



# Midnight run to New Orleans; The airport evacuation

Photo by Michael Rieger-FEMA



**Baltimore, Md (IOCC)** — “Probably the most gratifying thing about bringing out the 300 critically-ill patients from the New Orleans airport that unforgettable evening,” recalled IOCC Board Member Lee Kapetanakis, “was pulling back into Baton Rouge just at sunrise and seeing a convoy of more than 100 buses headed the other way to evacuate those we couldn’t. Word had spread that our midnight-run had made it and now the flood-

gates of evacuation had opened.” The remarkable story that culminated with the evacuation of 300 patients and 30 Vietnamese evacuees in the early morning of Sept. 11, 2005 actually started ten hours earlier.

Although the situation in New Orleans had somewhat stabilized with the military taking control, at the city’s airport people with special medical needs had not been evacuated, and the situation was desperate with people dying every day. Frank Carlin, drawing on more than 35 years of disaster response experience, led the IOCC response team and recalled the evening’s events.

“From 9 to midnight we pressed the case at the FEMA command center in Baton Rouge trying — with great difficulty — to get ten school buses to evacuate 300

*continued on page 7*

## Lebanon school receives help following attack

By Rachel Zoghbi Azzi, IOCC-Lebanon



**Beirut, Lebanon (IOCC)** — As the new year progresses forward, many Lebanese communities are still reeling from the effects of last year’s political and economic instability. Especially devastating were the more than ten explosions targeting populated commercial and industrial sites in Greater Beirut.

Mr. Maurice Bou Habib, Director of the Public School of Antelias, was in his office on July 12, 2005 preparing for the start of the new school year. Suddenly, less than 50 meters away, an explosion targeting Lebanon’s Minister of Defense shook his school, blowing out most of the windows and doors. The Minister, his escorts and others were injured, a civilian was killed, and the immediate area suffered massive destruction.

*continued on page 3*

Photo by Michael Rieger-FEMA



Evacuees, including many who required medical attention, share floor space at the New Orleans Airport following Hurricane Katrina. More than 300 of the sick were taken to Baton Rouge, La. by an IOCC team.

# From the Executive Director

Photo: IOCC-Ethiopia



As we enter the period of Great Lent we prepare ourselves for the fulfillment of God's promise in the Resurrection. The Lenten fast can be more than a personal preparation; it can also be a reminder of those for whom basic food, shelter, economic self-sufficiency and hope are a daily miracle. The pages of this newsletter are devoted to people who have received those miracles through your almsgiving in supporting the work of IOCC.

First the story of immigrants, the elderly and infirm who were evacuated by a pan-Orthodox and ecumenical group of humanitarian aid personnel from the devastation of New Orleans during the middle of the night after a harrowing journey, and into the capable hands of medical personnel to treat them.

Then there is the story of children in Lebanon and how their school was restored after a bomb damaged their building weeks before classes were to begin.

A village on Nias Island in Indonesia that was leveled by the destructive force of a tsunami over one year ago is beginning to be revived through a comprehensive community development strategy that is bringing hope to the people as new buildings are being constructed.

In Ethiopia, where HIV/AIDS has claimed millions of lives and left over a million children

without parents, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church is raising new awareness to help those afflicted with the disease with new opportunities to live fulfilling lives in their communities and prevent others from becoming infected.

And in Serbia-Montenegro and Bosnia-Herzegovina, the IOCC Study Group, joined by longtime supporter Vlade Divac, witnessed first hand how IOCC has empowered people, whose lives were destroyed by war and international sanctions, to help themselves.

God's promise of Resurrection is given flesh on a daily basis through the programs you support in IOCC. As we approach the Resurrectional celebration this year, we thank you for your prayers and we thank you for your faithful support that has brought this Paschal hope to millions worldwide through IOCC.



Yours In Christ,

Constantine M. Triantafilou  
Executive Director



Photo: Nicole Minor - The Pangea Network

National Basketball Association Superstar and longtime IOCC benefactor, Vlade Divac, is shown above with two children from Serbia whose family receives support through IOCC projects. The visit occurred during the IOCC Study trip this past September.

