

The Smiles FOUNDATION

Latest updates from Smiles in Romania

newsletter

series 4, edition 7 - SPRING/SUMMER 2024

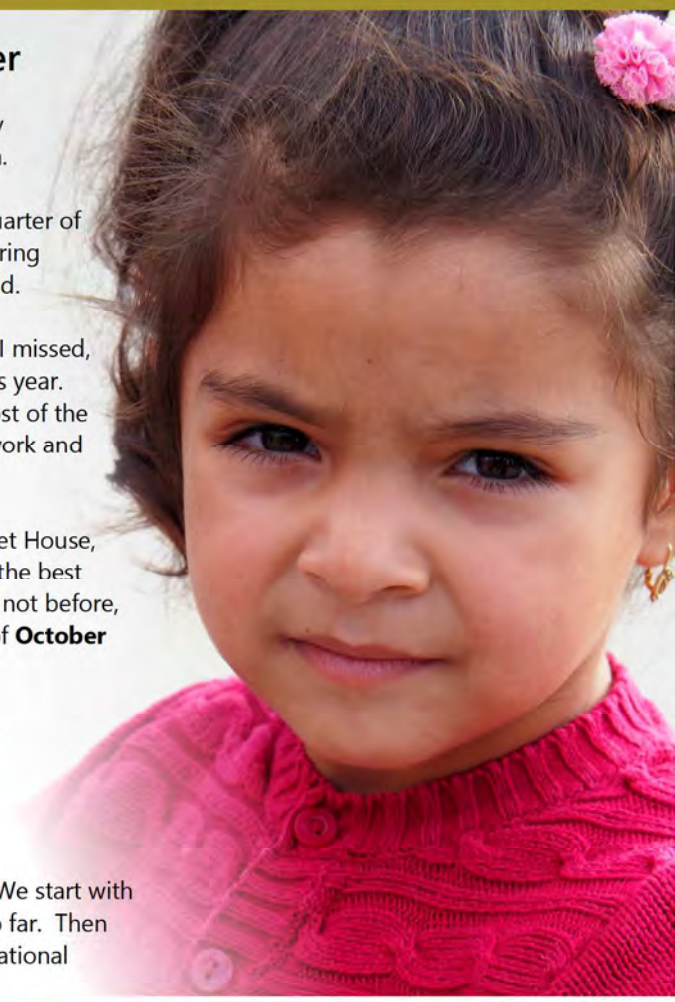
Welcome to our Spring-Summer 2024 Newsletter

Welcome to our first newsletter of 2024. I am excited to have this opportunity once again to share with you from the frontline of Smiles Ministry in Romania.

Uncharacteristically, I have not been in Romania very much during the first quarter of 2024. In fact, 7 of the 12 weeks I was away, travelling the UK and America sharing updates and new initiatives with our Smiles family and friends across the world.

It has been wonderful to see so many of you during my travels and for those I missed, I sincerely trust I will have opportunity to see you during the remainder of this year. Although, to achieve that, you will probably need to come to Romania, as most of the year now, I will be here seeing through the continuation of the tremendous work and especially the finish of Sunset House.

We have devoted a couple of pages in this newsletter to update you on Sunset House, but whether through this newsletter, or my monthly updates on the website, the best way to experience Sunset House, is to come and be part of the celebration. If not before, please consider joining us for the **Grand Official Opening** for the weekend of **October 11th – 14th, 2024**.



But Sunset House is now a fixed testimony to God's Goodness and Provision, so whenever you can come, on every Mission Trip throughout the Year, Sunset House will be here to visit, work in, or meet the staff and residents once fully operating, later this year.

It is so exciting to see so many already committed to Mission Trips this year. We start with 27 here in April and then the summer is looking very busy, with 87 booked so far. Then October, the Grand Official Opening of Sunset House, has close to 100 international guests already booked for the Opening weekend, with 60 of them staying for at least a week between October 5th – 19th so we are preparing for the biggest celebration ever here in Cihei, and I would love you to be a part of it.

All the regular Smiles Projects will be available for those on Mission Trips to share in. Updates on all the activities and various projects, are contained throughout this newsletter, which I trust you will enjoy reading. Be sure to let the folk know of your interest and any questions you have. Meanwhile, we truly thank you for your prayerful and practical support of all we do.

We cannot do the work without God's Power and Provision and this has been particularly true during the Construction of Sunset House but also in the recent appointment of new members joining the Outreach Team. Adi will be keen to introduce them as soon as possible, no doubt.

God continues to Directs, 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.



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





Joy in everything, no matter the reason and season!

