

EVERYONE'S CHILD ROMANIA



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Everyone's Child Reaches its Second Stage

Building a life instead of preparing for death

Exciting news! We are at a new stage in the work of Everyone's Child Romania – and it's an exciting one.

Paul Davies started his work with HIV positive children in 1994. When merely babies or toddlers they had been infected with the deadly HIV virus by unscreened blood and the sharing of needles by medical staff. They were not expected to reach maturity; indeed most of them had died before the age of 16.

Back then the aim was to work with families of HIV-positive children, so that they could stay with their families until they died. ECR worked to provide food, fuel and medicine. A holiday once a year, a party at Christmas time and shoe boxes of Christmas gifts were added, to bring some enjoyment into these stricken lives. The aim was to bring them comfort until they died.

Things have changed. Better anti-retroviral drugs have been invented and these are given free. The ECR youngsters get their ARVs from American pharmaceutical Co. ("Abbott International"). ARV drugs are not a cure, but they slow down the growth of the viruses in the blood. Result – the HIV patients are living longer. We do not know how much longer they will live, as the use of these stronger ARV drugs is still new. But the ECR team in Romania is now working with more young adults than children.

They still need a great deal of help. Having spent much of their childhood suffering illness, it is difficult for them to achieve the sort of independence other people take for granted. Discrimination makes it difficult for them to get a job, though some have – against big odds, (and with our help) – done just that. Others are, for the first time, daring to hope that they may have future.

It is for this 'future' that ECR is now fighting. The battle for some fair play for these unfortunate ones is a tough one, and one that would be impossible for them to fight alone. So now our role, although much changed, is, if anything, even more vital if we are to give our beneficiaries the chance of a decent start in the next stage of their lives. Please stay and fight with us for those who still have no voice here!

Everyone's Child Romania seeks to relieve sickness among children in Romania suffering from HIV or Aids and to provide counselling, medical and financial support and respite care facilities for such children and those of their families who may be in need.

DON'T MISS IT

The Mynyddislwyn Male Voice Choir is performing a concert at the Blackwood Miners' Institute to raise funds for Everyone's Child on 19th June at 7.00 pm. They will be involving a local school choir, and a special guest artiste. It should be a really good evening, and a chance to raise awareness of our charity. Tickets, £5 each, available from the Box Office at the Institute.

HAPPY RETIREMENT TO CANON REDMAN!

Canon Arthur Redman and his lovely wife Joyce, have decided that they are going to enjoy a well-earned retirement together.

Arthur has been director of the St Barnabas Trust, actively involved at every stage, preaching about the work of ECR, running the annual appeal, sending the 'Thank You' letters after the appeal. He wanted to be a hands-on man, with full understanding of all aspects of the work. With Joyce supporting Arthur at every step, they formed a wonderful, compassionate team as together with his hard-working and supportive secretary Thelma, they organised the work of the St Barnabas Trust. Our deepest thanks go to Thelma and her supportive husband Colin!

I first met Arthur when I was asked to meet this, "retired Canon from Derby", at Bucharest train station, to take him to the grand opening of another home for disabled children. It was not a task I was looking forward to, to baby-sit the 'Vicar of Dibley', and protect him from the

wandering hands of the thieves roaming the train station.

But it was the start of a close and enduring friendship and working partnership. Arthur joined the ranks of ECR in 2001. We agreed that he would raise money specifically for holidays and respite care. He did this magnificently, providing enough funds for at least 3 holidays each year, numerous periods of respite care, and in the latter years for the Independent Living Project. All of these programmes have proved to be vital and spiritually resurrecting for the children.

This quote was taken while we were on one of the holidays for which Arthur's Trust had provided. Elena had been going through a period of great depression, as do many of our kids.

"Who will love a body full of AIDS? Most of the time I have no hope for my future....but you do, for me!"

DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

Our ever-popular event, the Health and Beauty evening, will be held in Maes Manor, on 16th October at 7.00 pm. Don't miss it!

DID YOU KNOW?

More than 10,000 children in Romania were infected with HIV between 1986 and 1991 in hospitals and orphanages as a direct result of government policies.

A DEDICATED WORKER

Corina is 29 and she lives and works in Romania and is employed by ECR as a social worker. She has a degree in psychology. Prior to working with ECR as a social worker she did some voluntary work in a church and school in Romania.

