



# INTERNATIONAL ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHARITIES NEWS & NEEDS

CELEBRATING IOCC'S 15TH ANNIVERSARY

VOLUME 10, NO. 2 FALL 2007

IOCC Bosnia-Herzegovina



(above) Father and son Djuro and Dusan Latinovic in 1998, the first family to return to their village with the help of IOCC following the Bosnian war; (right) Djuro and his wife, Danka, today on their farm in the Bosanski Petrovac region.

## Bosnia: A Family Returns, A Nation Moves Forward

Veteran IOCC Bosnia staffer, Dragan Isaretovic, remembers August 20, 1998 well, the day that Djuro and Danka Latinovic with their son Dusan courageously became the first to return to their village of Vrtoce in the Bosanski Petrovac region in northwestern Bosnia-Herzegovina. Their other son, Ranko, had been killed in the Bosnian War, and they were driven from their farm in September 1995 when fighting intensified. They fled to Derventa (155 miles away) with thousands of others and lived a bleak existence in a garage finding work wherever they could. "Returning to your home at the end of the Bosnian War was not a simple matter," recalls Isaretovic. "The security situation was still unstable, and no one could guarantee your safety."

In 1992 nine-month-old IOCC

opened an office in neighboring Serbia, and began running emergency supplies into Bosnia. IOCC, working with the Serbian Orthodox Church, and supported by Orthodox in North America, distributed food and basic hygiene items donated by the World Council of Churches (WCC) member humanitarian agencies. In 1995 IOCC opened an office in Bosnia to continue fulfilling the emergency needs of displaced families, thousands of people just like Djuro and Danka. Eventually, IOCC would help them and hundreds of others return to their pre-war homes.

To facilitate the returns, IOCC staff set up a logistical plan that included extensive interviews with families to determine who was committed to returning to their communities. They took photographs of the villages and assessed local conditions, includ-

ing the cost of repairing each damaged house. It was also necessary to get local authorities to agree to the reconstruction and returns.

While public tenders were issued for the actual construction work, IOCC often employed a self-help approach whereby the returnees would assist each other. After the houses were finished, two or three times a week, Isaretovic and his colleagues began taking the returnees on "go and see" visits to their villages ensuring that each person saw his house.

Isaretovic recalls wanting to make the day that the Latinovic family returned to their village a major event so IOCC staffers called TV stations and local and international police to be part of their convoy back to Vrtoce. "We wanted others to see that if [the Latinovics] returned, it was safe for them to return as well," he said. Their convoy included NATO police which guaranteed their safety as they passed the many military checkpoints.

Others would have the courage to return because of the Latinovics. "They became a very important family because people saw them as the first returnees," says Isaretovic. "Now we begin to live again," said Danka who was motivated to return to her village despite the risks because she wanted to be able to visit Ranko's grave daily.

IOCC provided the returnees, "support kits" — food, hygiene supplies, a major household appliance, and something to help the families get started — a cow, a sheep, seeds and small farming tools.

*(continued on page 7)*



# From the Executive Director

IOCC Bosnia-Herzegovina



Bosnian farmer Marko Oljaca hosts IOCC Executive Director and CEO Constantine M. Triantafilou on his farm in 2006. Like many Bosnian farmers, Oljaca lost all his farm machinery during the war. IOCC supplied Oljaca with a hay baler, wheat seeds and fertilizer as part of a program to help farmers recover their businesses.

I began my career with IOCC more than 14 years ago during the Bosnian War delivering food and emergency supplies to families displaced by the conflict. As we were stopped at countless military checkpoints, it seemed the only important thing was to get help to the people depending on us. However, I wanted to give them something that was “far more potent than the commodity itself,” in the words of his Grace, Bishop IRINEJ (Dobrijevic), a former IOCC colleague from those Bosnia days. I wanted to give them a feeling of solidarity and hope. I wanted to let them know that these supplies were given by *all* the Orthodox Christians in North America. I wanted them to know that they were not alone.

