

newsletter

series 4, edition 6 - AUTUMN/WINTER 2023

Welcome to our Autumn-Winter 2023 Newsletter

Greetings to our many friends and family around the world. It is wonderful to have this opportunity of sharing with you all the news and stories for praise to God from the Smiles frontline of ministry in Romania.

It has been a truly remarkable year thus far, and I believe the remaining months of 2023 will be the 'cherry on the cake'. Many of you have travelled to Romania this year and spent time with us, whether in the projects visiting Families, the Homeless, the Communities we serve, the Residential Facilities, Dezna, even the Glasshouse. Many have also come with sleeves rolled up and helped us enormously with the task of finishing many aspects for Sunset House, Cihei. Updates on all these activities and the various projects, are contained in the following pages, so thank you for being a committed part of the Smiles family and for taking the time to read the news we bring you through our printed Newsletter.

Of course, new projects always bring a degree of special interest and excitement, and for sure, Sunset House has done that and probably been part of the reason we have welcomed so many guests this year through our Smiles Mission Trips. People from every corner of the United Kingdom, many from America and even Mission Guests from Dubai in United Arab Emirates. Already nearly 200 people have been on Smiles Mission Trips in 2023 and by the end of the year, the number will be closer to 300 with 45 scheduled in October and still 25 so far booked in December. A truly fantastic year, with so much achieved due to so many hands 'at the plough' focused on the primary work of God, through Smiles, in Romania – sharing His Love and the Good news of the Gospel to thousands across Bihor and Arad Counties in north-west Romania.

Thank you to all who have come and those who support and pray from back home. We can not do the work without God's Power and Provision along with the encouragement He Provides through His People.

God continues to Direct, Strengthen and Bless us all in our efforts to serve Him. Smiles is a wonderful means through which you can serve the Lord and I sincerely thank you for your faithfulness in supporting the Smiles Foundation prayerfully, practically and financially.

With love and thanks to you all.



Kevin Hoy
Founder & Chief Executive
The Smiles Foundation

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MISSIONS PILLAR

Missions is one substantial corner pillar that supports the entire work of God through Smiles. It covers strategic elements of long-standing projects that have been the backbone of Smiles for over 20-years. Now with new vision and motivation, the MISSIONS Pillar strives to be "salt & light" as we are commanded in **Matthew 5 v16**.

Maria Hava

Director of Missions Pillar
The Smiles Foundation



Energy booster!

There are sooooo many, so called "magical drinks and food stuff" that are meant to give you an energy boost once you have them! For me, the summer mission trip season at Smiles here in Romania, was having a much better effect. :) All our guests were my energy boost, and with the Lord's Vision and Purpose, it is all that I need to do the work I do here, 365 days a year.

The trips started on May 19th and went all the way through September 9th. People from as young as 9 years old to as old as 90 years old, and ALL come with the same purpose to serve! Lots of my tasks / dreams / activities were made possible to be fulfilled due to the hard work of everyone who came.

I ALWAYS appreciate the effort, time and money that each person invests in coming to Romania and working with Smiles. I know they can spend their week off in so many other places, including 'holiday resorts' ... but for some amazing reason they choose Smiles!



I appreciate them all so much and I believe God blesses us even more as we give of our resources to others, whether that be time or money. And with the Smiles family, it is virtually always both!! I appreciate their prayers and I know they pray for us, some every day! Prayer is at the heart of everything! Without it, we suffer through the loss of His Blessing and achieve nothing.

I appreciate the MONEY that is given through donations, because we live

in a world where sooo many things are more than we can afford, so giving your money to others is really wow and shows a deep love for God and His people. I appreciate the TIME each person gives. Time is a one-time gift, once spent, we never get it back. And that makes the time given to come on Mission Trips or Fundraise back home, very special, and for that I am truly grateful.



So, THANK YOU VERY VERY MUCH to each and every person who came this summer to visit us! And even to those who couldn't come, yet continued to support through your prayers and financial gifts. When all joined together by God Himself, everything makes the ministry function and blossom, as the miracle of God's Blessing on all we do, takes effect.

Next year, my little Mission Centre will be 20 years old!

I can hardly believe it! Time indeed flies! It is truly amazing to think we opened it for the first Mission team in 2004. Some of you were on that first trip and are still coming to support Smiles 20 years later. WOW... you are amazing!

I'm sooo happy that over these years we managed to host thousands of people without any major incident. For that, TO GOD BE THE GLORY!

