

The Smiles FOUNDATION

*Latest updates from Smiles in Romania*

# newsletter

series 4, edition 9 - SPRING/SUMMER 2025

## Welcome to our Spring-Summer 2025 Newsletter

Thank you for taking time to read our first newsletter of 2025. This year started with a frantic schedule. I was in Romania for a month from mid-January to mid-February. Then returned to United Kingdom for visits with meetings and presentations in Scotland before heading over to Northern Ireland. Both visits, as always, were tremendously enjoyable and valuable as I shared the Smiles Ministry with many people. Then I returned to Romania while we had a Mission Team from the University of North Carolina before heading to the United States of America for a month, where I actually am now, sitting in Baton Rouge, Louisiana between meetings, to write pieces for this Newsletter.

This seems to be the story of Smiles, always so much happening! Maintaining the projects we have established, some for more than 20 years, others brand new, like Sunset House, just opened, and yet others still on the drawing board such as the new After-School Club in Cihei, just around the corner from Sunset House.

It is incredibly exciting to see and experience all that God has planned for the Smiles Foundation to fulfil within the ministry to the people of Romania. I never imagined, 35 years ago, when I first visited Romania, that God would plan so much and be willing to use me and many people to share His Love and Purpose for those we are privileged to serve day by day.

Whether that be Families, through the Outreach Family Care Project established 25 years ago and still operating every day, or the Tileagd Children's Nursery, opened in 2004 and about to move to a new home, or our Residential Facilities for Elderly, Disabled and Vulnerable adults in Salonta since 2013, Oradea 2014, Tileagd 2017 and now Cihei opening April 2025. So many wonderful opportunities to serve our God and present Him to the people as their only true Hope for a better future as they discover the Plan and Purpose, He has for them.

With the increase in projects and the demands on both our time and resources, we need more and more help and support of friends from the United Kingdom and America who come on our Mission Trips, to work along side us in ministry, whether with visitations, food deliveries, children's work or taking time at our residential facilities. Of course, many of our Mission guests get involved with Hands-On work, possibly at the Glasshouse helping with the 1.7million plants and bulbs we process every year or construction work, maintenance work or freshening up a facility with a lick of paint. So many different ways you can be involved, serving the Lord, shoulder to shoulder with the Smiles Team in Romania.

As we plan our various schedules for the year ahead, why don't you plan taking a Mission Trip to Romania with Smiles. Come as a Church Group, Youth Team, Family or on your own. You will soon meet up with many on a similar mission, often becoming friends for life. E-mail us or contact the office for full information on timing, cost and booking arrangements.



**Kevin Hoy**
**Founder & Chief Executive**
**The Smiles Foundation**

These 8 pages of our Spring Newsletter have a lot of great news and information to share, so as you can, take a good read. Share the news with your friends and family and if you want more copies to spread around, just call the office and we'll get you all you need. There is even more covered on the website, so if you want even more news, go to www.thesmilesfoundation.org

My thanks for your continued support of the Smiles Foundation prayerfully, practically and financially.



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# MISSIONS PILLAR

Maria Hava
Director of Missions Pillar
The Smiles Foundation



*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.***

**"Every ending... has a new beginning!!!!!!!"** - ... not that I didn't hear it before, BUT this time has a different impact on me!

If you read my updates on Smiles website since November onwards, you can see that I miss the "construction world" ☺ Yes, you hear it right!!! There is something about that stress and pressure that keeps me going! It is like a drug, with no cure... But a good drug! So, I have a new building project on the list! ☺ This time it's me, not Mr. Hoy! He told you that Sunset House was to be his last building project, and he keeps his promise to you all!!!



What's it all about?! Well, a super place, filled with love, patience (this one not from me!) and care, where the kids of age 5 to 15 can come after school, have fun in a safe place!!!! A KIDS CLUB!

