

# C&D<sup>ro</sup>

Autumn2022

M A G A Z I N E



To cure, sometimes; To help, often; To comfort, always



# A Word from the President of Children in Distress Romania

**T**his autumn has been full of new beginnings. CiD opened Casa Maria, our new hospice for the children in our care in Bucharest. We celebrated Casa Maria's opening with a festive reception at the residence of the British Ambassador to Romania. We have a new U.K. Board of Trustees. We have established HiKHeR, a non-profit in Germany, and we are working on establishing a non-profit in the United States. Property has been purchased and architectural plans drawn for CiD's Pineview Retreat Lodge, our proposed integrative centre for children with special needs in the mountains of Zarnesti. It has been a very busy year!!

So much has been accomplished over the past 32 years since Children in Distress was established by Rev Dr John Walmsley, a Church of England priest. Since then, CID has provided hospice care to over 300 children, and served approximately 20,000 children and young adults through our various programs. I have been with CID for 22 years, and the last few years have been particularly challenging. COVID required quick thinking and action for over two years. There were a few times we had to quarantine some children and staff.

Other financial burdens in the last few years have been a challenge, as CID has complied with new Romanian governmental standards advised by the European Union for our hospices. Casa Maria was purchased and renovated in order to provide the government-required "family-style" care. While dealing with protecting children and staff from COVID, the pandemic resulted in a significant decrease in financial giving. Sadly, several staff were required to

be made redundant. Things over the last few years have been tight but we have managed. Thankfully, that all is in the past. We made it through. Now we look toward the future. (There is more information about Casa Maria in this Magazine, as well as articles related to HiKHeR, the new German non-profit, our efforts to establish a non-profit in the U.S., and our proposed integrative centre for children with special needs, Pineview Retreat Lodge).

Earlier this year, our sister charity in the U.K., and a major source of our funding, brought on a new team Trustees to help CiD through our new beginnings. We are grateful for the departing members. They served faithfully for many years, sometimes decades, and we are grateful for their commitment and wisdom. We would not be where we are today without their steadfast support.

I am excited to work with the new Board, and the new co-chairs Anne-Marie Martin and Simon Errington. We are happy that one Trustee from the former Board stayed on, the Rev June Hurn. Rev June has dedicated herself to CID for almost 30 years. She is an inspiration of tenacity, strength and dedication.

There is a lot happening. CID's future is bright and exciting. We know that CID would not be the strong organisation it is without your support. Staff, volunteers, those who run relays for us, financial contributors - you support CiD in so many ways. We would not have the new beginnings that we are launching without you. With you, our mission always has been, and continues to be - to cure sometimes; to help often; to comfort, always.

Thank you for continuing to journey with us.

**Valentina Zaharia Smith**  
President and General  
Director, CiD Romania



# CASA MARIA



## Grand Opening of Casa Maria

Our children moved to Casa Maria on September 6, 2022. This was a huge undertaking for all the staff of St Margaret's. Joining the effort were Revs Frauke and Lutz Ackermann, two clergy supporters who travelled from Germany to Bucharest to assist with the Casa Maria opening events.



On September 8, Children in Distress dedicated Casa Maria, our new hospice developed in accordance with E.U. guidelines. The fundamental difference with Casa Maria is that it provides “family-type” care rather than “residential” care. Casa Maria has the atmosphere of a home rather than the more institutional setting of St Margaret's Hospice. Casa Maria will continue to offer the care found at St Margaret's: permanent supervision, personal care, medical assistance, daily nutrition, physical rehabilitation, and recreational and cultural activities.

The kids are so excited to be in their new home. They love it. They are so proud to show it to visitors.

At the dedication and blessing of Casa Maria, the opening ribbon was cut by HRH Princess Maria of Romania and Royal Patron of Children in Distress.