If you are thinking to come and visit us, NEXT YEAR COULD BE THE BEST ONE!!

We plan for a party every Mission Trip to celebrate our 20 years and lots of great surprises. We will also be celebrating the completion of Sunset House and with lots of Hands-On help needed, I pray you'll be here alongside us. Then, in October 2024, we will be celebrating the Grand Official Opening of Sunset House, and that is one I know you won't want to miss.

I am looking forward to having you here!!! God Bless you.





OUTREACH PILLAR

Outreach represents several well-established projects that Smiles has become known for in more recent years. Now the focus has moved from the primary "social" concern to our primary responsibility of "spiritual" concern. This new emphasis of purpose encourages all in the OUTREACH Pillar to honour the Great Commission of **Matthew 28 v19**.

Adrian Matis

Director of Outreach Pillar
The Smiles Foundation



As a social worker under the Outreach Pillar, I am responsible mainly for activities like visiting the families supported through our programme and for keeping their official documentation up to date. We do these visits at least once a month, providing food, clothing, medicine, and sometimes we help also with getting personal IDs done, for example.

We try to be there for them when they experience different difficulties, advising them and helping them as we can. It is hard to see so many people living in really bad conditions, this year we visited many families, but one in particular was very impressive to me. The children had no clothes, no beds, no food! It gave me great joy to take all these things to them and see how that helped them, as now those children are dressed when we visit and they are smiling!

Another situation I would like to mention is this lady that has mental problems, she had no income when we found her, but she was entitled to some benefits from the state because of her disability. Yet, she wouldn't know how to apply for these by herself, since her disability limits her greatly. So, with God's help, we succeeded to get all the documentation that was needed in order for her to obtain some disability support. That felt like a great achievement for me!

This is just a little peek into what I get to do. I just wrote these thoughts to say that this experience of the first year and a half of being a social worker with Smiles surely opened my eyes more, towards what social work is and I believe God has helped me grow in many ways, to get to answer my calling better.

I can see His goodness in all that happened this period of time and I pray that He will help me to grow even more, personally and professionally, so I can help the people who are in our care and guide them to Christ.

Thank you for your support and for being a blessing for these people we work with!

Andreea Andrei - Social Worker, Outreach Pillar



Outreach activities, challenges and rewards. They come together.

These past months were indeed both challenging and rewarding for us, in the Outreach Pillar, as we could see again how God is faithful to His words, but equally we could see how us, humans, are often easily movable and take decisions which could affect more than our personal circumstances.



It is not a secret that finding the right people for such ministry is not easy and keeping them around, due to work challenges, it is even harder. It really takes a big heart and a strong commitment to stay focused and so I am thankful to God for all those who served under our Pillar, for longer or shorter, as they are good people that let God do His work through them! This is a wonderful feeling to realise we are together as a team and we do God's work as one!

Challenges we have plenty - on one side we have the beneficiaries of our programmes, who are often times their own worst enemy, because of the way they were brought up and they very reluctantly allow changes in their lives. Does not matter that they are good changes - the long time bad habits, which brought them down, often become strongholds impossible to tear! And this is such a challenge indeed! Then, on the other side, we have the personnel issues, like I mentioned, lack of people able and available to serve, to embrace our vision and to stay involved, in a positive and efficient way.

But among all of these, we are rewarded when we see something good happening as result of our effort! A child who is now better off, who learns how to smile and have a better chance for a bright future, a family who manage their own difficulties with more wisdom, a homeless person who re-discovers self-esteem again! And so on, we can think of many ways we feel rewarded! Not the least, we are rewarded by seeing how wonderfully you get involved with us, for the benefit of others! That is inspiring to us and motivates us to carry on with the work we do, being supported by hundreds of friends, who are ready to help out, so selflessly!

Thank you very much for your friendship and for the support given and we hope you'll continue to stay with us, giving a hand to those in need!



As Christians, we should never forget we are servants of Our Lord and we must spread His message to other people, that means to show love and compassion to them. This will help them see how amazing Jesus is and hopefully they will want to get to know Him, personally.

February this year, God guided my destiny towards The Smiles Foundation and here I found a proper environment where to express my response to the calling that God has for me - I can serve and I can help the needy ones, and I believe anyone who feels the same could find a place in this large family which is Smiles!

I am particularly experienced and interested in working with Roma communities, under the Outreach Pillar. I felt a special calling toward this area, and I feel right at home with this, as I have more than 10 years previous experience in working with gypsy children. But in the same time, I feel all children, no matter from what background, could and should benefit from our involvement, so I am ready to work with them as well.

