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“The Most Forgotten Children Deserve More Dignity”

BHF Grants \$100,000 to Hospice Casa Sperantei Romania

“Every Child Matters” became the name of a project the Blue Heron Foundation is supporting for a special reason: the most vulnerable of the vulnerable, children with serious, often incurable illness, are the most neglected. All too often, the assumption is that those children simply don't matter.

One of those children is Ionut. He was just a young boy when he contracted HIV, most likely through an improperly sterilized needle used during a hospital visit. He was not diagnosed with AIDS until age 9, and seven years later developed non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, which causes such severe pain he could barely sleep at night or tolerate clothing touching his skin. Now 18, Ionut was referred to a hospice run by the Every Child Matters Project. With his pain under control, he is able to play computer games, take short walks, and most importantly, enjoy time with his friends. Without help, his dramatic turn-around would not have been possible.

There are many children like Ionut. They are the reason why the Blue Heron Foundation is pleased to grant \$100,000 to the Hospice Casa Sperantei Romania (Hospice of Hope Romania) for the Every Child Matters project. In June 2007 when our members' votes were counted, the Every Child Matters Program was voted by our contributing members as the project they wanted this year's collective donations to support. Every Child Matters will be implemented in collaboration with “Hospice Casa Sperantei Romania,” located in Brasov, Romania, and dedicated to raising standards and providing equal care for Romanian children suffering from life-limiting or life-threatening illnesses. Terminally ill children represent some of the most neglected orphans in all of Romania.

Hospice Casa Sperantei is one of the oldest and most respected non-profits in Romania, and became one of two finalists among groups who had submitted proposals to Blue Heron this year. After careful consideration, BHF members chose them. Hospice Casa Sperantei Romania will also contribute \$157,000 to this project.

Over the years BHF has been approached for various programs for AIDS or other terminal illness, but the timing and the project never seemed ideal. In April of this year, BHF President Stefania Magidson met children in the Hospice of Hope Romania and saw what she had never seen before. “The breadth of experience and the complex programs of the Every Child Matters project gave real results.” The idea of collaborating seemed a practical one. “When we sat down to talk details, I realized that for \$100,000 plus their contribution,

Continued on Page 2...

The Most Forgotten Children Continued...

not only would we **help 130 terminally ill children directly**, but also **reach 2,000 school children receiving education on AIDS/HIV, and 230 hospital and state-care institution workers** who would eventually interact with thousands of kids.”

Along with medical care, practical assistance and education, Every Child Matters has a third, very ambitious goal. They aim to **lobby the Romanian government to increase resources for these children, and ultimately to enact a “Minimum Care Standards Guide” for seriously ill children.**

“In a developing nation, the standard of care is unfortunately comparable to what we do for an animal here,” says Blue Heron President Stefania Magidson. “When people are impoverished, they often don’t even receive pain medication, no matter how much agony they face every moment. The most forgotten children deserve more dignity.”

When the Every Child Matters Project came to her attention, she realized, “We could have a tremendous impact with \$100,000.” While the project is limited to the region of Brasov (one of Romania’s 41 regions), it has the potential to set an example for regions all over Romania. If lobbying efforts help to pass legislation, says Magidson, “We will have had a positive effect on a national level.”

A New Wing of Blue Heron Takes Flight in Romania



In January of 2008, a Blue Heron Foundation will open in Romania itself. The new foundation will be completely independent, but will open many new opportunities to improve our work. The money raised by Blue Heron in the U.S. will not go to the new foundation, unless U.S. members vote to support a specific program that will be run by the Romanian group.

Fundatia Blue Heron Romania (known as FBHR), will be monitored from here and overseen more closely with the help of our **Vice President, Mr. Mike Costache** who has been residing in

Romania for the past two years. As the Country Manager for Maserati Romania and Sales Consultant for Netjets, the Balkan Region, Mr. Costache has already secured a number of donating members, individuals as well as businesses.

Fundatia Blue Heron Romania will raise money somewhat differently. Due to the nature of the Romanian economy, we will work with individuals as well as giving programs in corporations operating in Romania. National tax codes allow Romanian taxpayers the right to redirect 2% of their taxes to an NGO; last year only 9% of them did. We have real potential to increase giving in Romania.

We have waited to start this program so that we can be sure the additional infrastructure will benefit, not take away from, the kids we support through our programs. With opportunities to speak directly to the public through the Romanian media, we are confident that FBHR will thrive on its own.

The BHRF has a slightly wider scope from the Blue Heron Foundation itself; it includes extremely poor children who are in danger of abandonment. By reaching out to support these at-risk kids, we can actually prevent them from becoming orphans, and becoming worn down by the institutional system.