Casa Maria was dedicated and blessed by three Romanian Orthodox clergy, Fr Ioan Bondar and two assistants. As a sign of Orthodox and Anglican relations, Rev Steven Smith, an Anglican priest and CiD's Mission Ambassador, led the gathering in the Lord's Prayer.

Other clergy present were Anglican priests Nevsky Everett (Bucharest), Lutz Ackermann (Germany), June Hurn (England), Frauke Ackermann (Germany), and Orthodox priest Fr Florian Daniel.

Casa Maria is named in honour of Maria, the mother of Jesus. In addition to Princess Maria of Romania, CiD was blessed to have other Marias at the dedication: Maria Popa, who serves on the Board of Trustees, Romania, and Maria Jurj and Maria Gheorghiadu, CiD student volunteers from Bucharest University's Faculty of Medicine. Probably others too, since Maria is a popular name in Romania.

Other guests at the dedication were Simon Errington (England), co-chair of the UK Board of Trustees, and his wife Jill; Patricia Shaw (Germany), vice



president of HiKHeR; Christian Burt (Bucharest) ARCO (Romania Without Orphans Alliance); several student volunteers from the University's Faculty of Medicine; and local government officials.



Following the ribbon cutting, dedication and blessing, the children and gathered crowd enjoyed cake and other treats.





# Casa Maria Celebratory Reception

On the evening of the dedication and blessing, a reception was held in the garden of the residence of the British Ambassador to Romania, His Excellency Andrew Noble, and Ms Helen Noble. The assembled were greeted with the classic English cocktail, Pym's Punch, and other drinks and canapes.



Helen Noble gave opening remarks. Speeches followed from HRH Princess Maria of Romania, Valentina Zaharia Smith, UK Trustee Board co-chair Simon Errington, and Rev Frauke Ackermann, president of HiKHeR. Rev Frauke and HiKHeR vice-president Patricia Shaw presented CiD with a €2,000 check to celebrate the opening of Casa Maria.

Following the speeches singer Dalma Kovacs and her band entertained the guests as more canapes and drinks circulated. Dalma is a very talented singer, and CiD is lucky to have her as a Trustee of CiD's Romanian Board.

During Dalma's singing, embassy personnel announced that Queen Elizabeth II had passed away. In acknowledgment of her passing, the reception ended and the guests quietly exited.





## The Children Adapt to Casa Maria

Casa Maria is equipped as a family house, where the children can fully feel the warmth of a home and the affection of a family. It was a testament to the hard labours and vision of staff that the children so easily and quickly adapted to their new home.

There is a park with a playground nearby. From the first days, the children of the neighbourhood were curious to meet our children and to play with them. They have had good times together, in spite of the fact that they barely knew each other. It was nice to be so warmly welcomed by the neighbourhood children.



The good morning circle and our games fit nicely into Casa Maria's new living room. There is a separate area for a study table and cupboards full of educational materials. The new arrangement of the physical therapy room fascinates the children. Outside, there is lots of room for fun and games in the yard, and a fireplace for grilling.



Five children at Casa Maria are able to attend school, and they began the school year in their new home. Cristina, Andrei, Bubu, Stefan, and Cristiana resumed their home schooling with their teacher, Ms Daniela. The kids were very excited to show her their new home. After the presentation of the house, the little ones were very eager to show Ms Daniela the new things they learned during summer vacation. The children and teacher then worked on educational sheets, practiced numbers and letters, and played educational games. Ms Daniela congratulated the kids for their progress over the summer and encouraged them to continue with their effort and love of learning.



Another volunteer Emilia Cocos visits Casa Maria on a regular basis to help with learning activities.

And the children had a birthday celebration for School of Medicine volunteer Maria, who was given a bouquet as a birthday present.







## Dog Therapy at Casa Maria

The specialists from Club of Utility Dogs have continued, together with our specialists, their animal therapy program at Casa Maria. Most recently, Andrei, Bubu, Cristiana, Stefan and Cristina have learned to walk puppies. They also learned about the care of puppies, including the uses of a collar, leash, bowl, and brush. They also have developed their vocabulary with new words, such as sit, step, and lie down. With each walk made with the puppies, the children enjoyed new moments of interaction with their new neighbours.