We celebrate our 15th anniversary year knowing that IOCC has gone out to more than 33 countries on four continents with emergency and long term development programs. I feel immense gratitude to our volunteers, such as the Circle of Serbian Sisters who helped us get needed supplies to the people of

Bosnia, the college students who spent their spring break building houses on the Gulf Coast and the Metropolitan Committees who organize IOCC fundraisers throughout the U.S. Our volunteers have not only inspired the people they help but also have inspired others to serve as well. We are proud to dedicate this issue of *News & Needs* to them.

*“Far more potent than the commodity itself is [IOCC’s] message of hope and solidarity.”*

— His Grace, IRINEJ (Dobrijevic)  
Serbian Bishop of Australia and New Zealand  
and former IOCC staff member

Our cover story begins in Bosnia and assesses all that IOCC has accomplished with an investment of millions of dollars in that country’s infrastructure. You will read about the stunning success of our Gifts-In-Kind (GIK) \$19 million program that sends medical supplies, school kits, books and other items to people on three continents. Our U.S. Government funded program helped to rebuild war-torn southern Lebanon by aiding 3,300 families in 65 communities. You’ll also read about the “Volunteer in the Gulf Coast” program that brought together 200 IOCC volunteers to build new homes in Louisiana and Mississippi. Finally, a very special interview with three Orthodox clergy, part of the IOCC Emergency Response Network, who volunteered their time to provide trauma and grief counseling to the students of Virginia Tech last April. Read how volunteers worked alongside our IOCC staff to make the critical difference. Again, we thank you for your voluntary support of IOCC.

Yours In Christ,

Constantine M. Triantafilou  
Executive Director & CEO

International Orthodox Christian Charities, Inc. (IOCC) was established in 1992 by the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas (SCOBA) as the official humanitarian aid agency of Orthodox Christians to work in cooperation with Orthodox Churches worldwide.

*The mission of IOCC is to respond to the call of our Lord Jesus Christ, to minister to those who are suffering and are in need throughout the world, sharing with them God’s gifts of food, shelter, economic self-sufficiency and hope.*

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recycled paper

*To learn more about how IOCC helps others help themselves, please visit [www.iocc.org](http://www.iocc.org)*

# A Healing Presence At Virginia Tech

## IOCC's Emergency Response Program

Three Orthodox clergy, part of IOCC's Emergency Response Network, recently related their experience of delivering trauma and grief counseling at Virginia Tech following the tragic shootings last April that left 33 dead. The network was activated in cooperation with Orthodox Christian Fellowship (OCF) to offer counseling for students and faculty. The clergy included Deacon Raphael Barberg of St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church in Niagara Falls, N.Y., a career police officer who served as an IOCC responder on 9/11; Father Peter Preble of St. Michael's Romanian Orthodox Church in Southbridge, Mass. and a chaplain for his fire department; and Father Angelo Pappas of St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church in Portsmouth, N.H., a disaster response team leader in his state and a fire chaplain.

**IOCC: How did you get yourselves organized on the day that students returned to classes?**

DN. BARBERG: We arrived on campus on Monday afternoon and got a game plan together. When Bishop THOMAS came on Tuesday, we had our first meeting with the OCF students on the main area of the campus where the victims were being memorialized. We did the trisagion prayers for the departed. We did it very simply and as low key as possible. We then proceeded to a room and there we did more prayers and the Bishop vested.

**IOCC: What is Critical Incident Stress Debriefing and how did it facilitate your work?**

DN. BARBERG: It's a tool to use when people have been through any kind of trauma. It is done in a group setting and gives people a chance to



Photo courtesy of OCF

His Grace Bishop THOMAS (Antiochian Archdiocese) and clergy who are members of IOCC's Emergency Response Network lead students in prayer on the main campus of Virginia Tech following the shootings that left 33 people dead.

say how they feel and hear what others have gone through.

FR. PREBLE: We listen to their story and watch their body language. The idea is to get people to tell the story as much as they can and that process will help them to recover. About 15 students participated. It was probably our biggest contribution. We passed those assessments to the two priests who are there all the time working with the students.

**IOCC: How did students react to your presence on campus?**

FR. PAPPAS: Some students told us that they were tired of seeing police uniforms and that they were comforted to see clerical shirts. I had taken a course in grief counseling. You don't go there to try and preach, but to listen. If you do that your presence will be more powerful.