Having organizations in the US and in Romania itself may greatly increase the amount of good Blue Heron can do. “I would love to be able to raise \$100,000 annually from Romania and to continue to support these kinds of programs,” says BHF President Stefania Magidson. And though currently Blue Heron has expanded its work to seven regions, “I have an even bigger vision to help all abandoned children from all 41 regions and Bucharest. It seems like a crazy dream, but I hope to inspire other giving groups. And of course we will continue to expand our outreach here.”

A Message from the President

Dear Blue Heron Members, Supporters and Volunteers,

Just one year after we announced that Blue Heron had “spread its wings,” we are thrilled to announce that our work will soon be flying higher than ever. We are preparing to help more children than ever before, by giving more resources directly to them, and securing new resources for the future.

We’ve achieved a major accomplishment by establishing a Blue Heron Foundation that will function in Romania itself. Now Blue Heron will literally have two wings – one in Romania and the other in Los Angeles. Together, we’ll fly even higher!

As well, we’ve continued monitoring 35 Blue Heron Scholarship recipients, abandoned youngsters who, thanks to you, are able to attend college; they have continued to grow and achieve thanks to your generosity and concern. Also we’ve started the Every Child Matters project, a program for terminally ill children. It’s an amazing project voted on by our contributing members, with the potential of improving the lives of thousands of terminally ill children.

You can read more about our busy, growing activities in the rest of the newsletter. But before you do, let me take this moment to thank each and every member and supporter of the Blue Heron Foundation. We couldn’t have done it without you – your continuing support means more every year.

Thank you!

Stefania Magidson

President



The Circle of Protection

One good thing inspires another. Three years ago, Blue Heron was inspired by the fundraising model set up by the **Everychild Foundation**. By creating a group of enthusiastic donors who commit a set and equal amount every year instead of events, this Los Angeles based organization raises funds for children. Administrative and financial resources are not sacrificed to organizing large events, and the expenses are kept to a minimum, going **directly** to the cause.

We quickly realized that cultivating personal relationships with people willing to give at least \$500 per year was the most effective way to carry out our mission. Blue Heron’s circle of committed members who donate annually at this threshold has proven to be a great success.

Now we’re helping to spread the good that a giving circle can do. Last year, Stefania Magidson worked with breastcancer.org founder Dr. Marisa Weiss and her staff in establishing **The breastcancer.org Southern California Giving Circle**. We are delighted to announce that, Basic Breast Health for Girls: helping our girls protect and cherish their breast health and support valuable dialogue among mothers and daughters was enthusiastically chosen as the first project to be funded by the Southern California Giving Circle.

Breastcancer.org is the world’s most visited online site for those in need of information at a difficult and often desperate time, reaching over seven million people worldwide every year. This website contains the most up-to-date, comprehensive healthcare information on the subject and it is completely free. We are proud to have encouraged this new fundraising model for this wonderful cause, and are thrilled to see that already a lot has been accomplished as a result.

Special Thanks

The goal of our foundation is to maximize the size of our annual grant by keeping our expenses as low as possible. This aim has been realized through the effort of many dedicated Blue Heron members, plus the generosity of the friends listed below:

**Monica Diaconescu
Christopher Kim
Simona Lederman
Stuart Timmons**

**Anastasia Beverly Hills
Consulate General of Romania, Los Angeles
CoraServ
CoreMedia Solutions
Greenberg Glusker
Gorelick & Uslaner, Certified
Public Accountants
Merchants Bank of California
Romanian American Professionals Network**

And

**Our tireless volunteers in Romania:
Cristian Balacescu
Ioan Calaică
Mike Costache**

What we've done: Monitoring Blue Heron's Projects

Blue Heron's projects are designed to meet the needs of the least powerful and support them in the most efficient way, a way that produces long term, positive and profound changes. We carefully monitor our expenses by signing detailed contracts with DGASPC, the National Child Protective Services and sending money in very small increments, as previous criteria is met and proof of accomplished goals is shown. Besides several volunteers who oversee and are directly involved with the programs in Romania, the foundation's president makes yearly trips to Romania, and has direct and regular contact with the children we help and the staff.

2003: The Loving Arms Program

Dan, a Romanian orphan adopted in the US said in a recent profile that his birthday, in March, was never celebrated during his first years in a Romanian institution. In his new home, he had birthday parties – cake and presents. “I thought they didn't have March in Romania,” he said, still bewildered over why his first few birthdays were ignored.



Blue Heron caregivers playing with toddlers at the Micul Print orphanage, Brasov, 2003.