This therapy helps the children develop living skills, especially in cognitive behaviour, where the therapists emphasize emotional self-regulation through interaction with calm, friendly dogs. In turn, friendship with a dog facilitates the acquisition of relationship skills with others. Even for those children who cannot communicate, being with dog friends brings a lot of joy.



Stefan makes the greatest effort to focus on the responsibility of walking a puppy. Andrei shows a lot of empathy and care for his puppy; he makes certain that he and his puppy are safe on the street. With the help of the puppy Betti, Cristina bravely managed to overcome her fear of dogs in the neighbourhood who bark as we pass their fenced yards. Bubu managed to formulate many more sentences through talking to the puppies. He is even able to articulate how much he likes the experience of the puppies. Although quite timid with the puppies, Cristiana manages to feel the control and balance she needs for taking a puppy on a walk.

We thank the specialists from Club of Utility Dogs (from Animal Therapy and Assisted Activities Bucharest), for continuing this beneficial collaboration. Their work helps these children live a fuller life.





# Janson-Roberts Scholarships

For the past three years, Children in Distress has awarded scholarships to young students who demonstrate promise in the Arges County school system. The scholarship programme is named in honour of Dr Michael Janson and Varuni Roberts, the donors of a generous legacy which funds the programme. Each year, 10 students in year nine of school are awarded €500 each. Superior school performance and family economic situation are the two main criterion for a scholarship award. The aim is to support gifted students from rural, poor areas of the County, so that these promising young people have an incentive to continue to high school. The scholarship may be used in any way the student chooses. Most recipients use the money to buy a laptop, which is a given to most students in the West but beyond the finances of many students in Arges County.

It is our experience that young people improve their school performance in order to compete for the scholarship. To date, the programme has successfully positively impacted the lives of 30 students. The scholarship awardees for 2022 will be announced near Christmas.

We hope that this initiative will be supported by local and foreign sponsors. To discuss a donation to the scholarship fund, please contact Valentina Zaharia Smith, [vali@cid.org.ro](mailto:vali@cid.org.ro).

## Surprise School Gifts at St. Christopher's Centre

St. Christopher's Centre is well known in the Curtea de Arges community. During the summer vulnerable children from Curtea de Arges and surroundings were involved in St. Christopher's activities and programs, all aimed at inspiring young people to stay in school despite economic and family pressures to abandon school and start working. This summer, St Christopher's offered arts & crafts, tutoring in reading and maths, playground fun, and a hearty lunch, all in the hope of encouraging further educational and social development.

CiD realises that one of the main reasons for students to drop out is that they lack financial means in the family. For many, they cannot comprehend a future beyond the poverty in which they were raised. This Autumn CiD asked the community to contribute school supplies and clothing for our young people. Our efforts were rewarded by many good-hearted people who answered our call. When the children arrived at St. Christopher's at the start of the new school year, they had a great surprise to find school supplies and clothes to keep them warm through the winter.

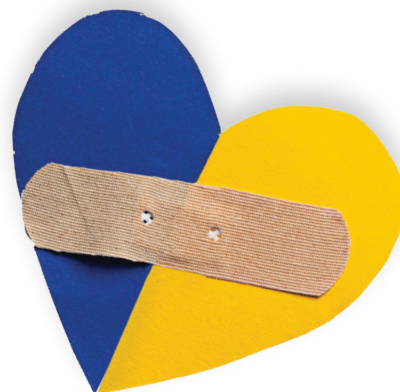
For the children it was a joy to receive these gifts. For their families, it was a relief that they could, at least partially, overcome the financial worries and pressure related to the start of every new school year.

The children of St. Christopher's are so grateful for the nice surprise made with great generosity by people who care for the community and understand the importance of maintaining a child's social and mental health.





