



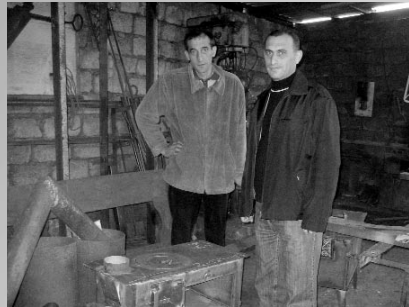
# INTERNATIONAL ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHARITIES NEWS & NEEDS

15 YEARS OF HELPING OTHERS HELP THEMSELVES

VOLUME 10, NO. 1 SPRING 2007

## Education and Innovation: Projects Promise Renewal in Georgia

photos by Zaza Macharashvili/IOCC



Georgian school children in the village of Bia receive World Atlases, part of IOCC's project to provide books and school supplies to underserved children. Vasil, a welder in western Georgia, realized the dream of having his own business through a micro-credit loan provided by IOCC Georgia. IOCC has provided loans to more than 1,700 borrowers in Georgia since 1999.

**TBILISI, GEORGIA** — A country with a renowned Christian heritage and singular culture, Georgia struggled economically and socially from the effects of the disintegration of the Soviet Union. In 1994, IOCC began its operations in Georgia at the invitation of ILIA II, Patriarch-Catholicos of Georgia. At that time, more than a quarter of a million people were also displaced due to separatist fighting. Winters were an especially difficult time as people had to do without heat for their homes and work places that had once been provided free of charge by the central government. IOCC Georgia, in association with the Georgian Orthodox Church and Church World Service, launched an emergency program in 1995 to provide tens of thousands of blankets and food parcels to the most vulnerable families.

Today, IOCC Georgia is focusing on long term development pro-

grams such as school infrastructure rehabilitation. "We used to not have windows or doors, but now we don't have anything to say except a big thank you to IOCC," says Tekla, a student in the Black Sea town of Poti where IOCC Georgia has renovated the local school. Before IOCC's outreach to public schools in Georgia, there were very few resources in the country to fund public education. School buildings were often crumbling, teachers and administrators were paid little to nothing, textbooks and school supplies were out of reach. Most Georgian schools had not received major repairs, or even routine maintenance, for a decade or more. With funding from USDA and Hellenic Aid of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, IOCC has repaired broken windows and doors, leaking roofs, renovated bathrooms, and provided shipments of books in 30 public schools.

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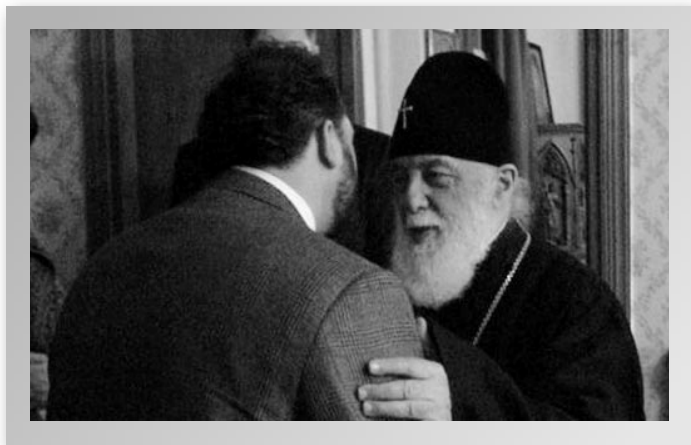
### LOOKING BACK: IOCC Georgia in 1995

IOCC, in association with the Georgian Orthodox Church, is launching a "Blanket Project", which will provide 10,400 blankets for additional warmth to vulnerable individuals residing in institutions for children, the elderly, and the sick. As a result of civil wars and the disintegration of its economy, the Republic of Georgia counts today more than a quarter million of displaced persons and a host of other vulnerable groups. The situation is particularly severe this winter with extreme shortages of electricity, natural gas and water. The project's estimated cost is valued at \$100,000 and will be funded by Church World Service. — *Taken from the February 1995 issue of News & Needs.*



IOCC's first efforts in Georgia focused on a program which involved the distribution in Tbilisi and Southern Georgia of 3,550 food parcels donated by the United Nations World Food Program. The program, which was valued at \$91,235, took place from July to October 1994.

# From the Executive Director



In 1994, IOCC began its operations in Georgia at the invitation of ILIA II, Patriarch-Catholicos of Georgia. At that time, more than a quarter of a million people were displaced due to separatist fighting. Pictured above, IOCC Executive Director Constantine M. Triantafilou is greeted by ILIA II.