The thought of it was "born" indeed at the same time as Stefan was born. When Stefan was 2 years old, by the law, I have to officially come back to work, which was a struggle around child minding. For me and Cornel, the concept of leaving Stefan with "other people" was a hard one and not on the ideal list. Because we both had to work full time, Stefan started nursery when he was 2. It was a heartbreaking moment, but because we had the understanding from Mr. Hoy, we decided that Cornel would be the backup and he would stay home with Stefan, when needed. So, the first year was more home than nursery, for him. In 2019, Mihai was born and Cornel stayed home with them most of the time... The time passed and we got through ok, until 2023. The Summer time, when we have big teams and both of us were needed, we had to find options... And not only was it hard to find, the cost of it was unreal most of the time, for a middle-class family, like us.

Last November, when Sunset House construction side was done and I had more time to think, my mind went wild!!!!! So wild that one day, when I took the kids to play with their friends in the neighbourhood, I saw a nice house for sale!!! Next morning, I called and asked about the price. Because it was just days before Mr. Hoy had to go back to UK, I drove him and Adi crazy to come with me, to see the place! They did not have an escape, so came... Saw it, said is was a nice place, but maybe too soon after Sunset House and all the other pressure we have!

Because Mr. Hoy is a nice person, he gave me the permission to tell to the agent the truth... that I do not have the money, but I dream of it ☺, and if there was an option for a one-year payment plan, we were interested in it! To cut the long story short, at the beginning of December, the agent said the owner went with another option, so the DEAL was off... I asked God for peace and the right place... So, I understood when the answer was no, but still the dream did not go away! JUST BEFORE we close the office for the Christmas break, another house 5 MIN WALK from Smiles main office came up for sale!!!! The owner was more than happy to wait until the end of 2025 for the entire payment, cheaper that the first one (50,000 euro cheaper) and more land (1,500 sqm this one instead of 600 sqm the initial one). Soooooooo, after a long discussion with the trustee board members, they gave me their blessing to move forward with it! I'm soooo thankful to God to have people like them involved in the work we do and I appreciate and respect each one of them,



TODAY, we are the owners of the new place, having paid a deposit of 10% of the entire amount! The rest of the money will need to be paid by the end of the year!! I'm OVER THE MOON!!!!

With Tileagd Nursery moving to the new home, and now Cihei Kids Club, I feel that there is a new beginning indeed. A new talk around the block ☺ ☺. For the last 4 years, you've heard a lot about the elderly, now it is time for me to stress you with kids!!!! And trust me, I'm good at stressing people!!! :)

**Every ending has a new beginning..**. THE KIDS WORK in Cihei and Tileagd, this is now my new beginning!!! And, of course, the mission trips... and the promotion, because I still love my travel time... and there are a few other things going on, always ☺!

# 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.***



Since I started as a Social Worker at Smiles Foundation, I have learned what this profession truly means - a vocation to help those in need! Working alongside the most vulnerable members of the community, I have discovered that a social worker is much more than just a provider of material help. Above all, they are someone who offers emotional support, spreading hope and comfort with every action they take.

As we learn from Christian principles, our involvement extends to spiritual support. We all feel the calling to spread the "fragrance of salvation" through every activity and interaction with those whom we visit. Satisfaction is measured not only by the food parcels we provide, but also by the smiles and gratitude of our beneficiaries. Every conversation, every visit, every service offered bring a deep sense of fulfillment and purpose in what we do.

One important aspect of our work is also the support we provide to students who come for internships. We offer them the opportunity to integrate into the professional life of a social worker, allowing them to apply the knowledge they have gained and actively participate in social inquiries. The feedback we've received from them has always been extremely positive and motivating, and I can personally confirm that this learning and training process is a valuable experience for everyone involved.

I am grateful for every day spent at The Smiles Foundation, for the opportunity to help and learn, but most of all, for the privilege of being part of a dedicated and compassionate team.

