

TIDINGS of HOPE

Hope House Family Center, Oradea, Romania • Living Hope Center, Targu Jiu, Romania

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Corina Caba (left) with adoption advocate Linda Robak following the hearing.

rosy portrait of Romania's child welfare system, which she has called "a model" for other European nations to follow.

The hearing was organized in large part by Linda Robak, an adoptive-mother-turned-activist who heads up the grassroots group For the Children S.O.S. In a March trip to Brussels, Ms. Robak was able to secure MEPs to sponsor a hearing the following month, volunteering to do most of the "leg work" of preparation herself. When it came time to invite people to testify at the hearing, Ms. Robak knew she needed the testimony of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working on the ground in Romania—ideally Romanian nationals.

Although initially very reluctant to testify, Corina eventually agreed to travel to Brussels, saying, "If it will help change the law, it's worth it!" An American friend, who also works with abandoned children in Oradea, traveled along with Corina to help her prepare her testimony in English.

On the morning of the hearing, there was standing room only in the small room. A large number of would-be adoptive parents had come from throughout Europe, asking for the finalization of their adoptions which were pending at the time the new law was passed. Children who had already been adopted from Romania also spoke in favor of adoption. In addition, several representatives of NGOs testified about

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Miss Caba Goes to Brussels

Hope House Director Testifies before EU Panel on Romanian Law

Ever since it took effect last January, Romanian law 272 has been a thorn in Corina Caba's side. When she tries to free an abandoned child for adoption, the law places a myriad of hurdles in her path. When she fights to protect the rights of children, the law is there to protect the rights of birth parents, forcefully "reintegrating" young children with the biological parents who abandoned them years ago. And when Corina visits the children's hospital from which she once rescued babies, she sees the number of abandoned babies up from 20 to 100 — thanks to a law which bans international adoption and forbids private homes like Hope House from sheltering children under age two.

On April 25th, 2006, Corina finally had a chance to speak out about the harm Romania's new law is doing to its

abandoned children. In a small hearing room within the European Parliament building, before an audience of several Members of European Parliament (MEPs), their aides, and several members of the European press, Corina testified about the specific problems now facing Romania's parentless children under the new law. Ironically, the law is one that the European Union itself—led by the former EU rapporteur for Romania, Baroness Emma Nicholson—pressured Romania into passing.

The hearing was sponsored by an MEP and medical doctor from the United Kingdom, Dr. Charles Tannock. Dr. Tannock is one of a growing number of MEPs beginning to call into question the extreme anti-adoption position held by Baroness Nicholson. Furthermore, these MEPs are expressing their doubts about Mrs. Nicholson's

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HOPE HOUSE UpClose

Christian Feavel and Rachel Nehring are two young American women currently living and volunteering at Hope House. We asked them to give us an insider's view of daily life at the orphanage—and of the children who live there. The articles on these two pages are their contributions (with names changed to protect children's identities).

Well, it's morning, and here I sit in my crib waiting. Footsteps are coming down the hall, maybe . . . nope, not coming here. Must be bottle time for Paul and Lydia, our two youngest residents. Annie, my twin sister, is still asleep in the other crib, so there is no conversation to enliven the waiting.

So, I might as well tell you what a day at Hope House is like. Christian, a long term American volunteer, was asked to but she thought that I might have a better perspective. I honestly can't see why you would be interested, but mine is but to obey. Oh, by the way, I'm Johnny and all the ladies tell me I am adorable (as if I won't use that to my advantage later).

CiCi, Amanda, and Stephen leave most mornings to attend a place of higher learning, pre-school, so we don't see much of them until lunch. Delia isn't quite old enough to go with them yet and stays to keep us company. They are all pretty nice as big kids go and usually leave us alone (usually being the key word). The girls like to mother us a bit, but we very resourcefully let them know when we have had enough "love."

We have a great cook and I am being constantly told to eat the good food, but I have reserved the right to spit it out by reason of my age and the universal standards that must be upheld. Besides, what would the workers do if they didn't need to clean up after us. OK, OK . . . I will try to be less trouble, but I am not making any promises.

Play, play, play! That is our life, except for food (good), naps (don't like), and baths (hate). Inside on rainy days, outside on sunny days, but always playing. It isn't too rough unless our lady helpers decide it's time to learn, but disguise it as "fun" play. They keep asking us where our eyes, nose, mouth, ears, etc. are. If I couldn't still feel them, I would think they had gone missing. We have to practice walking and talking, also. First, walking isn't too hard, but crawling is so much



Life at Hope House: A Child's Eye View

by Christian Feavel

faster and I figure if the little kids don't have to why should I. Talking can be more of a challenge, especially with Christian and Rachel, another American volunteer. They don't seem to understand just how bad their Romanian is, but they try so hard and we play along to make them feel good. I guess we have to learn these things if we ever want to hold our own with the big kids in the future.