*“Once upon a time there lived a boy prince ... All the doors of worldly pleasures and success were open before him. But something within himself turned him away from all those things after which millions of human beings are feverishly striving. He renounced all vanities and allurements of the world and one day secretly fled away from the royal court and settled in the desert place a poor stranger intent to enlighten his soul by fulfilling God’s will to perfection. Many years later this worldly prince, led by God’s hand, returned from the desert to his native country as a prince of the church and forever the spiritual leader of his nation. He became the spiritual father of millions of people rebuilding churches and schools throughout his country and reached out to all in need.”*

These words, penned by Bishop Nikolai about the life of St. Sava, have motivated and guided me from the moment I read them when I was just starting my career in Bosnia many years ago. In the early 1990s our own SCOBA Hierarchs in America emulated the decision of St. Sava to fulfill “God’s will to perfection” by reaching “out to all in need.” Faced with the fall of Communism and the war in the Balkans, our Bishops called upon their lay leaders to mount a unified humanitarian response to these events that would forever change our historic Orthodox lands. And so, on March 10, 1992 IOCC was born.

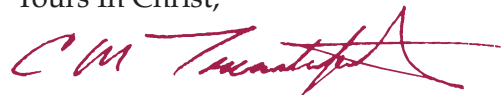
Since then, IOCC has implemented nearly \$250 million in emergency aid and long term development initiatives in 33 countries. As we mark this 15th anniversary milestone, we know now, more than ever, that poverty, war, and natural disaster are not the final arbiters in people’s lives. I have seen individuals driven from their homes, having lost all, and yet have the courage to return and rebuild their lives. It is humbling and inspiring to see that alongside such suffering there can also be such grace, courage, and determination.

Throughout 2007, and in the issues of *News & Needs*, we will be marking IOCC’s 15th anniversary with a look back at our beginnings in Russia, the Balkans, and Georgia, as well as a look at our current work and future initiatives. As we trace the geographic trajectory of IOCC’s outreach from Eastern Europe to the Middle East to South Asia and Africa, we will thank and feature our hierarchs, founders, donors, staff, and partners who have come together in one voice to serve our brothers and sisters in need.

We are particularly overwhelmed with the outpouring of love and resources of our Orthodox brothers and sisters towards the cataclysmic disasters of Sept. 11, 2001, the 2004 Tsunami, and the 2005 Hurricanes in the US Gulf Coast. Above all, we thank God for His Grace and love. And, we thank our SCOBA Hierarchs who saw the potential of speaking with ONE voice and acting with ONE heart in fulfilling our Lord’s commandment to serve the least of our brethren. Their courage, like that of St. Sava’s, in reaching out to all in need, has given them spiritual fatherhood over millions of people.

As we look forward to the next 15 years, we pledge, with our Hierarchs, our founders, our supporters, our partners, and our staff, to stand, side by side, and united with one voice respond to our Lord Jesus Christ’s call to minister to those who are suffering and in need throughout the world.

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 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 and Amal Morcos.





# Material and Mental Healing for Lebanese Students

**SOUANE, LEBANON** — Scan the faces of children gathered for a break outside Souane Elementary School and you see that life is slowly returning after the traumatic 34-day conflict last summer that left Lebanese villages bombed, roads destroyed and thousands injured and dead.

For 20 days, students at the public elementary school could not use their building because it was very badly damaged in the fighting, said Farid Hamra, a construction specialist for IOCC.

“Most of the schools were hit directly,” Hamra said, adding that the average budgeted for the schools is \$20,000. The repair work is being done using contractors obtained through a bidding process carried out via ads placed in local newspapers.

All of the windows were broken, and the school had shrapnel throughout, said Hamra. Yet with the help of IOCC and \$13,000 in repairs, including electrical and sanitary work, painting and maintenance, the school is open again.

“Today the children are doing okay. They are singing, even when they hear airplanes,” kindergarten teacher Oussama Mzanniar said recently. Souane is one of 23 schools that IOCC is committed to restoring in four districts in south Lebanon—Marjeyoun, Hasbayya, Bint Jbeil and Tyre—with \$3.7 million in funding from the U.S.

Government’s Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA). IOCC’s commitments also include non-food relief supplies to 2,900 vulnerable families and



IOCC Lebanon

Souane Elementary is one of 23 schools that IOCC is committed to restoring in four districts in south Lebanon — Marjeyoun, Hasbayya, Bint Jbeil and Tyre — with \$3.7 million in funding from the U.S. Government’s Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA).

water and sanitation projects in 30 villages. The villages are located south of the Litani River, the area that is closest to the Israeli border and that suffered the most damage during last July’s war.

For proof that the relief effort is working, simply look at 10-year-old Hussein Sultan, who was injured when an unexploded bomb went off while he and friends played near a home in the Souane area that was destroyed in the fighting. Sultan survived, although one of his friends was not as lucky. And though he spent a number of days in the hospital being treated for metal shrapnel in his lungs, he is now back with the other children at Souane.

Much is improving, there are success stories, and most agree there is still considerable work left to do, particularly in terms of psychological healing in areas closest to where the fighting took place. Many say activities like art, movies and plays will go a long way toward helping the children

heal their trauma. The OFDA grant will also allow IOCC Lebanon to provide psychological counseling to about 90,000 women and children.

