By Vasile Nemes, Director of the Lupeni Children’s Home, Lupeni, Romania. Not long ago I was called by authorities and asked to go and get a seven-year-old girl. Her mother had died, and her father was unknown. I, along with my son, headed towards the designated pick-up spot, barely discerning it due to the precipitation that fell from the night sky.

There, in front of an Orthodox church, hands dug deep into her pockets, head bowed, with two bags of clothes on either side, a doll in arms, stood a girl with big, sad eyes awaiting us.

“I am father Vasile” I said to her. She looked puzzled as if searching for the meaning of the word “father”. After several seconds she responded, “I am Dana”. We got into the car and headed towards our orphanage and as we did, a sense of sadness pressed so hard around us that we were for a time unable to speak.

It was Dana who broke the silence. She said, “You know, I am an orphan. My mother died of cancer. But still I dream of her in the night.” I looked at my son and he back at me, and like a spear her words pierced our hearts. We hardly could find words of comfort and encouragement.

We arrived at the orphanage and Dana voiced her concern, “But how will the other children receive me? How will they react?” My son tried to reassure her that all would be fine. As we entered the orphanage my wife met us, embraced Dana, and then introduced her to the staff, the other kids, and to her new home.

The next day when Dana saw me she cried, “Daddy, Daddy, I have my own bed! Come and see it!” She took my hand and introduced me to her room, showed me her bed and wardrobe, and then we went into the courtyard and she showed me a drawing that she had made on the pavement. The drawing portrayed a woman holding a little girl’s hand and next to them were some flowers. This drawing represented Dana with her dear mother. I looked at Dana, and seeing the smile on her face, I could only rejoice and praise the Lord and thank Him for His infinite love, for He is the Father of the fatherless.

Six months later, Dana finished the term in school. Smiling, confident, and holding her head high like a real fighter, she strode to the podium where she was awarded for her academic achievement. Now, Dana enjoys her holiday, and again draws on the pavement in the courtyard. Maybe she will draw once again a picture of a mother and daughter standing hand-in-hand, but this time she will be whispering, “Do not worry, mom, I found my Father who loves me and cares for me. God is my Father.”
Vacation Bible School (VBS) Impacts Children and Communities

Helping children in practical ways is important to Kidstown. As important is helping them in spiritual ways, such as sharing Jesus with them, and helping them to grow in their faith. Often this transpires in the day-by-day rhythm of life at the orphanage. However, it is always good to mix things up a bit, and by so doing share the Gospel in new and fresh ways.

One way this is accomplished is through spiritual emphasis efforts such as VBS (vacation Bible school). Specialized curriculums including games, crafts, Bible lessons, and discussion times are all part-and-parcel to such an effort. Such endeavours are not only enjoyable and meaningful during the week of activities, but often result in long-lasting impact in the minds and hearts of the children.

Dr. E. Velayutham, the Director of the Joy Children Home in South India, shares the following: “We are very happy to share with you that our VBS programme for the year 2015 went on very well. There were 127 children who attended the one-week VBS. More than 90% of the children are from non-Christian backgrounds. From our church 12 teachers were selected and given training to conduct the programme.

“The VBS theme for this year was ‘You are my witnesses’ from Isaiah 43:12. Every day the children were taught new lessons, songs, and memory verses. We also provided a noon-time meal for all the children.

“We had the final day programme on the 10th evening from 6 PM to 10 PM. More than 200 people from the village gathered to witness the programme. Children participated with colourful dresses, dance, and also shared memory verses. Even though it was so late none of them left the venue and all of them clapped and encouraged the children. We have prayed for the children who have shown interest to follow our Lord Jesus Christ and some of the family members who stood for prayers.

“Please pray for the seeds which were sown in the hearts of the children to bring hundred-fold results.

“Thank you for your prayers and support for our VBS and also for your continued support for the Joy Children Home ministry.”
By Chuck Valley, Team Leader. I don’t remember his name, but the look of despair on this father’s face tells of his struggle to just survive. This could be anywhere in the world; India, South America, Asia. This is rural Romania, though. In this small Romanian settlement where 35 people live, a number of tragic stories (and one of rescue!) have been unfolding. Adrian Stan, the director of Casa Otniel, a Kidstown-supported orphanage, drives our van up to a small compound encircled by a broken down fence, garbage, and five single-room homes that look more like sheds. He brings us here because five parentless children have just recently come from this community to live at the Casa Otniel. He wanted us to see the conditions in which they lived. We brought bags of food to the families which will feed them for a month.

This abject poverty was all around us. I keep thinking about this because it points to the daily struggle for survival that is the norm for so many.

I have travelled to Romania eight times over the years, leading groups for Kidstown, and yet somehow this experience was different than the rest. The father of this family knew why we were there and remembered the five children that now live at the Casa Otniel. He was proud and ashamed at the same time as he showed us his small home. His face spoke volumes of a hard life and of the hopelessness that is his reality. This image is forever etched in my mind and now drives me to find hope for other children that live in similar conditions. These children did not choose this life, and they cannot get out of it by themselves. Someone must help them. I will do what I can...will you join me?

Many children suffer due to poverty and broken families. We can help them. An opportunity to do so awaits!

By Missy Stocksett, Team Member - Family, for me, has never just meant the biological kind. I don’t just make friends, I make family. So it is not a stretch for me to find connection in a culture entirely not my own. We are all basically the same after all. We all have needs and wants and deep desires that fill our hearts. But this is a broken world and not all of us attain our deepest desires, for some not even the most basic needs are filled. Somehow, by God’s grace, I found myself in the midst of overwhelming need and I was not enough. None of us can be, not on our own, at least. Only God is enough. And amazingly, He makes us into more than we ever could be without Him. He can use us, every day, to be His hands and feet, to bring His overwhelming love and joy to the world. And that is exactly what is needed in Romania.

To make a big difference we must be willing to fill the seemingly smallest needs. To the families in this one small village a trunk-full of bread made the difference for that day. And singing at the top of our lungs in the streets may just be the change that the children in that community needed for that time. Depravity remains, however, along with the oppressing darkness of poverty. And momentary joy will not sustain. But prayerfully, we can meet small needs regularly for God’s bigger picture. And He can love them through us.
Year-End Opportunities

**Siblings Need a Sponsoring Family**
These children just arrived at the Casa Dorca (a Kidstown-supported orphanage in Romania) earlier this month. They come from a very troubled family. Their father is an alcoholic and at times would beat his children and his wife when drunk. They lived in severe poverty, such that they went twice a week to a feeding program hosted by a local church.

The kids came to the orphanage undernourished (physically and emotionally). They need lots of love, nutrition, structure, and most of all, Jesus. They also need a sponsor. For $152/month, you can sponsor all four, and your investment in their lives could be the best Christmas gift they have ever received.

Interested? Please send an email to director@kidstown.org asking to sponsor Ciprian, Denisa, Alexandra, and Patricia. Thanks for caring!

**Year-End Giving.** Undesignated gifts are appreciated, and much-needed, here at Kidstown. Such gifts are fuel which keep our engine running, enabling us to sustain and to continue reaching out. Donations can be made online at www.kidstown.org/donate or by mail. Please designate: “Year-End Gift”

Kidstown is committed to caring for orphans in practical ways, to sharing Jesus with them, and to preparing them to become His witnesses among their own peoples.