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 the 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.*

Published three times a year by IOCC, News & Needs is edited by Dan Christopoulos, Mark Hodde and Emily Stchur.



recycled paper

To learn more about IOCC's international work, please visit [www.iocc.org](http://www.iocc.org)



# IOCC rebuilding disaster-affected regions

By Dirk Van Gorp, IOCC-Indonesia

## Nias Island, Indonesia (IOCC)

— One year after the devastating Tsunami and earthquake in Southeast Asia, IOCC and its partners are continuing to provide life-recovery assistance to hundreds of affected families. The Tsunami that hit the northern coast of Sumatra, Indonesia on December 26, 2004, causing incomprehensible damage and human tragedy, was followed by an earthquake on March 28, 2005 that struck near the small island of Nias southeast of Sumatra destroying 35,000 homes and killing hundreds.

Just outside the main town of Gunungsitoli on the island of Nias, IOCC is working in partnership with the Orthodox Church of Indonesia and the Orthodox Metropolitanate of Hong Kong and Southeast Asia (OMHKSEA) to construct, equip, and operate a new community health clinic. This will be the first new clinic to open in largely devastated Gunungsitoli.

The new clinic will provide criti-

cally needed healthcare services to the families of Gunungsitoli. Staffed by a local doctor and nurses on a daily basis, the clinic will also benefit from visiting doctors and specialists. In addition to financial support for the clinic construction and equipment, IOCC recently shipped a material donation of new medical supplies and equipment valued at more than \$300,000 to support this clinic and other health clinics and hospitals in the Tsunami and earthquake affected regions of Indonesia.

IOCC has also partnered with Church World Service — Indonesia (CWS) to provide \$450,000 for an integrated village recovery program in Tugala and Desa Fodoro, two small neighboring villages in the Sirombu district of Nias, fifty miles from Gunungsitoli.

The villages' infrastructure, which was already in poor condition, was left largely destroyed by the earthquake. Through this program, IOCC will address many of the most critical needs, such as the



Photo: Dirk Van Gorp, IOCC-Indonesia

The construction work on the new health clinic just outside of Gunungsitoli is nearing completion and will be opening in April, 2006.

reconstruction of family homes, the rebuilding of water supply systems and sanitation facilities, psycho-social activities, nutrition and feeding programs and livelihood recovery assistance.

The integrated approach of these programs and others in the disaster-affected regions is aimed at helping entire villages rebuild their lives and livelihoods, one family at a time.



# Lebanon school receives help following attack

*Continued from page 1*

Luckily no one in the school was hurt, but the buildings were left badly damaged.

The Public School of Antelias is composed of three four-story buildings that house 36 classrooms. "No glass, no windows or doors; nothing stayed the same... I just thanked God for keeping us alive, a few scratches were not a problem," replied the director when asked about his reaction after the explosion.

"But after realizing the size of the destruction, I automatically thought that my school will have no future; no one will be able to recover all the damage before the

start of the school year ... and my students will not have the chance to attend classes anymore. It was the end of the world for me. I was so desperate. But, something triggered me to call IOCC saying to myself maybe they can help," said Habib.

The IOCC team rushed to the school, assessed the damage, and within three days the rehabilitation work was ready to start. After thirty-five days of continuous hard work, all of the windows and doors were fixed or replaced.

"We are very grateful for the effort done, and if IOCC did not intervene, we wouldn't have been

able to resume our school year as scheduled," expressed Mr. Habib. Words of thanks were not limited to the director or the management of the school, but students also wanted to say, "thank you" to IOCC in their own way by painting a picture of children saying "Merci IOCC."

The Public School of Antelias is considered one of the premier schools in Lebanon for excellent student performance, despite its poor building and infrastructure. It has also benefited from IOCC's School Feeding and Education program for the past two years.



*To learn more about IOCC's international work, please visit [www.iocc.org](http://www.iocc.org)*

# Serbia-Montenegro and



**From Aug. 29 - Sept. 7, IOCC Executive Director Constantine Triantafilou led a group of 11 committed supporters, including three clergy, on a study tour of Serbia-Montenegro and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Participants visited IOCC projects in both countries and saw, firsthand, how IOCC's efforts are continuing to make positive impacts in the lives of those served.**

"Foreign travel is often exciting but we tend to focus on the history and landmarks of each county. This special trip was an opportunity to immerse ourselves in the culture and everyday life of struggling humankind and to see with our own eyes how God's work makes a difference. Our lives will be changed forever."

