



Sharing the Faith and Making Disciples

Newsletter July 2009

Edition 1

Dear Friends

Welcome to the first edition of the **Smiles 400 Faith Club Newsletter**.

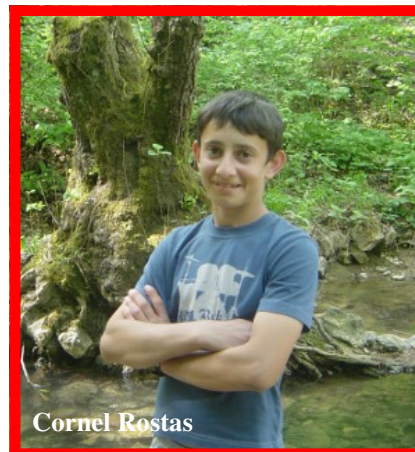
We are very grateful for your support of the projects within the Smiles 400 Faith Club which covers all aspects of the work with the Tileagd Roma community and the surrounding area. We hope you enjoy this update and should you have questions or require further copies, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Special Feature: Cornel Rostas

Many of you that know The Smiles Foundation and the Tileagd Children's Choir will also know **CORNEL ROSTAS**. But how many of you know much of his life *BEFORE* Smiles, that with your help, changed his World?! We recently had the opportunity to talk with Cornel specifically about his childhood and the difference the past 7 years has made. Now we can share with you part of "his life story" and tell you what he really feels about it.

We asked Cornel "**how was your life before Smiles?**"

He told us quietly: "I don't remember a lot, but I remember it was bad. I was only 6 years old when **Mr Hoy came to our house**. I was in bed when he arrived and my brothers that were in the city begging, brought this tall man to our house. I got up because mum told me "we have a guest". I do remember him talking a lot with my family.....I did not understand what was being said but next day he came back. With him, were other people that were called "his friends" and we received them all in our one room home.



Cornel Rostas



The early days

Back then, I sometimes went to the State school in the Tileagd town, but because I did not know how to read, write or count, I had to repeat the first grade twice. I never managed to get beyond First Grade at the State School, but then I didn't go much anyway.

One day, **Mr Hoy** and **Mircea Toca** came to see us, and told us they planned a school just for the Gypsy children. It seemed hard to believe and everyone in the Gypsy Village said, "*Let's wait and see*". But, one year later, I was going to the Smiles school, back in the first grade, with 70 other children – all in first grade! Was a new experience and I remember the first day when I had to brush my teeth that I eat the

toothpaste, and went to ask for more because I liked the taste! We had so much to learn!!

Before the school opened I was going in the city of Oradea begging, almost every day with my older brother Victor. He was my 'guardian' and he put me to beg on the Crisu supermarket underpass, on the stairs actually, because he said that was the safest place for me. **I was so scared to stay on my own there. It was dark, cold and dirty.... really scary!** Victor was begging on the street because he was older. I remember one day the police came and took me, but because I was so scared, I run from them to the train station. Then we went home.

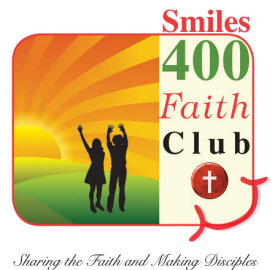
Since then, my visits to Oradea became less and less. Once in a year maybe at Christmas because I wanted new shoes or clothes. My village was dirty and ugly, even if our room was ok and clean we were nearly 10 people living in it. I remember one day when my dad came from work he was drunk and he started to hit my mum. We all got scared and we run to our uncle to hide. Once he was asleep we were safe, but this type of experience was happening at least 2 times a week. Everyone in the village, mainly the men, spent their money on drink and the ladies went to Oradea to beg for money and look for food from the waste containers. Life was hard. **I was without a dream, no hope, no faith. I did not know what that was!!**"



Tileagd Community Complex

Even if Cornel is only 14 years old he could talk and talk about his experience on the streets... He remembers it so clearly. This was his life.

But **"how is your life now?"** we asked. *"With Smiles part of it and for nearly 8 years was helping you?"* Cornel responded: "Once Smiles started to help us, particularly building the first school, all our village was involved in it. The men had a job there and they begin spending their money on food. The ladies helped with the cleaning there and started taking care of us at home instead of sending us to the city to beg. Soon the men stopped drinking and instead started to work on their houses to improve them.



My mum and dad got a job, and with Smiles help, we moved in a new house and life for us now is very different.

Six years ago, I started to sing and dance in the Choir and I went and visited places that I never imagined I would see. On Tour, travelling the road, we have fun and I love it. My favourite experience has been Disney World and Sea World in America and I love going on Splash Mountain....because it makes you to understand what it means to trust each other and have faith everything will be ok.



Now I can dream and I can't wait to be 18 years old, finish my high school and have a driving licence and be able to drive my own car!!

What I've learned and what's the most important thing for me now that has impacted my life?

Well, my dad is not drinking anymore, **he knows God as his personal saviour** and we are now a happy family...As for me? I know who is God and what He means to me. I have FAITH that my life is in His Hands. Is safe and the best place to be!....BUT I believe God sent Smiles people to teach us all these things, and I say THANK YOU to all the people that help us!!"

And finally, I can take every single person from the Tileagd Gypsy village and tell you their story, and how God has changed their life. But this is my story, Cornel Rostas, and I say THANK YOU to all the people that let themselves be used by God for our benefit.



Prayer Points:

1. Pray for the Nursery, Kindergarten and School. For the impact education is having on the lives of the children in Tileagd.
2. Pray for the Medical Services of the Tileagd Community Complex, including Dental and Optometry.
3. Pray for the Gypsy Community for their continued adjustment to a different life from the past and the support they need to succeed.
4. Pray for the work of the Children's Choir with their efforts to promote the work of Smiles and the impact it makes on the lives of the Choir members.
5. Pray for the ministry at Tileagd Community Church especially the children's work, youth work and family ministry. Pray for decisions for Christ and transformed lives.
6. Pray for the process of calling a new pastor to the work of Tileagd.

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