



The Family International

PER  
UN

# MONDO MIGLIORE

MAKING A BETTER WORLD IN CROATIA AND BOSNIA

Winter 2009 n.38

[www.perunmondomigliore.org](http://www.perunmondomigliore.org)

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Per un mondo migliore  
**Notiziario**  
N.38

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Dear friends,  
 These days, as I  
 was going through past issues of this newsletter, a question popped  
 up in my mind: Who would have guessed that we would still be  
 here, active, and working on issue nr. 38? We started 12 years ago,  
 modestly but regularly publishing these good news every 4 months.  
 Loads of positive information went on to those pages, even if some  
 photos were a little sad, touching and thought provoking, yet always  
 hopeful. I tried to remember the many people who took part over  
 the years in the activities described here, and thousands of faces ran  
 through my mind. Nowadays, some of these many volunteers are on  
 missions in far away places, others volunteer in needy situations  
 closer to home. Yet others are going through a rough patch in life  
 – and I would like to dedicate a special 'thank you' and prayer to  
 those of you who may be a little bit down, who feel like you are sta-  
 gnating, or like you haven't accomplished much. Of course you have!  
 It's all written here in our newsletters, inscribed in our hearts and  
 in the Book of life, of the One Who is always with us and Who loves  
 us unconditionally.

With hope that we will continue building a better world together,

Anna

Stephen Grellet was a French-born Quaker who died in New Jersey in 1855. Grellet would be unknown to the world today except for a few lines which made him immortal. The familiar lines, which have served as an inspiration to so many people, are these: "I shall pass through this world but once. Any good that I can do, or any kindness that I can show to any human being, let me do it now and not defer it. For I shall not pass this way again."

# The war is not the worst that hap- pened to us...

**An open letter from Dragana, a refugee  
from Jajce, BiH, who presently lives in  
Rijeka with her family - a similar story  
to that of many who suffer from the  
consequences of the war.**

It's January, cold wind is whistling outsi-  
de, it's snowing and we haven't had hea-  
ting for days because we're out of wood.  
We're waiting for welfare so we can get  
at least one cubic meter, I ask a few nei-  
ghbors to borrow some wood but even they  
don't have any extra. Then a van comes  
and volunteers from «The Family», our  
second family, unload a van full of wood.  
I thank you, and I thank your mothers for  
bringing you into the world.

How many times do we say  
«thank you» these days? Rarely,  
if ever. Most people remember to call on God only  
when they're in trouble. No-  
body knows His plan for us,  
but I can surely say that for  
me and my family, He has or-  
dained this friendship with  
the volunteers from «The Fa-  
mily». If it wasn't for their  
help during the past three  
years, my family and I would  
have starved, not to speak of  
the moral and spiritual sup-  
port they have been to us.  
I'm fifty-five years old. I suf-

fer from a serious autoimmune disease and  
three more chronic conditions but I don't give  
up because there are always those who are  
worse off than I. Three years ago my husband  
had two cancerous tumors, and with all the  
consequences and side effects of treatment,  
he lives from day to day, nobody knows how  
long. It's a medical phenomenon that he's  
still alive!

Love is what feeds our soul and helps us to  
go on, the love that our close friends give us.  
Nothing bad ever happens without a reason,  
and there is a reason why during the war we  
had to run away and come here to Rijeka.  
We waited for my husband's pension for two  
years - the rent, bills, medicine and food be-





came a big financial burden for us. The long-awaited pension finally came, and turned into a nightmare, as banks started taking off a third of it to cover loans. And again we didn't have enough for rent and bills. But we have food to eat, and love to lean on.