— Peter & Joan Calott,  
Minneapolis, MN

"Over ten days, we would meet people and hear stories of sadness, destruction, families torn apart, neighbors moved from their homes, and loved ones lost. The numbers of those affected, directly or indirectly, by the war in the former Yugoslavia were staggering; thousands, tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions. But the magnitude of these numbers pales in comparison to the reality that behind

every number is an individual: an individual created in the image and likeness of God. Our trip wasn't designed to impress upon us the numbers, but rather to share in IOCC's programs assisting those individuals less fortunate. These are our God-given gifts we offer to those with whom we share that very same image and likeness."

— Steve Kreta,  
San Francisco, CA

"Throughout the trip I was continually impressed by the IOCC staff. It was not only their unbelievable commitment to the activities in these communities that struck me, but their sincere connection to the people they are serving. It is clear that IOCC doesn't work with a community, they work within it, creating a sense of ownership and true participation among the beneficiaries."

— Nicole Minor, Houston, TX

"The two highlights of the study trip for me involved the shortest adult I have ever seen and one of the tallest men I have ever met. Standing less than five feet tall and 91 years of age, His Holiness Patriarch Pavle of the Serbian Orthodox Church awarded IOCC the Order of St. Sava, First Degree (the highest ecclesiastical award in the Serbian Church) in recognition of IOCC's work since 1992. His Holiness stated: 'The award is presented on behalf of all the Serbian people to Constantine and IOCC who were there for us during our most difficult times. I present this to you with my heart-felt appreciation. I know first hand all that IOCC has done for us. There was always a light for us, and that light was provided to us by IOCC, and that light continues to shine, even unto this very day.' The second highlight was having the 7'2" Vlade Divac, a Serbian born U.S.A. NBA superstar, spend the entire day accompanying us throughout central Serbia. A longtime IOCC benefactor, Vlade is a 'true hero' of this nation as he generously reaches out to everyone."

— Fay Zaharas,  
Cheyenne, WY



Photo: Vecenije Novosti - Belgrade, 9/1/05



# and Bosnia-Herzegovina

"I encourage you to participate in one of the future study trips, whether it be to Serbia and Bosnia or some other place where IOCC is working... And when you go, be prepared to come home changed, invigorated and committed."

— Fr. David G. Barr, Pastor of St. Elias Antiochian Orthodox Church in Austin, TX

"So often, a very simple request to a worthy cause is all our faithful need. As clergy, we must provide our flock with opportunities to exhibit their love to the people of the world. Almsgiving, along with prayer and fasting, is the instruction of our Lord."

— Fr. Anastasios Bourantas, Pastor of St. George Greek Orthodox Church in Media, PA



Milada was one of the beneficiaries visited during the 2005 Study Trip. Through the support of IOCC's micro-credit loans, Milada has been able to secure a steady source of income to support her family while insuring that her pasta business will continue to grow well into the future.

All photos courtesy IOCC unless otherwise indicated

"Whatever type of material assistance IOCC provides, it pales in comparison to the hope it creates for families with so little, for villages, and for entire municipalities."

— Fr. Marc Vranes, Pastor of Holy Trinity Orthodox Church (OCA) in Bristol, CT



"'Without the eyes to see, the heart cannot feel,' were the words of a refugee woman we met the first day of our trip in Serbia. Since then I often reflect on the significance of this statement. Many people have asked about the study trip and even when I tell them stories of the people and their hardships, I know it is not the same as being blessed with having experienced it first hand. IOCC has made such a difference in the lives of these individuals."

— Lisa Xanthos, Los Angeles, CA



## TWO STUDY TRIPS IN 2006!

Serbia-Montenegro & Bosnia-Herzegovina: Sept. 5 - 13 tentatively

Jerusalem & the West Bank: Nov. 7 - 14 tentatively

**For more information contact Dan Christopoulos at [dchristopoulos@ioccc.org](mailto:dchristopoulos@ioccc.org) or call toll-free 877-803-4622.**



*Helping others help themselves*

# Snapshots from Jerusalem and Ethiopia

## Education helps family, village in West Bank

By Nora Kort, IOCC-Jerusalem

**Madama, West Bank (IOCC)** — Maha lives in the West Bank village of Madama near Nablus.

She is a young mother of four whose husband, like most men in her village, can't find work. With living expenses and mouths to feed, her husband encouraged her to pursue her dream of having a job. Five years ago, she joined the Madama Health Education Training program funded by IOCC, where she learned to teach sound health practices to a community in need of public health awareness and a safe, clean environment. For three years she worked on a voluntary basis and found it extremely rewarding, but kept her hope alive to find a paying job that would enable her to study at the university.