# CiD's Continued Assistance for Ukrainian Evacuees



and requests us to help to fill up their stores. The most recent request, filled in mid-October, was for large quantities of flour, sugar and oil. We purchased these items in bulk at a discount market and then delivered them to Romexpo. Several of our high school volunteers helped unload and stack the supplies in the market area of the convention centre.

CiD will continue this work at Romexpo for as long as there is the need. Thank you to those who generously donated to our Ukrainian appeal last winter. Your generosity directly provides food for struggling mothers and their children.



Children in Distress continues to support evacuees from Ukraine who are in Romania. Our current support is food donations to the evacuee centre at Romexpo, the Bucharest Convention Centre. At Romexpo, evacuees shop for all sorts of items, from food to clothing, free of charge. There is also overnight accommodation and access to services for processing refugee papers. Most of the patrons are mothers and children. We are in close contact with Cosmina Simean, the General Director for Social Assistance of Bucharest. Ms Simean contacts CiD when supplies run low

## Christmas Gifts from the Heart



Christmas Gifts from the Heart is a way for you to bless the Christmas of a needy child or senior in Romania. Father Christmas delivers shoe boxes filled with your gifts in the weeks before Christmas to a number of Orthodox-run centres for rural and city children in need, refugee centres (refugees mostly from Afghanistan, Syria, and Iraq), and senior homes. This year, Father Christmas also will gift boxes to Ukrainian children at the Romexpo evacuee centre.

Ordering gifts is easy. Please go to our website [www.cid.org.ro](http://www.cid.org.ro), and click "Shop" on the home page. It will take you to the Gifts from the Heart page. There you order the items you wish to give. We purchase them in Romania, pack them in a shoe box and wrap the box in Christmas paper. For the children you may order a variety of items, from hats and mittens, to toys or drawing supplies. For their families you can donate towards a Christmas dinner. Last year Father Christmas gave 100 bags of essential foods to the families of St Christopher's children for their families' Christmas dinner.

For the seniors you may order gifts such as mittens and hats, pajamas, or body products.

This is always a highlight of the year for the children and seniors. They look forward to Father Christmas's visit and the gifts he brings. We appreciate your support in this effort to bring some Christmas cheer to those who may not receive much at Christmas. It is good for them to know that someone cares for them in the holiday season. Thank you for your support!







**H**ere comes some news from HiKHeR, which stands for Hilfe für benachteiligte Kinder und Heranwachsende in Rumänien! (Help for Distressed Children and Young People in Romania). This is the non-profit ("Verein") that was established earlier this year by CiD supporters in Germany.

### **Guten Tag, liebe Freunde....**

We started our fundraising work in Germany this year by literally putting our feet where our hearts are. In the summer members of the Verein started a 10,000+ step challenge, committing to walk at least 10,000 steps each day for five weeks. Old and young joined in the challenge, and we had many friends and family members sponsoring us. We raised more than €1,500 for Children in Distress!

Our next fundraiser action was to register for a sponsorship program of one of the big discounter markets in Germany. The grocery chain promises three charitable donations at each of their branches. Many people helped us to collect the vouchers needed to support the Verein's application. We won second prize!! This gave us another €1,000 for CiD.

In September members of the Verein were very happy to help with moving some children into their new home, Casa Maria. Of course, the opening ceremony for the house with HRH Princess Maria of Romania followed by a house blessing was a special event for us. At the reception hosted by the British Embassy in Bucharest we had some time to talk to current and new board members from the U.K. And we are convinced: Together we can do it! The Verein presented CiD with a €2,000 donation for Casa Maria on that evening. We are committed to raise money for the further support of Casa Maria.

Watch for our next activities: There will be an online Quiz Night coming up soon! This is always fun, and a good opportunity to meet people and get to know each other!