It's not so easy to find joy these days, but it is the best cure for a lot of issues that people face. I'm thankful to God that I have the privilege to be a part of so much joy and see it on the front line through our Ministry in Romania! Since my last report in our previous Newsletter, I saw JOY in:

The S.O.S program (Sack of Smiles)

Every December, for the last 20 years, we share JOY with a gift bag full of goodies! It is great to see the faces of the children when they see Santa and the gifts, but greater than that is to tell them the real reason for Christmas and why we celebrate. They know that our Santa is special, and all His little helpers are people with big hearts that give up at their time and money to be with us year by year! I will never have enough words to show my appreciation to them, but I pray that God, the one who knows it all, will bless each of the Volunteers who come. I thank you ALL for the tremendous support and I'm even looking forward to see what is in store for 2024! If you want to be a part of the JOY, you have plenty of time to book! So, why not spend time in December with us and be a Santa – distributing Gifts to those who need a reason to smile!



The Tileagd Nursery

The Project has now been running in Tileagd for 20 years this year! Several generations have seen their lives changed and been given a good start in their educational journey. I always believed that the foundation of a person is important to be laid at an early age, and I'm thankful that we are a part of such important work.

Thank you that during all this time, many of you did not give up supporting us!! Together we can change the world for one person at a time... and over the years we have seen many change, by the Grace of God.

The after-school program in Tileagd

Since the Covid pandemic, we integrated the whole operation of the school, with the state school, but we still continue to be a support to the children from our Gypsy community! This summer we have a girl who is finishing her 8th grade, which in their culture is still a very big step forward. Thank you for being a part of it, even 21 years later.



And then, of course, the MISSION TRIPS!!!!

Our little MISSION CENTRE this year celebrates 20 years of activity! What a JOY to know that we are STILL HERE, still doing a great job helping people in need, sharing love, hope, faith – which all results in JOY!

Over the years we celebrate many special moments with the opening of all our projects. I'm always thankful to the Continental Hotel after a few years of holding our Mission Teams there, that they put in us the desire of wanting to have "our little corner of peace".

For the last 20 years this is how I feel!! A SMALL PLACE, full of joy, love, peace, hope and faith.

THANK YOU ALL FOR BEING A PART OF IT!!!
And I'm looking forward to having you back this year for our special celebrations!!!

OUTREACH PILLAR

Adrian Matis
Director of Outreach Pillar
The Smiles Foundation



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.***



"Encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone." - 1 Thessalonians 5:14

I believe God calls us to be a ray of sunshine to those who are living a difficult life, to always give them a word of encouragement, to show compassion, to show the love of Christ, and to help them when they are in need. I am glad that we can help these people going through their troubles, through the work that Smiles does. And we can be that ray of sunshine that brings hope and light.

In Cuiesd, a village we've visited for many years now, we have Libana, a beneficiary who was supported through our projects for a good while now. She lives in a very small house made out of mud bricks, which is not doing too well. Libana lives in there with her husband and her 14 year old son, their only income is from social welfare and that is not much obviously. Sometimes, when there is an opportunity, they do take various day-jobs, to make some extra income. They have no education, so because of that they could never really get a proper job. We go there every month to bring them food and helping with anything else we can.

As I mentioned earlier, their house isn't in a good condition. For example, the roof isn't fully covered, in the winter snow gets in, rain also wets everything, making life even more difficult for them. For some time now, we had hoped we will find someone to help them with the resources and practical work in order to repair and improve what can be improved. Actually, as we also talk with them about God and what He can do, they are always happy to have us there and share something with them from the Bible, and they want us to pray together, hoping that soon their problems will find some solutions.



Homeless Container Village

The Smiles Container Village was first established in 2010, when we placed 9 metal containers on a piece of land leased to us by the Mayor Office of Oradea. At the time, these were the only solution for the homeless people, as the City's Night Shelter was not functional.

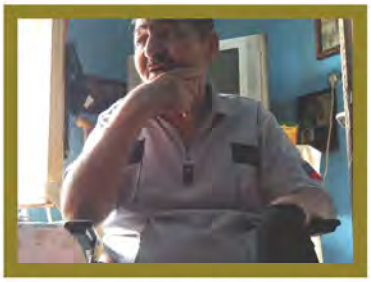
Starting 2018, we changed the way this worked, and because we wanted to make our work more efficient, we decided to allow the City to run a Day Centre in our Container Village, whilst we still had a free input with beneficiaries, as we saw fit.

So, after a difficult period of Pandemic, we continue the same prospect even at this time, and our team is present at least twice a week to see the people who are enroled with the Centre, take them food and spend time with them, trying to provide useful advice and counseling, including Christian life-essential principles.