She met Paul Davies, Project Manager for ECR in Romania, through a mutual contact. (She stresses that only 'God knows' how she came into contact with Paul.) Paul was looking for a social worker and Corina felt that she wanted to work with HIV infected children and she says that she was more than qualified for this role although at the time her English was very poor. However she promised that she would learn very quickly. Following an interview held in McDonalds she felt that her compassion for these children must have impressed Paul and she began working as a social worker for ECR.



*Corina delivering a bike
as a birthday present*

Dedication

Corina says that 'my work means my life' and that 'my clients are like my family'. She says that 'every family has a story to tell....mostly sad'. She says that since working with ECR she has lost some of 'her family' and that she misses them very much. She has fond memories of Catalin Ioga, who died 4 years ago.

She feels particularly close and concerned for 11 year old Asibe Mustafa who has problems with her heart and liver and who has developed TB as well as being HIV positive. When her parents died of AIDS two years ago, Corina felt that she wanted to adopt her. Asibe is now being cared for by relatives and Corina is currently helping her come to terms with the death of her parents.

Fighting for survival

As a result of the anti-retroviral drugs and the help and support of ECR, Corina says that most of the clients are surviving and are between 17-20 years of age. The government in Romania did not believe that these children with HIV/AIDS would survive and now they 'don't know what to do with them'. She describes the clients as having to FIGHT for everything, including benefits (if they are too ill to work), for the right to medical care, and the right to work/train. She says that 'normal' people have problems finding work and training programmes in Romania and that it is almost impossible for those with HIV/AIDS to find employment as the stigma surrounding AIDS in Romania is endemic.

She believes that there is a need to develop different projects for education, work and training, for independent housing and medical therapy and ECR are helping to work towards these goals.

Finally she feels that ECR has a 'mission' to keep up the 'FIGHT' so that they are not 'lost from society' and 'forgotten' (as the Romanian government would like) and that if they have any future at all, it will be thanks to ECR.

Diane Lloyd

Do You Belong to the 777 Campaign?

Inspired by the 7th verse of the 7th chapter of the 7th book in the Bible, we invite people to take part in the work of ECR by donating £7 per month, preferably by Direct Debit.

If you are one of the 90 people donating to the scheme, we want to thank you. What you are doing is great because it means we can budget with confidence. But it would be even better if we could raise the number of contributors. So – a question for you. Do you think you could enrol:

- ❖ a member of your family?
- ❖ friends?
- ❖ work colleagues?
- ❖ neighbours?

If you are embarrassed to ask them, why not hold a coffee morning, when the Fund Raising Team would come along and explain about the work we do. It's a good way to get to know your neighbours and spread the good news about ECR. If you want any more information, phone me, John Baker, on 01495 223888.

HOW ABOUT GIVING INDIRECTLY?

You can also give to Everyone's Child indirectly. Here are a few ideas. . I'm sure that you could think of many others.

Why not wash someone's car? (this way the kids can contribute)



Have a coffee morning. Get to know your neighbours and tell them about ECR.

How about a sponsored 10 Pin Bowling evening, giving 5p a pin or £2 per strike? Or even a sponsored swim



Or have a cheese and wine party. Charge a nominal sum. Tell them its for ECR. Get people talking.

These are just some ideas. If you have any others, why not let the Fund Raising Team know. Please contact the Fund Raising Team before going ahead with any of the above, so we can co-ordinate activities.

John Baker

Letter from Trevor Morgan, Vicar of St Thomas's Church, Cefn Fforest

Dear Friends

Everyone's Child Romania - Ecumenical Communion Service.

We have arranged for Paul Davies to be at our morning service on **Sunday 16th March - Palm Sunday, St. Thomas Church 10.00 am.**

Paul will give us a talk on his current work in Romania and the service will be a communion service. This we hope is chance for all to join in worship together with Paul who joins us for this special service.

Would you please advertise the service within your own fellowships and we look forward to seeing you on the day.

Yours in His Name

Trevor Morgan, Vicar, St Thomas Church, Cefn Fforest

Excitement at Christmas

The new scheme to provide Christmas presents was a great success.

As the young people are growing older, it had become increasingly inappropriate to provide shoe boxes of gifts, as ECR supporters had done previously. Instead, an appeal went out for money to be sent to Romania so that Paul Davies could take them out to choose presents for themselves. Your response was generous and prompt, and the shopping trips were a great success. "The arrangements for the kids to come in for their Christmas shopping trip are being made....and the excitement is running high", wrote Paul at the beginning of December.