According to recent research, babies like Dan who are not held develop attachment disorder as well as serious learning disabilities. To address this need, we started the “Loving Arms” program by hiring eight full-time qualified caregivers to hold and cuddle babies at the Micul Print orphanage in Brasov, where 200 children under 3 years of age had only one adult for every 10 children. BHF covered the monthly salary of the caregiver (\$160) and in the second year we were left with four full-time caregivers. This program cost \$18,360.

We ended the program in 2005 because, as part of its reform program, Romania has generated enough funds to establish small family homes with three caretakers per shift. We are proud we did the right thing at the right time. Now it is time to direct our resources where they are better used. We are very happy that other groups are continuing this work, such as the Atlas Family Foundation, which funds what it so wisely calls “high-impact early childhood intervention and education programs.”

2004: The Rupea Playground Project



Children playing at the Rupea Playground on inauguration day, Rupea, 2004

A muddy field—that was all that dozens of children housed at the Rupea Placement Center in the Brasov region had to play on before Blue Heron became involved with the Child Protective Services (DGASPC) of Brasov. Our first major project was to design and underwrite a state-of-the-art playground and sports court there. Five contractors bid on the project, and the winning company completed the play facility for \$32,000. Since then, almost 100 abandoned children ages 4 to 18 have a place to play, run and laugh in the open air.



Five year olds at the Rupea Placement Center sharing a moment of joy during the inauguration of the Rupea Playground, 2004.

2005: Blue Heron Scholarship Program



Blue Heron Scholarship recipients, Suceava.



Blue Heron Scholarship recipients, Iasi.



Blue Heron Scholarship recipients, Brasov, Sibiu and Prahova.

2006: Blue Heron Scholarship Program in collaboration with Lift the Children (USA) and Children on the Edge (Romania)

We are proud to announce eight ongoing scholarships through our partnership with Lift the Children (USA) and Children on the Edge (Romania) in a program targeted to help older orphaned or abandoned children who are not in the state care system anymore, but are still young enough to acquire a university degree and attend school. Lift the Children is a US-based foundation that has for many years worked in close and productive partnership with Children on the Edge, (based in Romania). With their help, 8 additional students are being closely monitored

and detailed reports are submitted regularly to Blue Heron Foundation. Blue Heron is providing a grant to pay for food, rent, and tuition for eight promising students who might otherwise not be able to stay in college.



Blue Heron Scholarship recipients: a partnership with Lift the Children (USA) and Children on the Edge (Iasi).

The Blue Heron Foundation launched a college scholarship program to make sure that orphaned and abandoned children who were rescued during childhood were not abandoned during their crucial years as young adults. The Blue Heron Foundation has awarded 38 college scholarships since September 2005, in 7 out of Romania's 41 regions and Bucharest: Suceava, Iasi, Bacau, Cluj, Brasov, Sibiu and Prahova. Our scholarships total more than \$92,000.

It is hard for those of us in the U.S. to imagine the enormous obstacles these students face. More than half had been abandoned; some at birth, some as children under age ten. More than a third outlived both parents; in one case, even the adoptive parents were deceased. For most others, one parent was deceased and the surviving parent was unable to care for them, due to mental illness, alcoholism, or drug addiction. Often entire families of siblings have grown up in a state institution.

“Based on latest reports and research, the biggest problem institutionalized children in Romania face today is lack of life skills,” says Stefania Magidson, President of the Blue Heron Foundation. “The opportunity to attend college allows them to become economically self-sufficient as well as socially productive members of a society that needs to take advantage of all of its intelligence and creativity.”

That any of these 38 young men and women survived their early years of deprivation still aspiring to go to college is a miracle. By investing in their education, we have invested in adults who can break the cycle of abandonment and poverty.

2007: Every Child Matters

Blue Heron is partnering with an organization that will provide desperately needed support for Romania's most neglected orphans – those with life-threatening illnesses. (See full article on the front page).

About the Blue Heron Scholarships



Scholarship recipients' obligations:

- Regular attendance.
- Successful completion of their courses.
- Monthly report of their performance mailed to Blue Heron Foundation and assigned mentor.
- Five hours of weekly volunteer work.

What do Blue Heron Scholarship recipients receive?

- \$65/month per student pocket money stipend.
- Annual tuition up to \$600 per year.
- If tuition is waived due to outstanding grades, the students qualify for a internationally recognized computer, English or driving courses up to \$400/year/student.
- A mentor assigned by the Blue Heron Foundation.