The lady you see in the picture, Nicolici was her name, was one of the people with a very burdened personal history, who eventually had to move to a specialized institution, but benefited for a good while of our support. We encouraged her during some very difficult times she's been through, and we hope that our help was indeed a relief for her, as she was quite ill and needed a lot of attention and comfort.

Nicolici represents that category of people who have so much bad history, very little personal resources, and so many needs. The work with homeless people is still part of our efforts and we think it is well worth it.





Alexandru, from Păulești, has a particularly difficult challenge to deal with: he has no legs. As this is obviously very limiting for him, he needs people around to help. He has one close friend, but that person can only help with some shopping and a little work around the house, and that's it.

When we met Alexandru, we asked him what he wanted us to help with, what would be his essential needs and among them, one was of a very practical nature. He told us he'd like to be able to move around a little bit easier, but the steep climb from the house to the street prevents him from ever leaving the place, as he could not push his own wheelchair up the hill. So, to build a little ramp or slope would be a very welcome improvement for his living place.



So, we were very blessed to have our trustee Ian Steenson offering to help with that! He was accompanied by his brother Billy in building a very nice and smooth path at the front gate, so that our friend Alexandru can now help himself out. He was so happy and so excited, and so very grateful to "these wonderful foreigners" who did for him what no one locally did! And indeed, this makes a big difference!

Alexandru suffers many medical issues. Each time when we go and see him, we talk and we try to help him as we can. As he worked as a miner in his active time, his lungs are affected and obviously him smoking is a very bad idea! At the same time, given the whole picture, we admit we can only do so much and our help for him should be seen more as a "humanitarian contribution" more than anything else. We do encourage a significant change in someone's life, but equally we need to have a compassioned approach even if not all our suggestions are followed.

All in all, this is another great instance of great support, generous hearts and willing hands that we see from you, our supporters, for the benefit of someone in need! God bless you all!

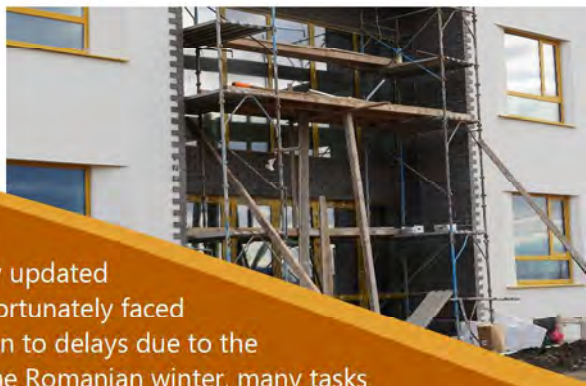
Update on Sunset House Cihei











Having now passed 2 years of Construction on Sunset House, there are of course numerous stories with such a large project that involve, delays, frustrations and simply, immense pressures in trying to see the job through to completion. I wouldn't want to take this valuable space sharing with you all those frustrations and disappointments.

What I can say, despite those challenges, is that month by month we are moving closer to the 'finish line' and as we emerge from the pressure of completion, so the excitement is restored of such an incredible project being built to the Glory of God and providing the opportunity to serve Him through the importance of Residential Care.



I am in no doubt, as we now have more than 10 years' experience in Residential Care in Romania, that the ministry opportunities to the Elderly, Disabled and Vulnerable who will call Sunset House their home, are truly immense. The vision and passion to see that Ministry potential realised, is a major driving force for us, as we work towards the finish line.

So, how close are we?

With the delays experienced on the project, which I have reported on regularly both through this format of our Newsletters and our monthly updated Website, we unfortunately faced a serious addition to delays due to the winter. During the Romanian winter, many tasks could not be started or continued from where they had reached before Christmas. At that point, several aspects of the work had to be paused until better weather, which I am thrilled to say we are now starting to enjoy. So, from early March work started again in earnest. By April, we should be in full-swing, which is unlikely to ease until the summer.

By that time, we will not only be finalising work inside the building and seeing furnishing begin, but we will also be able to begin the crucial work on the exterior of Landscaping, Gardens and Car Parking.

The delays have also impacted our Budget, as work that had been planned and anticipated to be done by Mission Trip guests, proved impossible, as the project wasn't ready when Mission Teams were here, so then we had to bring contractors in to do the work, after Mission teams had left. All very frustrating, but God has been the Great Provider and financial support for the whole project has continued to be a daily miracle which is 'life-changing' to experience.

At the turn of the year, I reported on January 1st, a balance needing to still be raised of around £500,000/$600,000.