As Christmas is fast approaching, we ask that you consider giving gifts to a needy child or a poor family in Romania this Christmas! Your gift from the heart will make all the difference for their holydays. To help a child, family or senior, please go to [www.cid.org.ro](http://www.cid.org.ro). On the home page click "Shop" and you will be taken to see the items you may donate. The items you purchase will be used to fill a Christmas shoe box with gifts for a child or senior or food for a child's family. Your gift can truly provide a joyous Christmas for someone. You will show someone who may feel abandoned that someone cares!

We are happy to be part of the CiD supporter family and send greetings to our friends all over the world from good old Germany.

**Frauke, Trish, Yvonne and Kaye**  
(Board of HiKHeR)

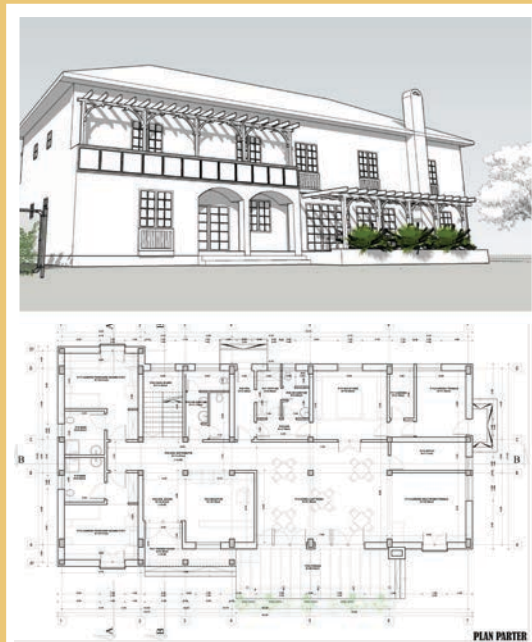




# Pineview Retreat Lodge

## A New Venture for Children with Special Needs

**F**or the past 30 years Children in Distress has gained broad and deep experience in caring for children with special needs. For hundreds of children, CiD has provided multiple thousands of hours of physiotherapy, speech therapy, art therapy, socialisation programmes, and psychological counselling. In this work, we realise that most children with special needs have little or no access to recreational and socialisation activities, such as playgrounds, camps, wandering excursions, and field trips. The fact is that in developing recreational activities for children, children with special needs are mostly ignored. This situation risks marginalisation and social isolation for children, and parents, if the children have parents or caregivers. To go somewhere to have fun, to have a “change of scenery”, to relax, is not an option.



Children in Distress aims to do something to redress this situation. Our vision is to build Pineview Retreat Lodge. The Lodge would be a complex which offers children with special needs time from their usual life, a chance for their social integration, innovative recreation, and therapy services. Parents and caregivers also would have a time to rest and relax, and learn new techniques for child-rearing in difficult circumstances.

Children in Distress has acquired a beautiful piece of land for the Lodge in the Carpathian Mountains (the Romanian Alps), near the town of Zarnesti. An architect has donated her services to draw plans. There is plenty of room in the Lodge for accommodation, physical therapy, communal meals, and a chapel space for prayer. The property outdoors has a generous yard, with room for a playground, gazebo, and vegetable and flower gardens.

Children in Distress is in the process of obtaining the required approvals for the Lodge, including a construction permit. If you would like to know more about Pineview Retreat Lodge or would like to contribute to the effort, please contact CiD Romania President Valentina Zaharia Smith, [vali@cid.org.ro](mailto:vali@cid.org.ro). Everyone's support is welcome!







## THE CiD SPORTS TEAM

**A**mong its volunteer fundraisers, Children in Distress is privileged to have a team ready, willing, and able to participate in sports events to raise money for the charity. Sebastian (Sebi) Ghioca, Adrian Presuceanu, and Mihai Badea (left to right) are motivated both by the desire to support the constant needs of our children and to have fun and be physically strengthened in challenging competitions. This year, for the second year in a row, these men participated in three swimming, biking, and running triathlons. The competitions were the X-man Oradea, Transfier and Hero Mamaia.