**Andreea Mureșan - Social Worker, Smiles Outreach Pillar**

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Some of you may remember Sabina and her three children: Denis (13), Karen (6), and Ben (3). They currently live in a small one-room rented apartment. With only a bed and a couch for sleeping, space is extremely limited, and they don't have enough room for proper storage.

Sabina is the sole provider for her family, as her husband has been unable to find a job. She works as a cleaning lady at the State University, earning a modest salary. Their only additional income is the child allowance, but even with that, it is not enough to cover their basic needs. Paying rent and utilities each month is a constant struggle and often she falls behind on the payments.



We have been supporting Sabina and her family for quite some time. Since her situation remains difficult, we have decided to continue helping her. Raising three children while trying to cover all expenses alone is not easy.

Recently, Sabina reconnected with her mother, and they are now on good terms. Her mother got a bank loan and purchased a piece of land with an old house. Sabina hopes to move in there with her children, enroll them in the local school, and finally have a place of her own. The house is in very bad condition and a lot of work will be needed in order to make it alright, however, she lacks the resources to do so.

If Sabina had her own home, she wouldn't have to pay such high rent and utilities, allowing her to invest more in her children's well-being. We pray that she'll be able to do that, one day. The biggest challenge is securing construction materials, which are quite expensive. With God's help, we pray we can make this dream a reality and give them a chance for a good future.

**Andreea Andrei - Social Worker, Smiles Outreach Pillar**

Often, in our team's fellowship times, we pray for our beneficiaries and for the challenges they have, but also for Godly wisdom for ourselves, to know what is the best way we can truly help.

In many cases, if not all, the emotional wounds and scars go very deep and they are in fact much more difficult to deal with, than the immediate material needs. People feel lost and they despair under their burdens, not being able to see any way out! And that is an extremely tough place to be in!

People need to feel they are loved and appreciated and we try to show them we care for them, in various ways.



One of these people is Luci, we mentioned her before in our reports, she is a long standing beneficiary of Smiles' programmes. Earlier this year, in February, we surprised Luci with a small cake and some other goodies, for her birthday. She turned 52.

We just showed up at her house and started singing to her and we lit the candles, gave her a little present… She was so impressed, started to cry and said: "I did not believe anyone ever will do this for me! This is my first birthday cake ever! This is extraordinary and I am grateful to God for my family, Smiles!"

Quite something, isn't it?



# SUNSET HOUSE CIHEI

# 32 start!




**Kevin Hoy**
**Founder & Chief Executive**
**The Smiles Foundation**


It's hard to believe that the initial vision for Sunset House was shared in 2016 – 9 years ago – when at the time we were considering a 'Sunset Village' in Cihei for which a Residential Centre was only a part of the plan. Believing God would always give confirmation of a project through the 'Peace that passes all understanding' – in 2016, we never felt that peace, so the concept of a Sunset Village was 'shelved' or at least put on the back burner.

An alternative development took place with establishing TAL (Tileagd Assisted Living) which opened in 2017 in the facility that started out as Smiles Community School in 2006 at the Tileagd Complex.




Not too much good, came out of the Covid Pandemic in 2020 but one thing that did, during restricted travel for me, was the re-emergence of the vision for a State-of-the-Art Residential Facility in Cihei. This time, a standalone facility, that would go by the name of Sunset House, Cihei.




As I started to share the vision and opportunity, first with the Romanian Executive Management, then with the Trustees and finally with our Supporters, the commitment and excitement for a new facility grew, and quickly I was preparing to launch the biggest project fund-raising campaign in the history of the Smiles Foundation.

**Sunset House, Cihei**

A £3million / $3.75million project would stretch our faith and confidence in God's provision and faithfulness but we all felt excited to once again, step out in faith and with that 'Peace that passes all understanding in our Heart' we were ready to experience what God had planned.






In April 2022, we held a Dedication Service and broke ground at the Cihei HQ of Smiles, Romania.