I hear complaints incessantly these days - that people have become cold and selfish, that nobody wants to help one another any more. Yet I'm still an optimist: because of that, people either envy me, or think I'm crazy. Tell me, after reading this letter, am I right or not to be optimistic? I am, because I know that there are and there will always be good people, of different nationalities and varied ages. My friends share with us whatever we ask them for, even though they themselves are full-time volunteers. I've also witnessed their interaction with people in another setting: they're miracle-workers when they go to visit terminal, old or abandoned patients, when they perform or organize workshops and seminars. You can feel their love and unselfishness everywhere. I want to thank also my friend Erika for bringing this new family to me, and I thank those who help and support their work. I will not write anymore about them, their noble hearts and kindness, because whoever reads this should seek them out and meet them. You will all receive a large measure of love, positivity, spiritual and moral energy. I know that Jesus is proud of them.

Thank you, and may His mercy be with you always.

Dragana Vidovic - Vrbat

# Against all Odds!

**No great deed was ever accomplished but by those who believed that within their soul was something greater than the circumstances..  
(B. Berton)**

Most of you would probably recall the article about my boys in Dom za odgoj (institution for delinquent minors in Rijeka) where I started working two years ago, after volunteering there for 5 years. I have always had a desire to work with the young (ever since I was young!), and in recent years have been involved with children every day in my association «Koraci». Yet I couldn't have ever imagined how much satisfaction I would get out of working with these young «problem cases».

When I think of my first days in Dom,

and especially of the times when some children were destructive and aggressive, everything good that has been accomplished since seems unreal. I'd often thought, am I overextending myself? Would I be able to carry this big load, and would I be able to change anything at all? With great enthusiasm, together with my colleagues, I started improving the living quarters of the children – their bedrooms, living room, school rooms, hallway, stairs and outside garden area. Whatever we were able to do one day, would already be destroyed the next day, burned or thrown out into the yard. I would come to work in the morning to find a pile of books ripped apart, burned decorations, scraped picture frames, pieces of broken flower pots and lifeless plants. The decorative wreaths hanging on the door of my office never survived till the next morning. I was often discouraged, but with the help of my colleagues, especially the cleaning ladies, and by developing a special relationship with the children, things began to change.



Nowadays, the shelves of our living room are full of books, interesting magazines, and even beautiful ceramic creations of the children themselves. In every room there are many flowers and the kids don't rip them apart any more, neither do they throw them out in the yard. Even more, they come to my art workshop room, which has become a little botanical garden, asking me for a plant to keep in their room. The once cold and awe-inspiring walls of our big hallways have become a world of children's drawings, ceramic creations and beautiful lively murals painted by volunteers from «The Family». Everything breathes with child-like freshness and joy. The staircase hallway is also decorated with educational posters, flowerpots and knick-knacks that add to the cozy feeling of «home». All summer long we worked on the





stay home from school. Nowadays, there is warmth in our conversations together. There is trust, respect and friendship, and to nourish that friendship, we need patience, understanding and forgiveness.

And we need to keep going forward! This year, there are new activities and projects that, I deeply believe, will strengthen our bond and convince our boys that we're not policemen or enemies, but friends whom they can lean on and with whom they

can share a great deal of their problematic growth into adulthood. We'll talk more about that in an upcoming newsletter; until then, many warm greetings to you all, and thank you for the help you've been to us!

Lidija

garden and outside area. Many hard-working hands of Italian volunteers toiled tirelessly to give a new look to the garden, which will take its final shape during the coming spring and summer of this year.