All of us are blessed to live here. It isn't always fun, things don't always run smoothly, and everyone isn't happy all the time, but it is a home filled with love. Hugs, kisses, and encouragement are given to us everyday and our bodies, minds, and hearts grow strong under this influence. But hopefully this home will only be

a rest stop on the way to a new home and family.

Many of you pray for us and the Lord has continued to provide homes for many children, but the need hasn't ended. We thank you for your love, prayers, and support. Even more important pray that each of us come to know Christ as Lord and Savior. Mark 10:14: "Suffer the children to come to me . . . for of such is the kingdom of God." Thanks again for listening and praying.

Ah, I think they are finally coming to help me start a new day and all the possibilities it holds. Oh goodie...Christian and Florida! I love all the workers, but a guy has to have his favorites, right?!

Author's note: I cannot vouch for the truth of all of Johnny's thinking, but the needs are still very real here. The end of children still needing to leave the hospital is not in sight. Please do not grow weary in well-doing. May the Lord's presence in your life give you guidance and strength for each new day. 3

► It costs approximately \$12,000 per month to fund the entire Hope House ministry, including nearly 20 children in private foster care. Donations of all sizes are very helpful.

The Hope House Children: a Snapshot

by Rachel Nehring

Paul: Somewhere around seven months old. Huge grin with a cleft palate, is teething and loves to chew on whatever he can get his hands on. Cherub face with a shock of black hair, resembling a mowhawk. Huge brown eyes, eyelashes reaching up to his eyebrows nicely curling upwards, chubby cheeks. Likes to squawk when not being held.

Lydia: Had adopted parents all lined up and had gotten used to her new name, Jasmina, when we found out she's 3/4ths deaf. She is about 9 months. Has soft chocolate-black hair about an inch long, large brown eyes with lots of hope. Likes to hum while smiling, unless she's really happy. Then she gives a high-pitched shriek of pleasure. Not crawling yet but working on it; rocking back and forth on her knees and scooting a little when lying down. Is a roly-poly, happy baby.

Johnny: The mastermind behind the story at left. Is around 1 1/2 years old. If there is an open door, no matter how barely open it is, he will somehow sense it and make a break for it when he thinks no one is looking, trying to escape the playroom (or whatever room he happens to be in). Just learned to walk by himself and is trying to figure out how to turn his toddling into running; so far not too successful. A fairly unabashed flirt, he likes to jam to the toys that make music and fight with his sister over whatever toy she happens to have. Likes to snuggle and is not above shoving the other children out of the way to get attention. Is learning to say his sister's name—usually practices it when he is irritated.


Annie: Johnny's twin, and looks almost the same as him except she has absolutely adorable curls, whereas her brother is doomed to mere cowlicks. Both she and Johnny were in the hospital for the first year of their lives, so were pretty far behind developmentally when they first came to Hope House. However they are doing well in working on recovery, and are currently competing to see who can walk the fastest without falling down and who can yell the other's name the most clearly and the loudest. Annie does have a tendency to turn into the green monster of envy when she sees other children getting attention and is learning how to not "covet thy

neighbor's toy." Likes to clap when the children do something positive (especially herself), to make noises with her tongue, and to be kissed.

Delia: A little blond haired, blue eyed three-year-old who lived on the streets with her mother before she came to Hope House. She was very much a mini-adult when she first came, but is slowly losing her "over-matured" mannerisms and behaving more like a three-year-old. She likes rough housing and has a hard time realizing that her play is too rough for the other children, though is very sorry when they get hurt. Her language is more the country "dialect" than the city speech, and she has a very unique lisp, so understanding what she's saying can often prove difficult. Very outgoing, compassionate, and active.

Andrew: Four-year-old twin and budding naturalist, nick-name of choice, CiCi. His love of observing and pondering things often makes him absent-minded. Mud is his friend, although there isn't much to be had around the House, and blocks are his favorite toy. Quick-tempered yet compassionate, he is very expressive and is good at dancing. Like Johnny, he is not above making himself at home uninvited in your lap and loves snuggles. Has learned that giving away bouquets of flowers are good ways to earn brownie points.

Amanda: Sister to CiCi and self-appointed mini-mother to the rest of the children smaller than her. Outgoing with a budding gift of hospitality, she is more reserved with showing her feelings. Heaven help the person who crosses her will, though, as she has a well-practiced "stone face," and her look of reproach could kill. Has learned how to whistle and does so when she is happy. Likes to pick flowers but is not always sure whom to give them to afterwards, and has been known to go back to those to whom she has bestowed her gift and ask for them back, having thought of a more worthy recipient.