FR. PREBLE: We met with a lot of students who just wanted to talk. Over the course of the week, each

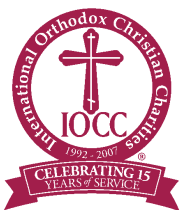
of us saw between 20-30 students on a one-on-one basis. You look for those who need some follow up based on their body language and how they speak. This is something we definitely need to get more people trained to do at the seminary level.

**IOCC: What would you say is the value of IOCC's emergency response at Virginia Tech?**

DN. BARBERG: There was a poster on campus which all of us claimed as a rallying cry: "32 are gone because one was lost." We don't know the issues that the person next to us is going through. If we don't reach out to them, we don't know what kind of trouble will follow us.

FR. PAPPAS: The most important thing was how well we worked together. Father Peter and I had worked together in Katrina. We knew each other and we were able to get things done. Truly Jesus Christ was among us in this tragedy.





# IOCC ON THE U.

Since the summer of 2005 IOCC has programmed more than \$4 million in emergency relief services, trauma counseling and relocation assistance for hurricane-battered Gulf Coast communities. The flagship of IOCC's efforts has been the "Volunteer in the Gulf Coast" program which recruited volunteers from throughout the United States to build new homes in Covington, La., and Biloxi, Miss. in cooperation with Habitat for Humanity, International. Since November 2006 a total of 200 IOCC volunteers representing parishes from Orthodox jurisdictions, and other churches, have put in 1,000 work days and worked on a total of 43 homes. IOCC's investment of volunteer hours has been valuable to Gulf Coast communities since getting people back into homes is the key to stimulating the return of schools and businesses.



"Until you have gone down and seen the devastation yourself, you can't truly appreciate how much work is still needed. A home-building program is an important contribution that IOCC can make to Gulf Coast communities. It was a memorable experience that my daughter and I will always share."

— Tamara D. Segall, IOCC Chief Financial Officer, who joined a work crew in Covington La. that included members of Orthodox Christian Fellowship (OCF). Accompanying Segall (above, extreme right) were sorority sisters from her alma mater, the University of Maryland, and her daughter, Jessica.



"This is exactly the kind of program IOCC needs to be doing stateside — responding to disaster needs wherever we can make the most difference. It was a privilege for me to work on an IOCC volunteer work crew. The experience was profound, inspiring, rewarding. IOCC is in the trenches — right where we should be."

— IOCC Board Member Basil M. Pappas (pictured lower left) on a work site in Covington, La.



Above: IOCC volunteers Jessica Segall and Jimmie Tyson in Covington, La.

To learn more about how IOCC helps others help themselves, please visit [www.iocc.org](http://www.iocc.org)

# S. GULF COAST



**Above:** an IOCC volunteer crew participates in a wall raising in Covington, La.

“Our church sponsored two tours and each one was very rewarding. We were glad to be able to respond in a very practical way to all the devastation we had heard about in the Gulf Coast.”

— Fran Rock (pictured below right), wife of IOCC Senior Management Consultant Paul Rock. Fran accompanied members of her parish, St. John Roman Catholic Church of Westminster, Md., to work on homes in Covington, La. and Biloxi, Miss.

“A great opportunity for the church to be the church. For the church to do what the church is called to do; to share in the responsibility to help the poor, the needy, the downtrodden.”

— Father Michael Rosco (pictured below right), IOCC Board Member and Pastor of St. John the Baptist Orthodox Church in Perth Amboy, N.J.



**Above:** Father Luke Melackrinos of St. Paul Greek Orthodox Cathedral (Hempstead, N.Y.) blesses a wall raising with an IOCC work crew in Covington, La.



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# We Deliver: The Dramatic Growth in IOCC's Gifts-In-Kind Program

*In just three years from 2004 to 2006, IOCC's Gifts-In-Kind (gifts of goods other than cash) program has dramatically increased from \$3 million to \$19 million. School kits, wheelchairs, new books, hygiene kits, toys, surgical supplies and critically needed medicines have been shipped to Zimbabwe, Albania, Serbia, and the West Bank. Biljana Mihajlovic, IOCC Desk Officer and a 14-year veteran of the organization, has been managing IOCC's Gifts-In-Kind (GIK) program with IOCC Consultant Frank Carlin since 2004. Mihajlovic talks about the growth of GIK and its impact on IOCC's projects.*

***N&N: What is the process for GIK and the key to a successful shipment?***

MIHAJLOVIC: First, the IOCC field office or a local partner identifies a need for a specific product. The field office may need a commodity that complements an existing project. You must find a reliable supplier in the United States and be well aware of local government customs regulations such as the expiration date rule, and what kind of documents are necessary in order to customs-clear the shipment duty-free. You absolutely must have a reliable partner on the ground that is a registered agency permitted to accept humanitarian goods. If goods have to be stored, you must make sure that the storage area is clean, dry and secured. Finally, you need a good distribution plan.