During those three years, Maha gained the respect and appreciation of her village for whom she volunteered so much time. Then, at the end of 2004, her village received a grant to start a computer center and a library. The village elected Maha to be the computer trainer for the center. After she started this job, she continued her voluntary health education training and started attending the university in Nablus. Her income from her job at the computer center pays for some of the family expenses and her university fees. She says she is grateful for her education and her role in the community, which has assisted her and her family.

The Madama village community center was constructed with and

continues to receive funding from IOCC and its partners.



Children in the village of Madama wait in line at the health clinic next door to the Health training center.

Photo: IOCC-Jerusalem

## Overcoming stigma in Ethiopia

Photo: Stefanos Rouliakis, IOCC-Ethiopia



Tadeleu's business, which keeps her busy at her sewing machine every day from sunrise to sunset, has given her a new sense of confidence and hope.

**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (IOCC)**

— Tadeleu contracted HIV from her husband, who has since died. Her two children, who are HIV negative, live with Tadeleu's mother. She tearfully tells of the stigma that she faces, both personally and socially. "When I found out I had the disease, all I could think about was how much I hated myself, and I kept denying that I had the disease" she says. "I do not want to [get to know] people, because I fear they will find out my status."

When Tadeleu discovered she had HIV, she started attending support meetings at the Hope Center, established by IOCC and

the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. There, she found a sense of community and a program that would change her life. The Hope Center provided her with skills training and the start-up capital to begin a small business.

Now she is too busy to feel hopeless. She works every day from sunrise to sunset at her self-powered sewing machine. Orders come in regularly giving Tadeleu confidence in her work and a sense of security. Amidst her tears, a smile breaks out, and she says, "I am happy that the Church has provided support. This program has given me life."



To learn more about IOCC's international work, please visit [www.iocc.org](http://www.iocc.org)



# Midnight run to New Orleans; The airport evacuation

Continued from page 1



Photo by Liz Roll-FEMA

Vietnamese who had been taken to the New Orleans airport.

We were told that no buses had been allowed through for several days, but since we had a Roman Catholic Church willing to house them in Baton Rouge, we were given permission.

Our team consisted of Fr. Peter Preble from the Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese of America, Lee Kapetanakis, Pat Johns from Catholic Relief Services, the priest from the Vietnamese Roman Catholic parish (with a few parishioners to translate), Jim Kelley, Executive Director of Catholic Charities New Orleans, and me.

"When the team arrived at the LSU football stadium to pick-up the buses a little after midnight, there was a SWAT team and two sheriff's cars assigned to escort them. Also present was the head doctor of the LSU Medical Center and a number of medical stu-

dents. He indicated that there were more than 2,500 people with serious medical conditions at the airport and that he wanted to evacuate as many as possible on our buses. It was agreed that the most critical patients would be taken out with any additional space being used for the Vietnamese evacuees. Finally the ten-bus convoy departed for New Orleans, escorted by the Sheriff's vehicles, with SWAT members, LSU medical students, and the IOCC/Catholic team members dispersed among the yellow school buses."

The 75 minute drive from Baton Rouge to the New Orleans airport would take much longer that evening.

"As we got closer we could smell a suffocating stench generated by the floating debris," Kapetanakis vividly remembered.

"There were no lights visible from a pitch black New Orleans

and for a moment I felt as if I were in a bad dream or in a war zone in a foreign land. That feeling was re-enforced as the SWAT team locked and loaded their weapons, guarding against snipers as we got on the long bridge going into the city."