Stephen: At five years, he is the oldest at Hope House. Has honey-colored hair that frames his face in cute curls. While one eye is glass, the other one is usually filled with laughter. Well gifted with communication in difficult situations, and has learned how to use his charm and good looks to his advantage when he wants more *puflets* (snacks). Usually the one to construct swords or guns out of unlikely objects and ask that one of the workers build him some sort of fort. Can usually be found in the midst of a wrestling match with any other available boy near his size when things get too slow. 



Reading, Writing & Rescue

by Lavinia Dreana
Co-director, Living Hope Center

The Challenge of LHC's Tutoring Program



The educational environment in this area is extremely limited because of the lack of schooling facilities and trained, dedicated teachers. The system is full of corruption and prejudice against poor children from the upper to the lower levels. A lot of the school buildings have been in the “renovation process” for years because the people responsible for the “renovations” need to take the right bribe for assigning the construction contracts to the “right” companies, depending on who paid more. As a result we are dealing with a huge “mob” of children who are going to school in 3 or 4 shifts, starting classes too early in the morning at 6:30 or 7:00 a.m., teachers not having enough time to deal with the “problem children” who are slower in learning and having poorer resources to give them gifts or to pay private tutors.

In Romania there are too many children that end up getting engaged in gangs, starting up on drugs, alcohol, and prostitution. All these things happen because they did not have ANY-

BODY to show them a different way, to help them pick another kind of destiny. They do not have parents to teach them a better life; they do not have a dedicated teacher to realize they DO HAVE abilities and talents.

So, our mission in this project is to select from a very large number of such children and teenagers, and integrate them in a solid context and program where they can learn another way to live their lives. This project is operated by people who care, love, get involved; people who realize the great importance and responsibility of their job.

Because of the situation in their families, the majority of these kids have very violent behavior; they are facing a lot of social problems. Some of the problems they are facing are:

- Communication problems - They can't communicate “nicely” with the other kids, with the tutors, they speak very loudly, they never say “please” or “thank you”. If they want or need

something, they just get violent. If they need to bring an argument for something, they just say: “because I want to” or they look at you as if asking: “how dare you ask me that??”

- Bad language: it is just horrible to hear how these kids/teenagers speak in the first few weeks. It is wonderful to see how they change after somebody speaks nicely day after day after day. This is a big challenge for our tutors.

- Submitting to authority/rules: Some of these kids are extremely rebellious. In this program, they learn how to obey the rules, how to live under a loving authority, how to understand that in order to live under the same roof with other people, they need to respect the “rules of the house.”

- Taking responsibility: In order to develop this skill, the kids need to learn how to be responsible for the tasks they are given, for the things they do. ↪

▶ Regeneration Ministries currently sends \$2,100/month to the Living Hope Center, but more is needed. Designated gifts will help us increase our support for this growing ministry.

Goodbye . . . and Thank You



In March 2006, our ministry lost a friend and prayer warrior. Mary Ellen Marshall went home to be with the Lord after suffering from breast cancer. Mrs. Marshall leaves behind a husband, Jim, and seven children.

We wish to thank the Marshall family for designating Regeneration Ministries as a recipient of gifts in Mary Ellen's memory. May God bless and comfort you as your generosity continues to bless and comfort needy children in Romania.

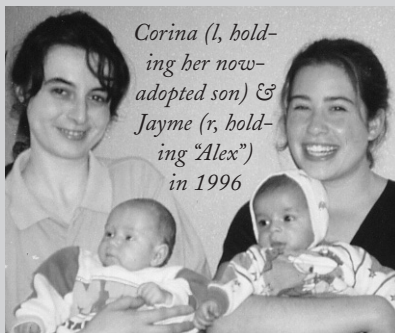
This spring I marked two anniversaries, and I got to thinking about the similarities between the two.

In June, Todd and I celebrated our sixth wedding anniversary. We watched our wedding video, which never fails to put big smiles on our faces as we remember the joy of that day, and all those who were there to share it with us.

In April, I marked a different milestone: ten years since I first visited Romania and met Corina Caba. Since I didn't realize that day was going to be a life-changing one, I failed to arrange for a videographer to record the moment. However, I did record it the old-fashioned way, in my journal.