***N&N: What was your most dramatic GIK shipment?***

MIHAJLOVIC: Two kits of antibiotics and surgical supplies worth \$100,000 that were delivered to Lebanon shortly after the ceasefire last summer. Less than a week after the war started we decided to organize a shipment with our partner, Medical Teams International (MTI).

A reliable medical supplier in Europe was chosen because of their proximity to Lebanon. They put together the two kits which met the standards of the World Health Organization to cover the needs of 20,000 patients for three months.

***N&N: Since both the Beirut airport and the Port of Lebanon were closed, how did you get it into the country?***

MIHAJLOVIC: To get the health kits into Beirut when most of the roads were closed was quite a challenge. After spending several days on the phone with our office in Beirut and different carriers in the U.S.A. and Europe, we realized the safest route was to go through Syria. We immediately contacted the Orthodox Patriarchate in Damascus, which has been an IOCC partner for previous projects in Syria. They met the shipment at the Damascus Airport and arranged for the supplies to be loaded onto trucks for the 220-mile road trip to St. George Hospital in Beirut.

***N&N: Does IOCC accept GIK from individuals?***

MIHAJLOVIC: We do not accept GIK from individuals. Only partner agencies can provide necessary certifications to attest for the quality of the commodities and enable us to customs-clear the shipments duty-free overseas.

***N&N: How has the GIK program contributed to IOCC's expansion into Africa?***

MIHAJLOVIC: Some of IOCC's first projects in Africa were GIK projects. For example, our first project in Zimbabwe last summer was a \$1.5 million shipment of surgical supplies and medicines used to treat patients suffering from HIV/AIDS. When we heard

how well the shipment was received and how desperately a country like Zimbabwe needs such supplies, we decided to assist them with more commodities. We will be sending three more shipments this year to Zimbabwe with a total value of over \$1 million. We have just sent a shipment of medicine to a hospital in Niger in cooperation with our partner, MTI. That shipment included medicines to treat high blood pressure, heart failure and stomach ulcers.

***N&N: What is the future for GIK?***

MIHAJLOVIC: I think GIK has great potential. We are looking into other commodities such as agricultural equipment and seeds that would complement IOCC's vast experience in agricultural projects overseas. The beauty of GIK is you can obtain a new commodity at a discount price that is in perfect condition and add it to a program that is being funded with cash and you immediately enhance the value of the program many times over.

**If your business wants to participate in IOCC's GIK program, please contact Biljana Mihajlovic at [bmihajlovic@iocc.org](mailto:bmihajlovic@iocc.org).**



photo courtesy of MTI

The West African nation of Niger is the latest country to benefit from IOCC's GIK program with a medical shipment of medicines that treat high blood pressure, heart failure and stomach ulcers.

## Bosnia: A Family Returns, A Nation Moves Forward

IOCC Bosnia-Herzegovina



(inset) IOCC Bosnia staffer Dragan Isaretovic and a woman who returned to her village through IOCC's help. In 1998, Isaretovic and his IOCC colleagues set up the logistical plan that would allow 200 families to return to their farms and villages in the Bosanski Petrovac region following the Bosnian War. Isaretovic (above left) greets members of an IOCC study tour to Bosnia in 2004.



*(continued from front cover)*

By 1998 IOCC was able to give even more substantial infrastructure aid through funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the European Community Humanitarian Aid department (ECHO), the U.S. State Department Bureau for Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM), and Christian Aid. Over the course of the next few years, IOCC rebuilt or repaired almost 700 homes, 5 primary schools, 35 miles of water supply lines and almost 100 miles of electricity networks, benefiting nearly 500 households.