So, these past months showed me how God can use me and my colleagues, in a very special way, being with us and guiding us step by step. We should be thankful and we praise His name for that! For us, that is to continue to do the work and be messengers of His love. To tell those underprivileged that even if all people will avoid and reject them, God will never forget them and their needs. He will always have open arms for them, by His providence!

Sidonia Lupaş - Legal Adviser, Outreach Pillar

Exciting developments Sunset House, Cihei

The past 6 months have been an extremely busy and most of the time, a stressful experience in progressing the Sunset House construction to its current position.

As those of you will know who have followed the story of this project from the beginning, and for those who haven't, let me reiterate the original plan by the Construction Company was to complete the main building in 13 months, so having started in April 2022, we were hoping to see completion by May 2023. Due to various problems the contractors experienced, delays started to occur, and we were advised initially, the finish date would move to September 1st, which was subsequently extended to October 20th. As of writing, (October 1st) I am reluctantly telling myself it will be well into November and if I am totally honest with myself, I'll be pleased to see the job (as per the Construction Contract) completed by Christmas!

Now although that sounds extremely worrying, it's not necessarily as bad as it could be. The contractors contract not only includes the structure and all interior finishing to first fix of everything from Plastering, Electrics and Plumbing – but also the entire exterior of insulation, plastering and final render. Fact is, there is a lot of work to complete outside the building, which whilst we had preferred (and planned) for this to be done during nicer summer weather, the contractors became so far behind finishing the interior, that we had to insist all hands were directed inside the building so as to finish, as we had major commitments to follow such as painting and linoleum floor laying. All this we wanted done before winter sets in.



Kevin Hoy
Founder & Chief Executive
The Smiles Foundation

With rearrangements put in place, whilst proven to be a real uphill struggle, it's showing signs of working and therefore we continue to trust and believe the interior will be ready for paint and flooring by the required deadlines. Lots of hands through our October Mission Trips will help with that challenging objective. If we can get as far as all but the 'final' coat of paint throughout the building done in October, then God-Willing, flooring will be laid in November and all the next tasks of which there are many, can be reviewed and scheduled in the new year.



I remain prayerfully hopeful that a great start to 2024, with plenty of hands-on help through our special Construction Mission Trips, will ensure all the work can be done by our preferred deadline of May 2024. We will need Electricians, Plumbers and a number of other skilled people, plus landscapers and gardeners to help us get Sunset House ready for furnishing and ultimately ready to start receiving new staff and residents in May 2024.

If you can help directly with coming or can help with getting word out through your family, church and community, fantastic. More people, means more hands, mean less work for each of us, and a perfect opportunity to meet the impossible challenge with another God-Sized Miracle. I look forward to welcoming you individually or with a team, between now and May 2024.

I have been humbled by the generosity of the Smiles Family and God's provision has indeed been miraculous. Over £2million (\$2.5million) has already been invested in Sunset House and I anticipate up to a further £750,000 (\$937,500) will be needed to see the project finished. And not to forget, even when the building is done, we have a huge facility to furnish – with kitchen, laundry, specialist medical rooms, lounges, activity rooms, staff rooms and offices.

The exterior of the building will also be a big task, with roads, car parking, gardens and landscaping to arrange. Costs have also risen significantly as we are all aware, since the initial budget was prepared in the spring of 2022. At this stage, it is very difficult to assess the final cost of many aspects of the finishing process. Costs are still rising and often when we ask for quotations, we are told that price rises are in the pipeline, so either order and pay now, or face increased cost when we are ready in the new year. There are many reasons, but the budgeting impact is one for sure, why we must retain total trust in the Lord fulfilling the work He started.

There have been so many indications of God's Hand being on this project since the initial concept discussions nearly 3 years ago. Since then, so much as happened - a war in Europe, a devastating impact on cost of materials and individual cost-of-living and considerable strain on the personal budgets of those wanting to support God's Work through Smiles. But nothing will stop God fulfilling His promises and I ask you to believe with all your heart that Sunset House, Cihei is a promise God will fulfil.

Please continue to pray about how you can help with a Gift, a Fundraising Event, a Loan to help with the cash-flow time pressure. Many ways you can be part of seeing this Dream become a Reality.

You can support the Sunset House Project through a donation online, or by telephoning the Smiles office or by using these Codes above, right here and now.