"April 29, 1996 — So much has happened! . . . Today was a very good day. I feel like I'm finally just slightly getting settled into a semi-routine. Becky [an American missionary] and I went to a home for abandoned babies, and the children are simply precious. Absolutely beautiful children. It breaks your heart to think of them abandoned in the street or in a hospital. . . . But this little home I worked at today is a glimmer of hope in the darkness. They have seven babies there now, so the workers have their hands full! My favorite is a 5-month-old boy named ["Alex"] . . . Corina, the woman who runs the

From the President On Anniversaries and Fruitfulness



home, said that when he first arrived she was afraid he wouldn't live—he was just skin and bones. . . . I held him today for almost two hours—until he went to sleep (and a little after that)!"

It's amazing to think about the changes that have occurred since my 18-year-old self penned that journal entry. Hope House is now located in a beautiful, large home overlooking the city, rather than in Corina's tiny, Communist-built apartment. Alex is now a thriving 10-year-old boy, living with his adoptive parents in Canada. And Corina and I have built not only a close friendship, but a strong partnership in ministry—a ministry that

includes you and the many others who support us.

It's somewhat similar to the feeling Todd and I have when we consider our six years of marriage, and see the three beautiful little girls God has given us. How could something so amazing have happened through us, as a fruit of our relationship? Welcome to the wonder of being used—consciously or not—by our amazing God, to accomplish His purposes. I pray the next ten years of ministry will be marked not by human effort, but by God producing His extraordinary fruit through ordinary branches like you and me. May God give us the grace to stay yielded to Him. ↪

continued from cover

the harms of the new law, and the ways the Romanian government is covering up the truth about its child welfare system.

Not surprisingly, Baroness Nicholson attended the hearing and forcefully made her own position heard. Unfortunately, she dominated so much time that some of the testimony had to be cut short.

Corina was the last to testify and was limited to a mere two minutes. Nevertheless, she was able to stress the most important points, and to submit her full, written testimony for the record. Her testimony was made even more significant due to the fact that she was the only Romanian national who spoke out against the law.

Despite her shortened time slot, Corina was very encouraged by her experience in Brussels. For the first time, she saw that a large number of MEPs were opposed to Baroness Nicholson's position, and were open to hearing the truth. Furthermore, she was able to give several

government officials her contact information, telling them to come to Romania for a tour of the real child welfare system.

Since the hearing, our efforts to overturn Romania's law have been gaining momentum. In early July, the European Parliament passed Written Declaration 23, calling on Romania to "resume without delay consideration of pending cases, in the best interests of children, and to authorise international adoption where appropriate." While not legally binding, this Declaration is a strong statement that the majority of the European Parliament is pro-adoption.

The battle continues to play out in the press, as well. In early June, a group of 33 Romanian-based NGOs (including Hope House) published a full-page ad in the UK's *Financial Times*, decrying the impotence of the new laws and calling for change, including the re-opening of international adoption. The ad sparked a fierce letter-to-the-editor from Baroness Nicholson, as well as reprisals by the

Romanian government against several of the charities who signed the ad.

Despite the momentum we've gained, the battle is far from won. Lady Nicholson and the Romanian government are fighting tooth and nail to retain the child welfare laws, especially the ban on international adoption. As always, this is a battle that only God can win. But if He is for us, who can be against us? ↪

► Read Corina's full EU testimony on the "news" page of our website: www.RMRomania.org

► Read the ad published by 33 charities in the *Financial Times*, along with the responses from Baroness Nicholson and the Romanian government: www.romanianchild.org

► Join the fight by making a donation to our Adoption Advocacy fund, which supports the work of Linda Robak, Corina Caba, and others who are fighting for adoption in Romania.

TIDINGS of HOPE

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in PRAYER

1. Praise God for the tremendous progress we've made in fighting for change in Romania's child welfare law (*see cover story*). Keep praying that God would change the hearts of those in the Romanian government, and that the law would ultimately be changed.
2. Keep praying that God would change the heart of Romanian Christians regarding adoption. Ask God to raise up pastors who will clearly preach about God's heart for adoption, and for Christian couples to respond to the call. Pray that God's people would be on the forefront of a new surge in adoption, particularly the adoption of Gypsy children.
3. Pray for each individual child currently at Hope House (*see page 3*), as well as those who are in Hope House foster care. Ask God to provide each with a loving Christian adoptive family, and to protect them from being forcefully "reintegrated" with abusive birth parents. Pray for their ultimate salvation through Jesus Christ.
4. Pray for the Living Hope Center's tutoring program (*see page 4*). Ask God to grant wisdom to the LHC staff, and to work real transformation in the lives of children, reaching their entire families with the Gospel.
5. Pray that God would continue to meet the financial needs of Hope House and the Living Hope Center, and praise God for His faithful hand of provision thus far.

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