Mihai starts the team by swimming. Once his portion is finished, Mihai hands the baton to Sebi, who is the biker.

Once Sebi finishes, he passes the baton to Adrian, who completes the competition by running to the finish line.

The team uses the slogan "WE SUPPORT THE CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS". Beyond the medals and prizes won, they convey the message of support for children in vulnerable categories. Not only are Mihai, Sebi, and Adrian passionate about exercise and healthy living, they find great joy in doing good things for the children of CiD.

Perhaps you too might have a sport challenge that can help make a difference for the young ones in CiD's care. Please think about it.





# Royal House of Romania Honours CiD Ambassadors

**A**t a ceremony October 25, Anne-Marie Martin and Nelly Miricioiu-Kirk, both official CiD Ambassadors, were conferred distinctions at the Throne Hall of the Royal Palace in Bucharest. Nelly is a renowned opera singer who has sung on stages throughout the world. Anne-Marie is Director of Global Business Networks for the British Chambers of Commerce. Anne-Marie also serves as co-chair of CiD UK Board of Trustees.

Nelly (left in photo) was awarded the Order of the Crown of Romania in the rank of Commander. Anne-Marie (right in photo) was awarded the Custodian of the Crown Medal. Both Nelly and Anne-Marie live in London and are of Romanian parentage. Congratulations Nelly and Anne-Marie!!



The day before they received their distinctions, Nelly and Anne-Marie visited Casa Maria with their husbands, Barry Kirk and Neil Martin, and soprano Valentina Nafornita and her partner, conductor Cristian Spataru.

The children had prepared autumn flowers to give to their distinguished guests.

Following a tour of Casa Maria led by the excited children, Nelly and Valentina sat on the floor with the children and sang a few arias. Then everyone went to play outside and take a group photo.

Thank you, Nelly, Anne-Marie, and Valentina, for your support!



## US non-profit

**CiD** began networking over the past year in the United States. We have developed a base of supporters, and fundraising in the U.S. is steadily growing. We also received numerous U.S. donations for our Ukraine appeal, including proceeds from a neighbourhood yard sale, a generous donation from a group of female friends, and individual donations.

To strengthen our presence in the U.S., CiD is in the process of establishing a non-profit organisation, known as a section 501 (c) (3) charity. Formation of a non-profit is essential to CiD's presence and growth in the U.S., partially because it will allow donors to receive a tax credit.

This summer, the President of CiD Romania Valentina Zaharia Smith and Mission Ambassador Rev Steven Smith made presentations to church congregations and ministers and also met with potential Board members. The energy and goodwill for CiD in the U.S. is inspiring. We hope to report more in the next issue of this Magazine.



# HOW YOU CAN HELP

There are many ways you can contribute to the work of Children in Distress. Most importantly, please **PRAY** for the children and young people, and the nurses and care-givers and staff in our various locations

**DONATE** Make a one-time donation or a general monthly donation. You also might choose a monthly sponsorship dedicated to one of the children featured in this magazine. The monthly donation to sponsor a child is: 64 Lei, 12 British Pounds, 13 EU Euros or 15 USD. For more information about making a donation or sponsoring a child, please

contact President Valentina Zaharia Smith at [vali@cid.org.ro](mailto:vali@cid.org.ro)

To donate, please go to [www.cid.org.ro/donate](http://www.cid.org.ro/donate) to use a credit card or PayPal. You also may make a wire transfer using our bank account information. We apologize that we cannot receive cheques as Romanian banks do not accept them.

**CHILDREN IN DISTRESS** (in Romania, COPII IN DIFICULTATE/CHILDREN IN DISTRESS)

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IBAN FOR DONATION(S) IN US DOLLARS: RO84BRDE441SV46002154410

Remember us in **YOUR WILL**. Leaving a legacy would be a great help. To discuss a legacy, please contact President Valentina Zaharia Smith at [vali@cid.org.ro](mailto:vali@cid.org.ro)

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