Within days, heavy plant equipment arrived to start preparing the land for the construction of Sunset House, Cihei.







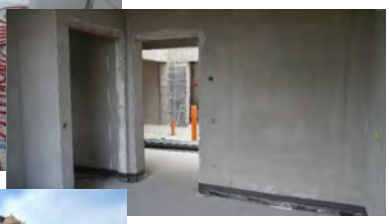


By end of 2022, we had the slab poured at the first level of the first section (Phase One) for Sunset House, Cihei. Little was achieved during the Romanian winter, so it was March 2023 when we started to see more progress.

By April 2023, progress seemed to be moving better and the building was taking significant shape. Within 3 more months, the entire building was constructed with the roof completely cemented.

Then a huge amount of work would begin, focused on what is generally known as the 'Finishing Stage' – Insulation, Plastering and Paint to the exterior. A vast amount of Interior installation work for Electrical, Plumbing, Heating, Flooring, Fire Department installations, IT requirements and so much more. Numerous contractors who between them took 12 months to complete the entire job.









August 2024, the Building was about done. Just interior finishing, such as paint and furnishing, which was required in preparation for the Grand Celebration of the Completed Building on October 12th & 13th, 2024 which brought 100 guests from America and the United Kingdom plus many from Romania for a Celebration that will not be quickly forgotten.




After all the October celebrations, the long challenging process of securing all the required Authorisations began. Construction, Health & Safety, Social Services and the all-powerful Fire Department! Each important and often dependant on securing one certificate to submit it with the next application, which helps explain why this process took several months.

However, in early March 2025, we secured the final Authorisation we were waiting on, and that allowed us to start implementing the process to function – namely the employment of Staff and the welcoming of residents.

Word had spread about the Opening of Sunset House, and people had started applying for employment for several weeks. With all our Authorisations approved, we started interviewing and steadily the full picture of the team to operate Sunset House, Cihei started coming clear.

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

*for UK*

*for USA*



Leading the Team, Director of Smiles Residential Pillar is **Simona Tosity**

Assisting Simona is:



**Natalia Malita**, Management Assistant



**Delia Mezea**, Social Worker



**Dr. Olimpia Sandor**, Medical Lead Doctor



**Ramona Barda**, Senior Nurse



**Andreea Tufan**, Physiotherapist

In addition to these six team members, there are 3 more Nurses, 8 Carers, 3 Kitchen staff, 4 Security/Maintenance personnel and 1 Housekeeper. All new to Smiles and having completed their training, will welcome our first residents to Sunset House on **April 7th, 2025** and what a gloriously happy day that will be!

The Financial support since the start has been incredible. Three million plus, whether British Pounds or American Dollars is a great deal of money, but God has been faithful, and His people have given generously. So, we got here... we arrived – the true **Beginning of Functioning for Sunset House, Cihei**. Don't leave it too long before you come and see it for yourself. Meet the staff, spend time with the residents. We are waiting for you, and if you visit, I know you won't be disappointed.

**Thank you on behalf of all who will now call Sunset House, Cihei – HOME!**

# 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.***



**Living with Alzheimer's**

This is a story I have heard from many of our beneficiaries, and one that I have witnessed myself many times... It is the story of residents at JFL, as well as in other centres. It is about the true meaning of compassion, sadness, joy, unconditional love, and sacrifice. The feelings that accompany it are powerful, the emotions profound - no one can remain indifferent, as the life lessons it teaches are so deep!

It is the story of a person who is - or rather, was - someone special. A kind and yet strong person, an honest man for whom sincerity and respect were fundamental values, cherished until the very end. And yet, this man was taken away from his loved ones by a merciless, relentless disease that gradually transformed him into someone different, seemingly stripped of his former traits.