My sincere thanks for all you do, prayerfully and practically.



You can support the Sunset House Project, through a donation, using these codes:



UK US





RESIDENTIAL PILLAR

*Residential is a key-pillar of Smiles - demonstrating God's love and compassion for the elderly and disabled in our communities. Substantial facilities with trained and dedicated staff, enables Smiles to be a leader in the development of Residential Care in Romania. We rejoice at God's provision as stated in **Isaiah 46 v4**.*



He has made everything beautiful in its time (Ecclesiastes 3:11)

Based on these wise words of King Solomon, I would like to bring you some news from JFL. Three years ago, for me it was a time of searching, as it's written in Ecclesiastes 3:6 "*searching has its time*"; I was a fresh graduate from University with many worries and fears. I applied for the position of social worker at JFL and after some time of waiting, God answered my prayers about finding a job and, by His grace and provision, I started the work at JFL Salonta, as a social worker.



Coordinated and supported unconditionally by Ioana, Carmen and Simona, as well as the entire Smiles team, I managed to learn and grow,

professionally, to get to know myself better, to learn how to do new things, and above all, to fulfill my dream of helping those in need.

When I look back on these past three years I have already spent at Smiles Foundation, I realize that God gave me more than a job, He answered my requests with the opportunity to serve Him every day, by helping others.

Currently at JFL we have beneficiaries with different needs, but each one of them is special in their own way. They are people from whom we all have much to learn. Their favourite weekly activity is still the time of worship through songs of praise and reading the word of God. This is always something special, a time when we stop our daily rush and think about eternity, and these moments make us aware that "*love has its time, birth has its time, planting has its time, healing has its time, weeping has its time and laughter has its time, silence has its time, speaking has its time, war has its time, and peace has its time*". These words give us the strength to go on.

This autumn, we planned activities for our beneficiaries on the occasion of the International Day of the Elderly, October 1st, moments of thanksgiving that we will celebrate on the Day of

Thanksgiving and other activities.

As I said at the beginning, "*He has made everything beautiful in its time!*" Three years ago, for me it was a time of professional interest,

now God has brought the blessing of another period in my life and has given me the opportunity to become a mother. Through God's grace, at the end of this year, my husband and I will have a baby boy and because of this, my work at Smiles will take a break. I look forward to returning to work though, to further fulfill the words of Ecclesiastes "*All things have their season, and everything under heaven has its hour!*"

Thank you for all the moments we spent together, both with the activities of Disability Club, as well as with the elderly. I wish the thought of eternity to always be in your mind and God bless you! With Him through all times we are victorious! For all things and at all the time, Soli Deo Gloria! Glory to God Alone!

Andrea Borszeki - Social Worker JFL Salonta



Part of our regular programme, Wednesday meetings with our colleagues from Outreach Pillar mean getting together for worship, prayer, a word from the Bible, encouragements and testimonies, for about an hour of fellowship in Christ.

In ECO and TAL, just like JFL, the residents are very happy to change the routine and get a "church-like" programme, as many of them cannot go anywhere from the centre, let alone go to church. So, the church comes to them!



We are actually privileged to be able to serve these people and it is always a joy to remind them about the glory of the Heaven that awaits their arrival, when the times comes. We do want them to know the Salvation offered by Christ and so, we are very happy to bring the Gospel to each and every one.





ENTERPRISE PILLAR

The Enterprise Pillar carries the responsibility of supporting the Work of God through Smiles as an honourable Business, doing God's Work in God's Way. 100% owned by the Smiles Foundation, ensures all profits are channelled into front-line ministry - wherever most needed with the other three supporting Pillars of Smiles. Inspired by **Matthew 25 v15-16**.

Simona Tosity

Director of Enterprise Pillar
The Smiles Foundation



8th of October, Sunday 7.47 am - Ralph Woldo Emerson: "In my walks, every man I meet is my superior in some way, and in that I learn from him!"

Dear friends,

Its been 6 months since our last newsletter, and it feels like it was yesterday telling you about how our busiest season ended, feeling released that all went great and we have summer coming. Well, today guess what, I should tell you about the fact that we are getting ready again to welcome the craziest period in production for SMINRO. Actually it started in September, when we delivered over 36,000 Chrysanthemums to Lidl, we planted 136,000 Hyacinths bulbs for Christmas orders, then in October, 32,000 Primroses, 43,000 Dianthus and the most important, 420,000 Tulips, Hyacinths and Daffodils bulbs for Spring, that are about to arrive from Holland.