However, rebuilding homes and schools was not enough to enable people like the Latinovic family to return to a normal life. Bosnia had suffered from a civil war and from the loss of an entire way of life as it changed from a socialist system to a free market economy. People

accustomed to government controls and guaranteed prices would have no idea what their farms and investments would be worth or even how to market themselves in this new economic reality.

The focus of IOCC's operations gradually changed to address Bosnia's new economic and social

realities. Four major grants by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) allowed IOCC to create a three-pronged program that addressed Bosnia's long term needs in the areas of agricultural revitalization, civil society development, and micro-credit lending. This program continues yielding impressive results. Thousands of farmers and small business owners have received loans, tractor attachments, green houses, and repaired farm structures. In addition, hundreds of nongovernmental organizations have received capacity building grants, and have been able to send their leaders to IOCC-sponsored training workshops.

For Isaretovic, who today manages IOCC's comprehensive microcredit program in Bosnia, the experience of helping people return to their homes was unforgettable. "When I now visit the Petrovac region and see life there, I feel joy that I was a small part of that," he says. "At the beginning, we were restoring this country, but now we are developing it. We are moving forward."



### + KATHRYN IRENE EVANS 1976 - 2007 +



On Saturday, June 22, Katie Evans, IOCC HIV/AIDS project manager in Romania, was killed in a bear attack while hiking on a weekend outing with her husband and friends on a remote trail about 75 miles north of Bucharest, Romania. Katie served a three-month internship with IOCC during the summer of 2006 before becoming project manager. "The entire IOCC family sends our thoughts and prayers to Katie's family," said Executive Director & CEO Constantine M. Triantafilou.

"Katie was committed to serving the most vulnerable in her work with the HIV/AIDS program. We are confident that her selfless outreach for the betterment of others will continue for decades to come. We celebrate Katie's exemplary pilgrimage and we will follow her example in every phase of IOCC's service. May her memory be eternal."



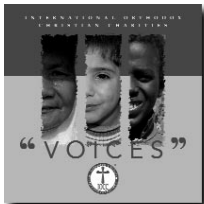


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## NOW AVAILABLE IOCC Releases New Video



Everyday, IOCC responds to the voices of some of the most vulnerable people in the world. Their stories are available now on IOCC's new video, "Voices", a 13 minute documentary.

Order a free DVD from IOCC or watch:  
[www.iocc.org/voices](http://www.iocc.org/voices)

## STAY INFORMED

Sign up for IOCC's email alerts:  
[www.iocc.org/updates](http://www.iocc.org/updates)

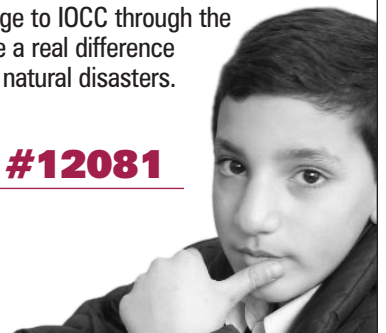
# Help Others Live While You Earn a Living

When you support IOCC through a workplace giving campaign, you're helping to rebuild schools for children, restore water and other utilities for villages damaged by war and disaster, and provide jobs and job training for mothers in areas of high unemployment. For just pennies a day, your pledge to IOCC through the Combined Federal Campaign or United Way can make a real difference for children and families affected by poverty, war and natural disasters.

**PLEASE USE OUR NEW  
WORKPLACE GIVING CODE #12081**

*Or, on the campaign form, write in:*

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P.O. Box 630225 • Baltimore, MD 21263-0225  
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## VOICES of: Faithful Philanthropists

"Our parish priest got us involved with IOCC when it was first launched. It didn't take long for some of the great news about what you are doing to reach us. It's important for us to help out those people who need help. I especially feel for the IOCC staff who are working in Lebanon and the Middle East. They are doing a great job just by being there. The microloan programs are fantastic; only \$200 and you can make a world of difference in people's lives. We are impressed with the fact that the money we give can be leveraged by IOCC to get government funding. We're very proud to be part of this great organization — even in a small way."

**James and Vassiliki Montgomery, Gulf Breeze, FL • IOCC Supporters Since 1992**