For information on how you may be able to assist the nameless children of Romania, or if you wish to obtain public service announcements, please write or call David Sauer at the Catholic Health Association, 4455 Woodson Road, St. Louis, MO 63134; 314-427-2500.*