So, plenty of fun and hard work!

But I want to mention to you about something else, the small handful of people that are making all this possible. SMINRO has 7 staff employed permanently and of course, when the critical moments come, we must find extra people on a daily basis, we have our colleagues from other projects to give us a hand as well. The majority of you know them personally, some of them are with us from the beginning of SMINRO in 2011 - and other shortly after, joining us in 2012 and 2013.

So, we have the same team for close to 12 years now! Incredible, right?! They are, to me, the most valuable assets SMINRO has. Their commitment is impressive. One of my favorite actors, Denzel Washington, said: *"Without commitment you'll never start, but without consistency, you'll never finish!"*

Yes, consistency... some might call it, or interpret it like routine, dull, boring - but what I learned from them was different: it is actually ambition, determination, passion to grow and make it better. Every season they learned from the previous one, they didn't repeat the same mistakes and even if we grow the same plants again and again - from one year to another they produce better, stronger, healthier, nicer plants. Every season is a new chapter.

I can secure as many contracts as I want, bring as many orders as possible, but if the team would not grow them, all would be wasted. I learned from them how healthy the competition with yourself is: to use a repetitive process as an opportunity to create something better.

Of course, it would be easier for all of us to look over the fence to other growers from Holland or Germany and put ourselves down, because we don't have the same technology, machinery or know-how; instead, we become creative and place our goals and tasks in such a way that will enable us to find more effective and efficient ways to produce more and better with our resources.

CONSISTENCY!!! Such a great quality to display!





Last week, we had a friend coming to our Container Village to do something nice for the homeless people residents or in-passing. Her name is **Diana**, she's a hairstylist and very passionate about her work. But also a good Christian, who wanted to do some volunteer work for the benefit of those who couldn't afford these services. That was great!

We had about 10 people who went through the process and they came out so excited! Vidu, Iuly, Marga, to name only a few that you might know, were very happy with the results and they already started putting together a list for Diana's next visit.

Thank You!

This year was a great come-back for us, when it comes about Mission Trips, and we were also very happy to see things progressing nicely in all areas, overall. The major project of SHC is a highlight, but all the other programmes developed and increased their activity as well.

For all of these, we are very grateful to God for His provision and then to you all who support us, as your involvement made a huge difference, allowing us to do more and expand the work of Smiles!

So, thank you for being our friends and for seeing value in what we are trying to achieve with the people we work with, and of course, thank you for your prayers, financial and logistical support! May God's blessing be always with you!

Please pray with us!

We always encourage everyone to pray! As we have the opportunity to interact with many people, we tell them to make sure they bring their concerns, thoughts, desires, needs, intercessions, all they want to be heard about, to God, as He is the only One truly able to change circumstances and destinies.

We've seen His provision and loving care more than once, actually we can see it every day, should we only be interested to notice it. That is why we really believe He can help us, more than anyone else, in our battles and struggles, and that is why we pray to Him and encourage you to do the same. So, please mention these in your prayers:

- 1 *Continue to pray for good people to join our team and not only for Outreach Pillar, but for all the others, as we face a rather systematic and long-term lack of personnel, and this really prevents us achieving the proposed objectives.*
- 2 *We hear about so many stories and life-situations from our beneficiaries, often we are overwhelmed with the sadness and despair they present and we need Godly inspiration to find the best advice to give! Please pray we'll get that!*
- 3 *Our work here in Romania is only possible because of very generous and kind hearted people, who contribute and support what we're doing, they are tools in God's hands! We appreciate them and ask God's blessing for them all!*
- 4 *Sunset House Cihei presents many challenges, most we anticipated, but many came unexpectedly - yet, they all need to be addressed and nothing can be left for another time! So, please pray that SHC will continue its progress!*

This Summer, we were visited by a team of present and future specialists in Counselling, students and professionals from United States. They came under **Divine Mercy University's** programme, led by prof. dr. **Ben Keyes**, who is a long-time friend of Smiles.

They came to Romania for two weeks, to visit our projects and understand the difficulties Romanians have to deal with. Of course, they were here to advise and help as possible, not the least to offer free training for Smiles staff, as well as for colleagues from other organisations from Oradea, especially those dealing with elderly care and residential facilities.

We want to thank the team for their presence here, on behalf of all those people who were visited or participated to the training sessions!



The Smiles
FOUNDATION

Latest updates from Smiles in Romania

newsletter

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