I speak of what dementia does, this monstrous illness known as "the disease of forgetfulness", which takes its victims captive and condemns them to an existence in an abysmal universe, far removed from reality. And this man, who was not spared either, left behind a deep void in the hearts of his loved ones, in their thoughts and emotions - a shadow of the person he once was. Now, I speak of "him" - the one who was a father, husband, grandfather, brother, friend... I was honored to meet him at the Centre, even in the advanced stages of his illness, yet I could still glimpse in his eyes the man he used to be. His deep blue eyes, like the sea, still revealed his kind soul. He would still react, even faintly, at the sight of the woman he once loved or the child who had since grown into an adult...

I came to know this man personally, but also through the stories of many others. He was a man weighed down by time, burdened by thoughts long faded, thoughts as countless as the stars in the sky. Sometimes, he would look at me with a frozen gaze, other times with desperation, as if crying out for help from the depths of the abyss. And sometimes, he was entirely absent, lost in a world unseen to us, a world that had become his sole reality.



I also had the pleasure of meeting his wife—a loving woman with a calm, resigned expression. She came to be by his side, even choosing to live with him at the centre, brought there by their son, who found comfort in knowing his parents were together, cared for with love. She remained by his side until the very end, with devotion and dedication, just as she had stood by him throughout their lives. And until the very end, she was the only one who was never completely erased from his memories - the only one he still recognized from all his loved ones. What a strong bond must have connected them, one that not even this cruel disease could break! She stayed with him until his final breath, until his eyelids closed, and silence settled over his heart...

*"I miss him so much! I carry him in my soul and in my thoughts, and I will, for as many days as God grants me… I will walk the same path one day, but I am not afraid! The people here at the Centre are so kind to us; they take great care of us, putting their hearts into everything they do, as if we were family - because, in truth, that's what we are! I am not afraid, because I know what it means to live with Alzheimer's, and even though it is hard, I know that it is not really the end!"*

**Carmen Pop - Manager at JFL Salonta**

For the Smiles Foundation, Residential Care became a very important part of its portfolio, since we opened our very first care home in Cihei, back in 2010.

That was a small beginning, as we only had 8 beds, established within the former Cihei Children's Centre. Still, a great experience nevertheless, as it created the premise for growing this area to a much larger level, in the coming years.



This was a need we noticed long before we could do something about it! Visiting so many communities out there, under Family Care programme, we encountered numerous difficult situations of elderly, who were abused, neglected, abandoned and had no hope for a decent life anymore.

We brought in "social cases" - meaning people who could not take care of their own needs - but more and more, we were asked to offer this type of service for a larger population. Especially after joining the EU, Romanians travel abroad for work more than ever before, this resulting in an increasing number of aging people left behind, who would need care and medical attention, from someone.

This led us to expand the programmes to assist the elderly, but particularly the Residential Centres. And it soon became a broadly known thing that Smiles offers the best services!

# 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.***

**This time, a different type of report. A day out.**

As Simona is very busy these days with Sunset House affairs, we were thinking we could have a different type of report about the Glasshouse - from the perspective of those of us who are not involved with this project every day, but rather ocassionally. But still involved!

We all agree that work load can be overwhelming sometimes, it happens in all areas of Smiles work, especially when tight dead-lines are in place, and even more, when it is related to external partners. We just need to deliver and terms need to be respected!

This is when Cihei based colleagues, along with the social workers from Tileagd and Oradea, are invited to give a hand! And we are happy to oblige! Of course, the largest amount of work is still on the shoulders of the Glasshouse employees, but we are happy, those few days in a year, to wake up a little bit earlier, head out to Arpasel and join the working forces. And feel it, for the next couple of days!



As we start doing what we are told to, obviously we need proper instructions, we, the office people, realize how much we lack physical activity, as well as practical skills, the handiness our local colleagues master. But we are good and supportive team-mates, so we learn quickly. Before too long, the team work shows its benefits and the progress is very visible! We even start to be a little bit proud of ourselves - exactly the right time for Victor to notice how slow everything moves! Of course, as a passing joke!