Sunset House, Cihei
A project of the Smiles Foundation

You can support the SHC Project, through a donation, right here and now, by using these codes:

UK **USA**

After 2 years of fund-raising, I can be honest in saying that the January 1st realisation was a tad daunting! Were we going to see the support continue to get us over the finish line of Sunset House? In February and March, I spent 6 weeks on the road in the United Kingdom and America, sharing the updates and the needs to finish the project. Amazingly, £185,000/$222,000 was donated for Sunset House during the first quarter. Furthermore, some progress we had been waiting on for a long time with the sale of Land and building in Romania, brought in a further £65,000/$78,000 – so by April 1st we have seen the need met by 50% - meaning we start the second quarter needing £250,000/$300,000. Isn't God amazing!

There is still a way to go, so I continue to ask for your support through whatever options you have to help us over the finish line in these next few months. In one sense, like the final sprint at the end of a marathon, raising these final funds is tough, but none of us want an unfinished project, so we will keep our hand to the plough and not look back until the job is indeed finished.

We also still have great need for Help from any able to consider a Hands-On Mission Trip for finishing work on Sunset House. This is urgently needed from now until the job is done, which could take until July or even August. If you are interested to know more specifics about coming to Romania to help us on the ground, contact me by e-mail or telephone the Smiles Office.

Whilst pictures, updates and even the occasional video we produce, all gives an insight to this incredible project, nothing beats being here, seeing it and walking through the building to truly understand the size of this God Given Vision coming to fruition before our eyes.

In the next Newsletter we produce, I'll be writing about the Grand Official Opening which will be October 12th & 13th, 2024. A weekend of Celebration and Thanksgiving for this amazing Facility, built as a testimony to God's Love and Commitment to the Romanian people and their daily needs.



Kevin Hoy
Founder & Chief Executive
The Smiles Foundation

Over 100 international guests will be joining us for the Opening Celebration. Are you planning to be with us? Contact us now for details of being involved with this memorable moment in the Smiles Foundation's history. 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.

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



















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.***









These days, we enjoy the sun's beautiful rays which until recently were hidden behind the winter clouds. It's as if we bloom at the same time with the flowers and trees. The smell of the whole nature seems like a mixture of expensive perfumes that soak our senses. The birds are chirping in an indistinct song to us delighting our hearing. In this perfect season of Spring, we can feel God's Creation even with our eyes closed!

At ECO, we have elderly people with so many different personalities, different needs and different expectations. The past is different for everyone, but we all share the present. It depends on each of us to make the present pleasant inside our Smiles home. Here, we are all a family. Under God's protection and with the help of the Smiles team, we are able to meet everyone's needs, according to their expectations, but certainly at the best we can.

Among others, we have volunteer programmes and committed people who come to visit us every week. There are Christian teams who come to sing with the elderly and share with them. Many residents have not previously left their homes for months or even years, and these meetings are the perfect opportunity to get closer to God and to know Him more, providing an opportunity to sing together and pray. Sometimes, a team of high school students come to visit, they play games with them and have activities to help maintain their intellectual abilities. We have a physical therapist who ensures the maintenance of physical abilities through group exercising programmes, as well as individual sessions.

Another group that we are very happy to receive are the students from the Music and Arts College, who come to do various musical sessions, using imagination games with a musical theme, by jingling bells to the rhythm, by singing with musical instruments or with their voices. We also have volunteers who come from time to time just to talk with them or to take a walk outside. These activities, and others that we have from time to time, are the ones that take us out of daily routine and bring us all so much happiness!

We want to thank each of you who visited us, those who encouraged us and all those who prayed for us. You are a blessing to us and we pray to God to keep you all healthy, happy and in peace so that we can enjoy our friendship in the years to come.







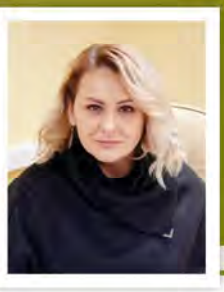






ENTERPRISE PILLAR

Simona Tosity
Director of Enterprise Pillar
The Smiles Foundation



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.***











Times change... and so should we!

My biggest challenge twice every year, when I need to write few words for you, is to summarize 6 months of constant work at the Glasshouse within just one page!

It's an age of speed, everywhere we look we are invaded with tonnes of information, our devices are pumping on to us hundreds and hundreds of new data every time we turn them on... So, most of the time I think to myself "What can I say to be relevant? What words should I use to put in the reader's head? Will the reader of this newsletter have the patience to go through it all until the last page?"



I feel it is very easy to miss the mark these days, unless... there's a purpose. But it is also true that through words, one can be relevant for someone nearby, through decisions and actions, one could impact positively someone's life.