After stand-offs at each of the six check points between the National Guard and the SWAT team, the convoy was finally allowed through. Upon arrival at the airport only 30 of the stranded Vietnamese evacuees could be located. The LSU medical team was thankful because it would mean more space for the critically ill. One final glitch was the refusal of the FEMA personnel at the airport to allow transportation of critically ill patients claiming that the school buses were not properly equipped for such transport. But, through persuasion by the Sheriff and the SWAT team, as well as prayer and a demonstration by the lead bus driver of how the stretchers could be loaded and situated securely on the buses, the okay was given and the patients and evacuees were loaded.

The midnight run by IOCC, a pan-Orthodox effort in collaboration with our ecumenical partners, started a ripple effect that led to other convoys coming into New Orleans to successfully evacuate the airport. It is a story of perseverance, faith, and God's grace seared into the hearts of those whose suffering was alleviated by IOCC's response to Christ's call to care for our brethren.



# Georgia and James Nicholas establish new fund to assist children

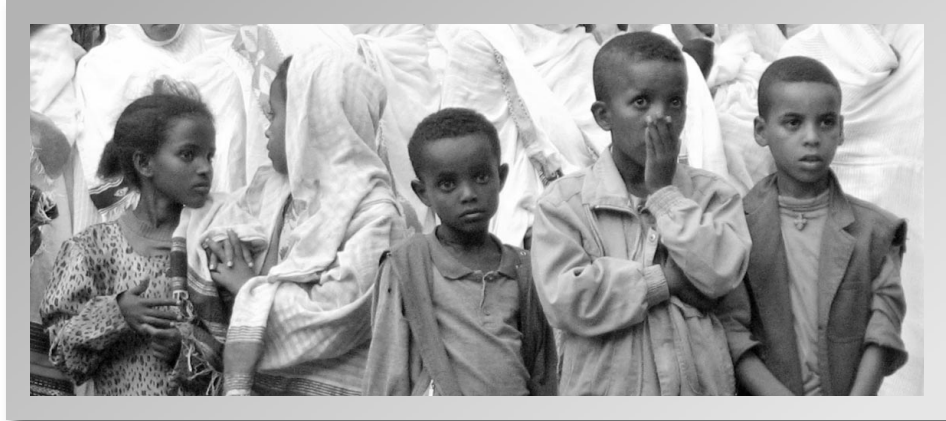


Georgia and James S. Nicholas of Grand Rapids, Michigan recently established a \$250,000 fund within the IOCC Foundation to honor the memory of Mrs. Nicholas' parents, Chris and Amalia Spiris. The "Chris and Amalia Spiris Fund" will assist vulnerable children through educational, vocational, emergency relief and other IOCC programs. It will also provide capital for some of the world's poorest families so they can create their own jobs, raise the income in their households, and improve their standard of living.

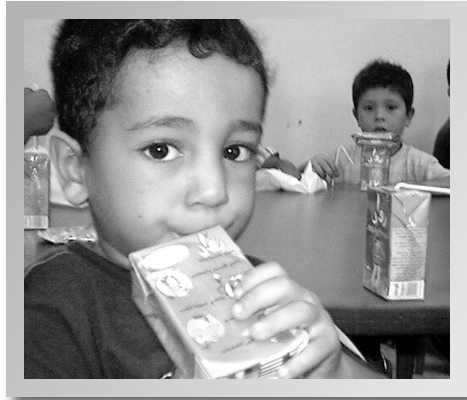
Mr. and Mrs. Nicholas are long-time members of Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan as well as members of Leadership 100. Mr. Nicholas is also an Archon of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and member of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Detroit Metropolis Council.

The IOCC Foundation, a professionally-managed, not-for-profit support organization, is dedicated to supporting IOCC's relief and development programs. The IOCC Foundation was formed in 2004 to provide a vehicle whereby assets contributed toward IOCC's philanthropic work worldwide would receive focused stewardship.

For further information about the IOCC Foundation and how you can participate, please contact Dan Christopoulos toll free at 1-877-803-4622 or [dchristopoulos@iocc.org](mailto:dchristopoulos@iocc.org)



All photos courtesy IOCC



110 West Road, Suite 360  
Baltimore, MD 21204 USA  
Internet: [www.iocc.org](http://www.iocc.org)  
E-mail: [relief@iocc.org](mailto:relief@iocc.org)

Non-Profit  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Baltimore, MD  
Permit No. 4280