

# CELEBRATING LIFT THE CHILDREN'S 10 YEAR ANNIVERSARY

## OUR PARTNERS AND COLLEAGUES SHARE THEIR MEMORIES

### THE TOY HOUSE, FUNDATIA COPIII NOSTRI *Bucharest, Romania*

It is difficult to write a "short story" based on ten years of activity together: 10 years of support, friendship, of learning from your experience and sharing our experience with you, 10 years of joint efforts to change the lives of children at risk of neglect, abuse, abandonment, hunger, and discrimination.

We will always remember the day when Katie Smith and Kathy Miller entered the "Toy House" for the first time. Our organization was in a very difficult moment because our primary funder had just cancelled our contract due to financial insolvency. At that moment Providence showed us the way and that way was Lift the Children. Yes! It is true. By the end of 1998 our project was approved by Lift the Children, and we knew could continue our work and begin to help children again.

During the 10 years that followed the Toy House assisted 318 families and prevented abandonment for 632 children. Children and families in our program are confronted with multiple economic, social and cultural problems. One needs to help them with an open heart, and be available to support and guide them until they find their way.

From a small organization offering services to community families and children, Fundatia Copiii Nostri gained a well

deserved reputation for its expertise not only in providing integrated direct services for preschool children and their families, but also for its research regarding parenting knowledge, attitudes and practices in Romania. With Lift the Children's help, we have produced parenting materials and offered training to professionals working with children and families. FCN has partnered with the local child welfare authorities and the Ministry of Education, managing to replicate the Toy House model in 10 other locations and implement our parenting education program on a national scale.

None of this would have been possible without Lift the Children, who recognized FCN's potential and believed that a small and compact organization like ours could grow into an important change agent in the community and the nation. The hand Lift the Children extended to Fundatia Copiii Nostri 10 years ago is still there. All our beneficiaries are grateful for that.

**Mihaela Nicolaescu, Director**



### Fundatia COTE *Iasi, Romania*

Fundatia COTE (Children On The Edge) Romania has worked since 1996 to support the process of community reintegration of abandoned children and teenagers who have left the orphanages. Our services strive to prevent institutionalization, and support the former institutionalized teenagers as they reintegrate into society.

We are proud to say that we are one of the NGOs supported by Lift the Children from the very beginning of their work in Romania. Since 1999 when we started our collaboration with LTC, we have benefited a lot from their support, which enabled us to develop the "GRADUATE" residential project. In 1996 the program started in 2 hostel rooms and had the capacity to assist 8 teenagers a year. With LTC's support, including purchase of two apartments, the project is now run in 3 apartments in Iasi City and annually assists a minimum of 25 teenagers.

In 2001 LTC played a huge role in launching the new Continuing Education program to respond to the need for support for continuing high school or university studies. Despite the fact that the Romanian institutional system has a legal obligation to

support students in continuing education, the system does not always work in the best interest of the child. We help fill the gap by assisting 8 -12 students each year with scholarships and living expenses that allow them to complete their education. This year, with support from Lift the Children, we are assisting 12 students in university.

We can honestly say that Lift the Children is part of our family now, playing the role of a parent, trying to guide and support us in our own developing process as an NGO. The fact that they continuously encourage us in our work with these vulnerable teenagers means a lot, especially when we face difficulties. Their unconditional dedication and involvement in solving or alleviating the problems we face shows great humanitarian principles and values.

Thank you Lift the Children, and especially thank you Katie and all of the people involved in LTC's work. Your work is priceless and it will never be appreciated enough by all the beneficiaries you help! God bless you!

**Iulian Mocanu, Executive Director**



## Holt Romania *Sigishisoara, Romania*

I want to start this letter by thanking you for your support. I also want to congratulate all of you for your 10th anniversary of Lift the Children. I can't believe that 10 years have already passed. I remember with pleasure the enthusiasm with which we began this program, the 10 years of intense work, with a lot of changes and many successes...All your support helped us endure the challenges.

Holt International Children's Services—Romanian Branch and Lift Foundation [*Lift the Children*] started to collaborate in 1999 when we began working together on the long-term foster care

program in Holt Targu Mures Centre for Social Services. The program was the first of this kind in Romania focused on children's deinstitutionalization. Later, it was followed as a model of good practice and applied in Holt Constanta Centre receiving a grant from the European Community.

All the evaluations done along the years showed the program's success and the long-term impact in the children's lives. LIFT Foundation [*Lift the Children*] proved to be a faultlessly serious foundation with a staff extremely devoted to their job, highly competent, flexible, real professionals.

[*Lift the Children*] fully deserves to be supported in continuing its extraordinary work for the benefit of the children in Romania. Holt Romania is so proud to have such a great collaborator and we highly recommend Lift the Children for any activities they intend to develop in the future.



Livia Trif, Country Director  
and  
Elisabeta Buscu, Targu Mures Site Director

## Celebrating Lift the Children's 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

*A note from Kelley McCreery Bunkers Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*

When asked to share my thoughts on Lift the Children's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary, I realized that I have a very privileged position from which to comment. I have three unique vantage points; first as Director of an NGO that was one of the first recipients of the Lift funding. Secondly, as a private consultant hired by Lift the Children. Finally, as a project manager for an international child rights organization that contracted Lift the Children to provide training and technical assistance to direct service providers in Guatemala.

In 1999, I was fortunate enough to be one of the first people that Katie Smith met with as she arrived in Romania to research who, what, and how the Lift the Children (then known as the Lift Foundation) would begin disbursing funds to child welfare NGOs. Katie and I met and spoke at length about Lift's mission, her hopes, concerns, and most importantly, her desire to fund only top-notch organizations that truly impacted the lives of Romania's children. It was clear from our first meeting that Katie was not in it for herself nor for the status of being a donor, rather for assisting those organizations that could and would improve the well-being of children. That has been the driving focus of Lift for the past ten years.

In 2001 and 2002, I had the opportunity to work with Lift in developing and implementing a conference targeting Best Practice Programming. As always, Katie had the highest of expectations of me, the participating NGOs, and herself. The conference was a wonderful way to create and strengthen collaboration between Lift-funded NGOs and provided a forum where the funding recipients could share their successes, lament their challenges, and find new ways of improving their services to children and families. The conference

had very positive results and a year later, USAID utilized the same concept in a much larger, national conference highlighting best practices in child welfare. One of the strengths of Lift has been the way that they facilitate coordination, collaboration, and exchanges between the organizations that they fund, partnering agencies in the US, and other organizations around the world. Lift has always strived to promote partnership and collaboration and has led by example. This has made them the exception in the world of donors.

Finally, in June of 2008, in my position as a project manager for UNICEF Guatemala, I had the opportunity to work with Lift and assist them in providing training and technical assistance to Guatemalan social workers, psychologists, police, program managers, and lawyers. The idea was to bring Lift and the Cap Center's expertise gained in Romania and the U.S. to Guatemala. Guatemala has a nascent child welfare system and could benefit from new information, ideas, and models in the area of family resource centers, foster care, and services for child victims of abuse. It is my hope that these types of exchanges will continue both in Guatemala and beyond as Lift, via its wonderful partners in Romania and the U.S., has demonstrated how much experience and expertise they have to share with other professionals also striving to better meet the children and families that they are serving.

I wish the Lift the Children a very happy 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. May you flourish many more years and continue, through your example, to encourage others to excel, to collaborate, to share ideas and lessons learned, and most importantly, to work towards the shared vision of a world where children are placed first and their well-being is priority.



LIFT THE  
CHILDREN

An agency of the Child Abuse Prevention Center  
[www.liftchildren.org](http://www.liftchildren.org)