I am not sure why, on a page dedicated to SMINRO, I started with these thoughts... Maybe, it is because I myself need to remember "what about SMINRO?"

Many of you know that our winter season is the longest season we have. It starts in November and finishes in March, usually. But particularly this winter season felt long, and actually proved to be a precarious season, with a lot of ups and downs. Usually, months like January and February are the coldest, with average temperature of 8-9 degrees below, but this year they brought temperatures of 10-11 above!

For us, obviously that was not good at all! It actually created a great deal of panic, because all the plants were in bloom and ready to be sold, and yet, the contracts are based on deliveries weeks later... So, I was thinking, what will I be doing with plants ready to be sold in January? Who will buy flowers in the coldest month of the year? But I was surprised that people adapted very fast to this "climate change" and everyone started to ask for flowers... Even the supermarkets asked for the products earlier! And so, plants that were meant to be sold around the end of March were delivered and we finished the winter season as early as 28th February!



Amazing, I would say now, a month later, but the immense pressure we had then is hard to describe! Three months compressed into six weeks... I thank God for the amazing staff we have working every single day for 6 weeks and long hours to accomplish all the commitments!

Once again, God provided all the means for us to overcome every challenge, so by 20th of March, over 520,000 bulbs and 48,000 primroses were gone and over 300,000 other spring plants planted...

That was a first! But you see, as times change so should we, just to make sure we stay relevant! For me, Simo, this is indeed another reminder to myself: get a purpose (that I already have) establish goals, be ready for all the challenges that come along the way!

And always be ready to adapt!

As was already mentioned, we are always looking for good people to join our Outreach Team, as we believe there is a lot to harvest in the field, and worthy workers are always needed!



Dezna Camp in particular requires a very specialized approach, in terms of calling and vocation, but also availability and skills, we are glad to have **Corina** joining us, as manager for this project, which has a great potential for development and can definitely become a top service offering in the area.

Corina started employment with Smiles in March, so her input should be very welcome for the busy months of Summer, first and foremost for the activities in Dezna, but then, as possible, also for Mission Trip visitors!

She graduated from Emanuel University as a social worker many years ago, but now she is also training under the Management Faculty. Her Christian Faith motivates her to be a good testimony for the Lord, while her professional direction is towards management and administration. We are confident she can be a very efficient and successful coordinator of the activities at Dezna Outreach Centre.

Please continue to pray for Corina, as well as for the whole Outreach Team, to always be under God guidance and inspiration! This work takes a lot of commitment and strong faith, to grow into what God wants us all to be and to do what people need us to do for them!

Thank You!

So much of all we do here in Romania, talks volumes about the generosity of our wonderful supporters! Be it something very special as the new Sunset House Centre, or something more regular, like our Field visits... all present your amazing commitment and support for Smiles!

That's why, we can only say a big thank you to you and please receive our deep gratitude and appreciation, as we pray that God will reward you abundantly, according to His grace!

Please pray with us!

One well-known Scripture about prayer is Philippians 4:6, where we are encouraged to bring our requests to God, at all times. There is a particular detail in this text which we believe is very relevant - in order to come before God with no worry, no anxiety, the Word tells us to do so by bringing our thanksgiving as well!

In all truth, a good spirit, a positive attitude and a thankful heart will always take us much further, will give us a better and more complete understanding of all the things we go through. When we are blessed with good times, we should be happy! But equally, when we experience a deep valley, we should never lose heart! So, please do pray for:

1. *The major milestone in Smiles work, which is the completion of Sunset House Cihei Residential Centre - soon to be open - and for all the challenges that will follow, concerning staff, new residents, budgets, inspections, licenses, and so on.*
2. *Inspiration and guidance for all Smiles team, as we are all under presure to give the best we can, and this is indeed what we want, as well; pray that we always press on, despite difficulties and complications on our path.*
3. *For our the beneficiaries, as they need support with their challenges, more than only in the material, immediate sense; they need praying for, a lot of counseling, emotional support and more than anything, to trust there is hope for them!*
4. *As mentioned above, we should always be ready to give thanks and appreciate the many gifts God gives us; above all else, we should be grateful for people all over the world who are so very supportive and generous towards Smiles!*

In October this year, we will have the Grand Opening of our most impressive Residential Centre, the Sunset House Cihei! Between 11th and 14th, we offer a very special opportunity for those who would like to come and be part of the Celebration.

That's why we welcome you to join us bringing thanks to God for His help to complete such a huge project! We will be very excited to have you here, as well as many other friends from all over the world!



architect impression



The Smiles Foundation

Latest updates from Smiles in Romania

newsletter

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