The Christmas Shopping Trips were a great hit here, with the kids feeling very mature being able to choose and pay for their gifts...again a 'first' for them.

The picture on the right shows one young man having a great time shopping. He's a farming boy, and likes to contrast the drab lifestyle shovelling pig manure, by buying the brightest coloured clothes. (The jacket he chose is bright yellow). He bought trainers in the same colours:)



It's hard to find something both smart and the right size. This lad who could do with a turn for the better in life. Last year he lost his older sister. And recently his school colleagues found out about his HIV status, so all sorts of bullying began for him. Fortunately he has us on his side, and we've been to the school on a number of occasions to put pressure on the principal to sort this out, and

things have begun to improve for him, so he says :)

Come and hear for yourself

Paul Davies will be home during early March. Why not come along and hear him speaking about his experiences in Romania:

- ❖ **Sunday 2nd March**, 3.0 p.m. – Norton Baptist Church
Norton Baptist Church is on the B4521 Abergavenny to Ross road. It is about 12 miles East of Abergavenny, just before you reach the village of Skenfrith.
- ❖ **Thursday 6th March**, 6.30 p.m. for 7.00 p.m. – Markham Congregational Church
- ❖ **Sunday 9th March**, 10.30 a.m. – Underwood Baptist Church, Underwood, near Chepstow
- ❖ **Sunday 26th March** 10.00 – Communion Service at St Thomas's Church, Cefn Fforest (see page 8)

How you helped Romanians this winter

It's been cold since the beginning of November, but for the past week (the beginning of January) we have had heavy snow, temperatures dropping to -25 C in the mountains, and -18 C in Constanta – the lowest in Constanta for 20 years. It's even colder than when the sea froze 2 years ago. This is due mainly to a wind that rips through you like a step-mother's breath, (between 50-70 km/hr today). If you venture out to buy a loaf of bread, the wind lashes the stinging snow into your face, (if you are crazy enough to have any skin showing), until your cheeks look like raw meat in matter of seconds. Even when the wind eases, the cold is so raw it makes your skin feel like it would crack and fall off if you attempted to move it in an attempt to talk or smile.

Do we ever experience cold like this?

Constanta cut off. Some of the villages surrounding Constanta have had no electricity nor water for this week, and no way for the electricity company to get to the point of breakdown to fix the fault, while this weather persists. Constanta is cut off totally from other surrounding towns by any normal means of transport. People who are urgently in need of hospital treatment, like for dialysis, are being lifted out by helicopter when it's possible to fly....and it's not always possible. I'm so relieved that Lili, nor any of our kids, did not have a turn for the worse in this period.

Just before this really bitter period we were treated to scenes of pensioners **queuing overnight outside the mayor's office**, in temperatures of -10 C, for their 'Christmas treat' of: a small frozen chicken, 1 bag of flour, 1 bag of sugar, and 1 bottle of oil.

You may think, "The people know that bad weather is coming – why don't they prepare for it?" The price has gone up 30% since last year, from £40 to £55 per ton – and they will need 4-5 tons each winter, depending on the severity. **Many people use corn husks and stalks in place of wood.**

Why don't they prepare for it?

You are allowed to collect wood, but only that which is smaller than 3 cm in diameter, **Old people take the responsibility.** You can imagine how many of these twigs you would need to make a decent fire that would last. One of the saddest sights I still see is older family members, (and I mean pensioners), out in all weathers with a small barrow collecting these twigs. Apparently this is the 'role' of the older family members...as they can not contribute much to the family budget. This is all they do **EVERYDAY.**

If you were to get desperate, as did one of our families last winter, and try to cut up larger dead wood....woe betide you if you are caught. The uncle of Mustafar Asibe, was caught and he was fined 1400 lei (£300). He has no hope of paying this, and we are not in a position to help. He has to pay this off 'pro-rata' each month

So if anyone was to ask me how happy I was that we had the fore-sight and the financial backing, (thanks to you guys), to supply all our families with food and wood before this bleak time arrived.....I would say I am absolutely delighted that we could do this. At least we know that those in our care.....are cared for adequately.

Foresight to care

YOU ASK THE QUESTIONS

The questions below were all put to Paul Davies about the HIV positive young people among whom he is working.