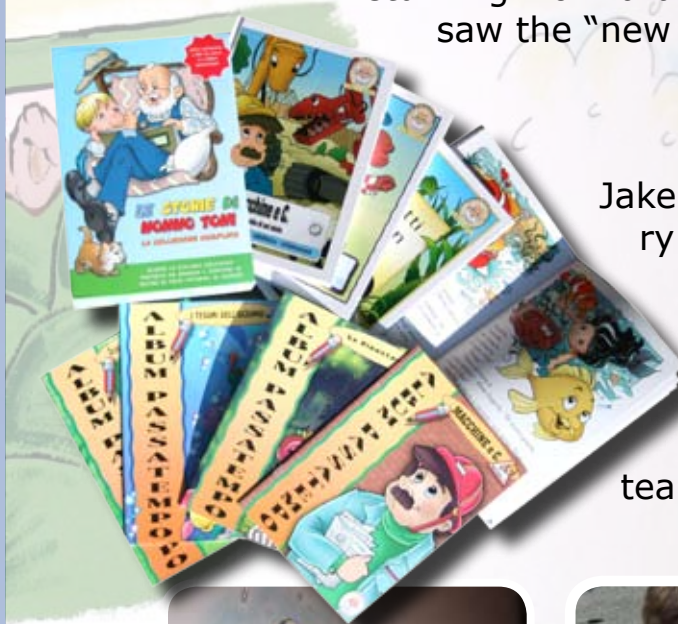
The changes are felt not only on the outside, but also in the atmosphere of the whole place, and more importantly, in the behavior of the children. They still have their «moments», but now vandalizing acts are rare. Unity and respect between children and caretakers are becoming stronger. I dare say that I await with joy every new day, watching the children wake up, get ready for breakfast, talk about the happenings of previous days, or simply sit down sleepily yawning and trying to find an excuse to



## Kids Corner

Thanks to the colorful and lively illustrations of the "Grandpa Jake" book series, this month the children in the orphanage of Lovran received a surprise gift package: new murals on the walls of their bedrooms and outside in their play area. What a thrill to see the children jumping up and down and to hear their squeals of joy when, returning from a day out in the snow, they saw the "new friends" on their walls!

Do you know "Grandpa Jake"? In this educational story and activity book series, Grandpa Jake tells exciting stories, helping children learn good manners, friendship, honesty, unselfishness, teamwork and more.







▲ We organized 48 shows/clown therapy events for a combined audience of over 6000 – kinder gardens, schools, senior citizens' homes, prisons, handicapped centers, hospitals, town squares and the soup kitchen.



▲ We held 5 seminars, 3 in Croatia and 2 abroad (in Romania and Albania), as well as many Sunday fellowship and inspirational get-togethers.



We worked to improve the living conditions of different institutions: "Dom za odgoj" (for delinquent minors in Rijeka), Psychiatric hospital (Rab), Dom Turnic (for mentally ill senior citizens in Rijeka), Udruga "Koraci" (association offering creative ways of using children's and senior citizens' free time), Dom za djecu (Orphanage) in Lovran.

◀ During our visits to needy families and institutions in Rijeka, Karlovac and BiH, we distributed more than 1000 kg of food, 208 boxes of clothes, shoes and linen, gym equipment, household & kitchen needs, baby needs and school supplies.



▲ We organized "Free hugs" 5 times together with young people from Rijeka, had a counseling presence at EXIT rock festival in Novi Sad, performed in "Palach" (Rijeka), and spent many hours in personal counseling.



▲ 2 volunteer training camps were held in the summer for 24 attendees, while a stream of part-time volunteers flowed through our community from the end of June till the end of August



◀ At Christmas Our show troupe performed altogether 56 times: 10 senior citizens' homes, 10 schools, 5 kinder gardens, 4 orphanages, 4 churches, 3 prisons, 2 hospitals, 2 centers for the handicapped etc.



# DEFY THE IMPOSSIBLE

Have you ever read something and had it get stuck in your head? That happened to me recently with a magazine article titled "Murder of the Impossible." As soon as my eyes fell on it, I was intrigued. (The word "murder" does have a way of capturing your attention!) I quickly skimmed the text. It told of a man who had climbed most of the highest mountains in the world. In fact, he had dedicated his entire life to his dream of becoming one of the most skilled and accomplished mountain climbers ever. His passion was not without its price, though. Taking on the elements often cost him his health, and on one such occasion frostbite claimed seven of his toes. Undeterred, he continued to search for new ways to defy the impossible.