Mentor List

A heartfelt thanks to Blue Heron Scholarship recipients' mentors:

- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|
| Carmen Andrei | Renata Maldur |
| Mihaela Blanariu | Silvia Martis |
| Diana Cergan | Anca Marza |
| Cristina Conchi | Ramona Maxwell |
| Mariana Chim | Emil Minciu |
| Andrei Costache | Camelia Minoiu |
| Alexandru Ghita | Cristiana Pasca |
| Cleopatra Ilie | Olivian Pitis |
| Aura Imbarus | Sabina Rascol |
| Valentina Ionescu | Daniela Suteu |
| Simona Lederman | Bogdana Voicu |
| Cristian Lisov | |

Locations of the Blue Heron Scholarship Program



Blue Heron Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit charity organized and operated by volunteers both in the U.S. and in Romania. The foundation provides playgrounds, caregivers, and scholarships to abandoned children in Romania.

100% of your donation goes directly to projects benefiting the children.

Frequent Questions

It has been 17 years since the suffering faces of warehoused Romanian orphans made international headlines in 1990. “Isn’t that crisis over?” some ask us. Sadly, it is not. Here are some answers to the questions we hear most often:

Is there still a significant problem with orphans in Romania?

Yes. Though it is improving, as of 31 March 2006, there were still 77,866 children living in institutions or in family-type care, as compared to 100,000 children living in public residential care institutions in the early 1990s. The largest inflow of children into the protection system results from abandonment in maternity and pediatric hospitals.

Is there still a problem with orphaned infants and children in Romania?

In 2006, Romania institutionalized 31,000 children, according to the New York Times, which speculates, “the real figure may be higher.” Indeed, at least as many children are now placed in foster care. (According to UNICEF, the total number exceeds 81,000.) And because of a moratorium on international adoptions, thousands are still institutionalized, unable to find loving families in Romania or abroad.

Have there been improvements in Romania’s care of orphans?

While policies to abolish the warehouse-style institutions have been implemented, they are absolutely dependent on partnerships with private charities, both in Romania and abroad, making Blue Heron’s work more important than ever.

What developments has the Romanian government been taking to improve the welfare of children there?

Working with UNICEF (United Nations – Children’s Emergency Fund) the Romanian government has implemented an initiative for evaluation and accreditation of maternity hospitals. Other initiatives address basic nutritional deficiencies, including use of iodized salt and flour fortified with iron and folic acid.

Is HIV a big problem with young people in Romania?

According to a recent report, more than 7,000 Romanian children and teenagers who are infected with HIV receive no medical care for their condition. Many of these kids do not attend school out of fear of discrimination. Most of these children were infected in hospital settings by blood transfusion or through improperly sterilized needles.

Is the government doing anything to address this?

The government has faced this crisis by improving blood screening and sterilization standards in hospitals, and has also implemented a “harm reduction” program specifically geared to young Romanians with HIV/AIDS. However, treatment and social integration programs are new, and in partnership with NGOs.

What are other concerns about Romanian children?

One of the saddest is the ongoing problem of child sexual trafficking. In a recent report (2003), 1,431 unaccompanied children were repatriated to Romania of which 351 (25%) acknowledged having been trafficked, while the status of the remaining 75% continues to be unclear. The main reasons for trafficking continue to be the lure of western countries, the opportunity to contribute to the family income, and often to escape a hostile home environment. For Romanian children, enormous work remains to be done.

How long will the need last?

We don’t know, but we do know that UNICEF will end its current level of support in 2009 – hardly more than one year away. As the victims of Romania’s most painful era in recent history continue to grow, their needs will change. We want them to know they won’t be forgotten.

Sources: “UNICEF Romania, Annual Report 2006” United Nations; “Life Doesn’t Wait’: Romania’s Failure to Protect and Support Children and Youth Living with HIV,” Human Rights Watch, 2006.

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The Blue Heron Foundation is committed to improving the quality of life of abandoned Romanian children and providing them with greater access to life's opportunities.

How Can I help?

- Become a member by contributing \$500 or more annually: please fill out the included envelope.
- Become a contributor; donations of any size are welcome. Please fill out the included envelope.
- Become a mentor to our Blue Heron Scholarship recipients: by reading monthly reports from an as signed student and responding to them, giving support and guidance.
- Support with services: your talents with website and graphic design, writing, printing, non-profit consulting or any other suggestions of services or product donations that would help our organization further its mission, are greatly appreciated.
- Host a salon by inviting potential new members. Please contact us at 310.275.2217 for further details.

Although annual membership contributions are not due until April 2008, we welcome your donation before the holidays.

Donations made before the end of this year are tax-deductible for 2007!