What is the typical experience of contracting the HIV virus/AIDS?

There is no "typical experience" really. As they are all individuals, the disease can affect them in a multitude of ways, and their situation can change very rapidly. However there are some 'common threads'...like most have TB and/or other respiratory problems, most have skin infections of some sort.

You are caring for some children who are too young to have been injected with the HIV virus when they were admitted to hospital. How did they become HIV positive.

They were born to HIV infected parents. In the family of Negel (6 years old), all the family are HIV positive, including his sister who is also a client. There is a 9-year-old who lost both her parents to HIV-related illnesses just over a year ago. She is now being raised by her aunt.

Presumably some of the youngsters have brothers and sisters in their family. Do you get involved with them at all?

The degree of help given to siblings depends totally on their situation, and the funding available. In the Anghel family for example, we have 6 siblings, and we try to make sure that they eat regularly, and are not cold or unclothed in the winter. But in the David family there are only 2 children, including our client. The father works regularly so we only provide emergency medical cover, or educational supplies, or help to find work in the future.

Are the anti-retroviral drugs free? If not, how do they pay for them? They often need other drugs, which ECR helps provide – are drugs expensive in Romania?

The ARV's are free, and are provided by Abbott International Pharmaceuticals, (USA), who are linked to the America-Romanian Clinic with whom we collaborate closely.

Other medicines and treatment are paid for by us, they are very expensive. The most expensive for us are the initial analyses and operations. These problems are not covered under the Romanian Health System, and therefore they rely totally on our help....or they die.

We gather that much of the housing is poor. Do they have access to clean water?

In Europe Romania has the least amount of housing with mains water, (over 60% of houses do not have this facility). Even in the capital Bucharest there are areas where there is no such facility. In the villages where we work mainly, the water is supplied through fresh-water wells. This system normally provides clean water, even if it is hard work to fetch it twice a day. But in this year's drought, many of the wells dried up...that's why we lost so many crops. Hygiene is so important to our clients, but this system does not make it easy.

How many are in paid employment? How many are fit enough for paid employment?

We have 3 clients in paid employment at the moment, (although well below the minimum wage): Lili Caslariu works in a hair-dressing salon; Georgie Tiru started 'on-the-job' training as a welder; Marian Ciobanu works with his father in a building supplies yard, as a labourer.

There still seems to be young children contracting HIV. How does this happen?

There are some cases that are 'mother-baby' transfers,...and in the near future we may be dealing with a 'new generation' of HIV babies, as that generation starts to be sexually active.

Do you have questions that you would like to put to Paul Davies? Send them to the Secretary (see front page). She will contact Paul and print the answers in the next newsletter.

SPONSORED WALK

Last year's sponsored walk was an enormous success, with over £2,000 raised. It was a wonderful day, with many people telling us how much they enjoyed the atmosphere.

We are hoping for a repeat on **Saturday 26th April**,

As before, we will be starting at 11.00 a.m. We start at the car park at the Full Moon Industrial Estate (near the roundabout at the north end of the Crosskeys by-pass) and walk to the Ynysddu Hotel, a distance of just over 3 miles. You can end your walk there, or if you are feeling energetic, complete the return walk to the starting point – a total of about 7 miles. There will be a scavenger hunt for children.

If you wish, soup & roll will be available at the Ynysddu Hotel at a moderate charge. If you want soup, would you please let Diane Lloyd know by phoning 01443 831392.

You will find a sponsorship form is enclosed in this newsletter. If you need any more, you can contact Diane, or you can download them from the ECR Web site: www.everyoneschild.org.

We are hoping for even more people and even more money. Please come along, and help raise money for some very needy young people – and enjoy a great day at the same time.

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| <p>The Annual General Meeting of Everyone's Child Romania will take place on Monday 12th May at 7.30 pm, in Ebenezer Church, Pengam. If you would like to find out just what has been achieved, and what is planned for the future, please come along. You will be very welcome.</p> |
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If you would like to help some of Romania's HIV-positive young people by joining the 777 Campaign, with a direct debit, please contact the Treasurer (see front of newsletter.) Or if you would like to join as a member, for £3 receiving the newsletter twice a year, contact the Treasurer or Secretary.

Have you seen our Web site? More information about ECR is to be found on
www.everyoneschild.org.uk