Usually, by 11 o'clock, we feel a significant motivation for a break, but that only happens later. Not much later though, we can be easily convinced, as some pizza is involved. And we are again, happy to oblige.



Honestly, we get to appreciate a good lunch much better when we are at the Glasshouse. And we also realize it is quite difficult to carry on with the second part of the day, after said lunch. But we put in the effort and again, soon enough, we see more progress, particularly as we head toward the target numbers for the day. As a delivery is imminent, the particular numbers need to be achieved.



Sometimes, we make it! But most of the times, there is still a lot to be completed, and when we leave the Glasshouse, our colleagues there will continue the work, until all needed plants are prepared and all is done and ready.

The Glasshouse Staff-day, as we call it, is actually a great opportunity for us to do something different, that is both useful and fun! As always when people get together like that, laughter is in place, we get to know each other better, talk about our families, different adventures from the past, all of that! Even some heated political debate is on the table, but all in good spirit, no one places too much hope in those guys!



We all agree, helping at the Glasshouse is not too bad and we recommend you consider joining us there, on a Smiles Mission Trip!

# Please pray with us!

Matthew 6, verse 6 is a very powerful Scripture: *"But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."*

I love it, because it really talks about what really matters - an intimate connection with God, who will listen to our prayers, even if no one else will know about it! But we will know! And it is so wonderful to realise what God's saying, giving us that answer that we need, in His time - that will build our trust also for the future! With confidence, we should pray:

1. *To have powerful impact, we all need powerful vision and lots of determination, no matter what we do. Pray with us that Smiles projects will continue to be relevant and for the team, to confidently carry on with their work, now and in the future!*
2. *There are many challenges we all encounter every day, when trying to do God's work - no doubt there will be difficult times and narrow paths ahead, but let's just surrender all our worries and concerns into God's hands! Much stronger than ours!*
3. *Getting Sunset House up and running is a very significant effort, as it is a large and complex project, and a lot of areas to be covered, staff, equipment, furniture, procedures, and of course, the beneficiaries. Pray for a successful start!*
4. *The Word encourages us to bring our requests to God, but equally to come before Him with a grateful heart, with songs of joy and praise, giving thanks for all the blessings we have already received! So, let's all just do that, together, always!*



The Container Village is a place where hugs are greatly appreciated!

Those vulnerable people carry with them a lot of emotional baggage, their personal experiences often being difficult to process and deal with. That's why we are trying to be friends they can rely on, and although our programme is not 24/7, they still appreciate the occasions we visit them!

Showing love is priceless!

# Thank You!

It is truly amazing to see the support and encouragements you provide for us, regularly or through one-offs, this really is inspiring and of course, very useful for continuing our work, here in Romania.

So, we want to say thank you and to appreciate your efforts in supporting the Smiles programmes!

Everything we do, we want to be useful for people in need and equally to bring praise to our Lord, so please continue to be our partners in this very special ministry and may God bless you richly in all areas!



The SOS programme, that you know very well, was a great success also for Christmas 2024! We get to report a little bit about it, but it really is something you need to be part of, in order to appreciate the whole experience!

This time we were blessed with having two Santas, which were of course accompanied by their helpers, to make sure the presents were carefully handed to children, families, elderly - what an amazing way to celebrate the best gift of all times, our Saviour!



The SOS week started of course with giving the first presents in Tileagd church, then we visited the residential centres, families in Oradea and villages of Bihor county, the nursery, the Homeless container village, everywhere we sang carols and brought the good news of Salvation! Too bad there is not enough space here for all the pictures we took, but there were definitely a lot of smiles involved! The residents of our centres, as well as everyone else whom we visited, were very happy and excited to get all these visitors from abroad to come and see them, and not empty handed! Indeed, it was an amazing week and we thank you for helping this happen!

The Smiles Foundation

Latest updates from Smiles in Romania

newsletter

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