After I put the magazine down, I reflected on what it means to defy the impossible. First of all, what is impossible? From the most innocent child to the wisest elder, we all encounter things that at first seem impossible to us. But unlike those who have been persuaded by experience that it doesn't pay to try to tackle the "impossible," babies expect to overcome. That's because they have a quality that the doubters lost as they grew up—childlike faith and trust. They have faith in their parents and trust them to be there to catch them if they fall. And their faith pays off; they learn to overcome an amazing assortment of

obstacles, one step at a time. When the impossibilities of life loom large, take God's hand and take it one step at a time. He makes the impossible possible. That, I was reminded in my moment of reflection, is the key to vanquishing the impossible—faith in God. As we take God's hand, He can help us overcome any impossibility. Throughout history great men and women have confronted the impossible and have come out victorious, and that is why they are still remembered. The road to victory was long and treacherous, but they went the distance, one step at a time. They defeated the impossible because they held on, and when that victory was theirs they looked ahead to the next challenge and moved on. When the impossibilities of life loom large, take God's hand and take it one step at a time. He makes the impossible possible.

People are always blaming their circumstances for what they are. I don't believe in circumstances. The people who get on in this world are people who get up and look for the circumstances they want, and if they can't find them, make them.

—George Bernard Shaw (1856–1950)

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## Mail Box

You are all a wonderful family, full of light and love. I'm really happy to have met you. Hugs,

**Elena (Rijeka)**

Your counsel was helpful, you reminded me of what action I should take... Thank you from my heart! May the Lord be always with you. I think of you often. Yours,

**Ljerka – Rijeka**

Jesus is a true friend! A big "thank you" to all of you for helping me get to know Him!

**Andrea – Brescia**

May the light of this Christmas give you strength to keep giving God's love away, as you do in your unselfish service day after day. This is your mission. My wish is that you will never lose that light that you give to so many people, especially in their moments of greatest need.

Kisses to all,

**Nada – Rijeka**

The work you are doing is incredible, it makes me feel proud of you. Warm greetings, Marilena – Brescia  
Thanks a million for your visit which I eagerly await every time – in my almost "chronic" darkness you shine a little light to warm me up...

**Monica**



# Tired of Helping Others?

Interview with Andrea

## **Tell us a little bit about your calling in life and the time you spent in Croatia.**

Before I met Jesus and became a volunteer, I worked at different jobs, looked for satisfaction in material things, tried drugs, alcohol and Satanism. I always felt that there was something more to life than working at a job, having your own house, growing your roots somewhere and settling down. One day when I was totally down, I pleaded with Jesus, "If You really exist, please give meaning to my life!" A few days later, an old lady asked me for help to cross the street. There were no cars on that quiet morning in my small town, yet she asked me to help her. After I helped her cross, she thanked me with a beautiful smile and love in her eyes. I still carry that smile in my heart today, and when I think about it, it still makes me happy. Through her Jesus showed me what joy can be found in helping others. Soon afterwards I came to visit the Family in Croatia and felt the Lord calling me to leave my old life and stay here, dedicating myself to others. I felt a special love for the people here, and so I stayed in Croatia for 9 years.

## **What do you consider your greatest accomplishment during your time of service in Croatia?**

I met a lot of people, and hope that I have made a difference in their life. I started "Clown therapy" after seeing the movie "Patch Adams" – I realized that I had a "clowning" talent, and that there was nobo-



dy doing it here in Croatia. So for years I visited various institutions weekly – senior citizens' homes, hospitals, handicapped centers. With time I also helped organize seminars and presentations of the project and different people from here joined me, realizing that this was helping them even more than the patients we were going to cheer up!

## **What happened to you during the past year?**

**About one year ago, I was starting to get** tired of giving to others, thinking that I needed a break from missionary service. I went back to Italy and tried helping my family and especially my brothers. I tried to go back to a normal life, but found out that it wasn't possible! The Lord kept calling me to reach out and help others! I kept meeting new people who needed His joy. A few times I helped the Family community in Sarajevo, Bosnia, then I went to help out with the earthquake victims in L'Aquila. Recently, the Lord gave me back the desire to return to full-time missionary service, and after praying and writing to different Family communities around the world, I have decided to go to Columbia. I'm presently working on

my visa and one of our communities there is waiting for me.

## **Why Columbia?**

It's easy to go to a place where one can live an easy life. But there are not so many willing to go to difficult countries – and those are some of the most needy places. I'm going there because the Lord told me to go.

## **Aren't you afraid?**

I'm afraid to disobey God. I'm more afraid to stay here and be out of the Lord's will, than to be in a dangerous country in the Lord's will. Because I know that if I obey, He will provide for me and protect me wherever I go. He promised to do it, so I take Him at His word.

## **Do you have a request, and a message for our readers?**

My request to you all is that you pray for me, that I can do the Lord's will, and get the visa that I need soon. My message for everybody: this world needs love. If everyone would try to change only their part of the world, right where they are, this world would become a better place. So, instead of thinking about yourself, try thinking about others, even if you don't feel like it!

**To all my friends:** I will always have you in my heart, and will never forget about you! I will keep you in my prayers. My prayer for you is that you can get to know Jesus and His love the way that I know Him, because this will change your life. If you don't know how, just ask Jesus to help you! God bless you all! I love you!





# News and Projects

*The clown therapy project began on January 2nd this year, but we are planning an educational and training event for a larger audience of potential new volunteers – a weekend Clown therapy seminar on February 20 and 21st.*



*The yearly documentary of 2009 will soon be available in three languages – English, Italian and Croatian!*

*“Love for love” group in Cremona (Italy) is still going strong! They regularly organize fundraising events for the new volunteer Center we are planning to build. The construction will start in spring this year – a special thank-you to all who are willing to contribute in any way!*

*Coffee is essential to life in Croatia – anyone who has ever visited this country should know! With the beginning of this year came the invention “Morning coffee for the soul” – a weekly motivational email we send out to people who subscribe. The email message, containing meaningful stories, power point presentations, quotes or video clips is sent out every Monday morning, to help give subscribers positive energy and counsel to use in their daily life and interactions.*

*Trips are planned to Mostar area in Bosnia, and Karlovac with its surroundings, where we visit many needy families to help improve their quality of life. Humanitarian trips will be taken to Italy as well, bringing into Croatia necessary clothing, food, wheelchairs and other aides for the disabled.*



# Thank you!

As you may already know, our volunteers live for others. We have all dedicated our full-time to serving fellows in need daily, and thanks to the help of many, we have been able to go on for years without a break (here at our mission in Croatia for 14 years). We are not a big or supported charity with large overheads, but rather spend very little in living expenses, dedicating most of our manpower and materials towards the projects of our mission.

Many of you may wonder, “How do you go on? Who is your sponsor?” Our answer is simple: Thanks to your help as well! We are, hence, extremely grateful for all the help we receive, both big and small, which enables us to continue our 24/7 service to those who need us most.

In every issue of our magazine we publish a list of our most immediate needs, but you don't need to be limited to those. Some regularly help by depositing a donation on our bank account. Others give us hospitality on our travels. Yet others donate food, clothes, and household items. Somebody fixes our van for free, others print our newsletters, develop photos... and here we lack the space to list all of you who help in one way or another, and all the little deeds of kindness that have helped us go on during these past few years. Thank you from all our hearts, and may God bless you! And, of course, thank the Lord for His never-failing help and provision!



## **Our Present needs...**

Donations, material and workers for the construction of our new center.  
Long life food items.  
Detergents and cleaning materials.  
Fuel to run our vehicles - one of our greatest expenses.  
Educational and office materials.  
Acrylic paints for our mural projects.

\* For the present our storage is full of clothing items. We will let you know when we need more."

## **For Lidija's Projects in the Reform Center :**

Classic or acoustic guitar.  
Vinavil Glue  
Pottery turntable.