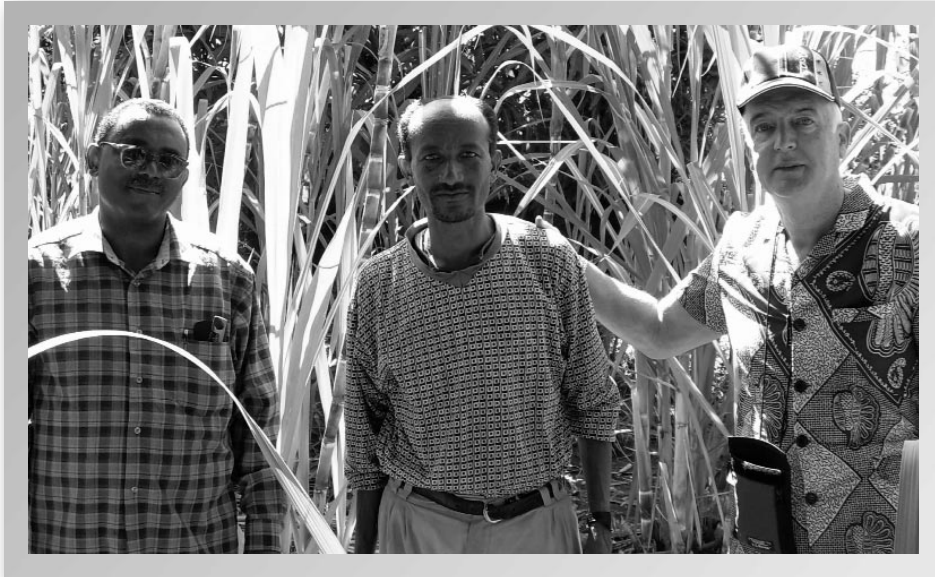
The students are not fully recovered, said Khalil Haider, a principal at Aitaroun Elementary School, another school that IOCC is repairing near the Israel-Lebanon border, where some of the most intense fighting occurred. “They are not feeling safe... They have a strong fear.” More psychosocial programs including entertainment and music are needed, stressed Haider, whose school was so badly damaged that it needed \$24,500 in repairs. “If we can provide a small smile, it will give a lot for a depressed student,” he said.

*Excerpted from an article by Toya Richards Hill for Action by Churches Together (ACT) International. IOCC is a member of ACT, a global alliance of churches and related agencies responding to emergencies worldwide.*



# Ethiopia: Key to Africa

*An Interview with IOCC's New Head of Office, Thomas Kivlan*



Shumea grows sugarcane and sells it to wholesalers for a modest profit. He is pictured here with Solomon Hailu (left) of the HIV/AIDS Unit of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and Thomas Kivlan (right) Head of Office for IOCC Ethiopia. With the \$80 of start up capital provided by IOCC, Shumea, who was diagnosed with HIV, was able to purchase some farmland. With additional money he earned as a night watchman, he was able to purchase seeds and cultivating tools. Through its partnership with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, IOCC has assisted over 8,000 Ethiopians who are living with HIV/AIDS.

**ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA** — IOCC recently reported to the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) that nearly 7 million Ethiopians have received training in HIV/AIDS prevention through IOCC's program in partnership with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. A country with a rich Christian heritage, Ethiopia has struggled on several fronts, battling not just HIV/AIDS but drought, war, and famine as well. IOCC began operations in Ethiopia in 2001 through a partnership with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Programs for the development of clean water sources and improved agricultural techniques helped rural communities overcome the effects of poverty and drought. In 2004, IOCC

launched a comprehensive AIDS awareness and training program with funding from USAID. Along with prevention and awareness training, children orphaned by HIV/AIDS and adults who are living with the disease are also assisted by IOCC through one-time start-up capital for small businesses. IOCC's new Head of Office for Ethiopia Thomas Kivlan has had a 24-year career in humanitarian aid and development work, including stints in Afghanistan, the Congo, Honduras, El Salvador, Egypt, Morocco, Iraq and Georgia, where he opened IOCC's office in 1994. Kivlan talks about Ethiopia's significance to Africa and the difference IOCC's HIV/AIDS prevention program is making.

*N&N: What is Ethiopia's significance regionally and for the continent?*

KIVLAN: Ethiopia is a sensitive country politically, economically, and from a humanitarian standpoint. It has always been a high profile country because of the global stature of the late Emperor Haile Selassie, and the notorious reputation of the Marxist regime which overthrew the emperor and ruled the country with an iron hand from 1974 to 1991. Ethiopia is also sensitive since it is a nation of chronic food instability. There have been five major famines in the last three decades.

*N&N: What strengths can IOCC offer Ethiopia?*

KIVLAN: In Ethiopia, IOCC is lean and mean and efficient. It was the same story when I worked for IOCC in Georgia, when that country was trying to revive itself after decades of repression under communism. We have a focused and succinct mission and we execute that mission very effectively.

*N&N: How does Ethiopia compare with other African nations that are dealing with the HIV/AIDS pandemic?*

KIVLAN: Other African countries have been hit harder and have a higher infection rate; places like Zambia, Malawi, Zimbabwe, South Africa.



However, Ethiopia is important because it has a population of over 75 million people, so it is absolutely critical that we control the rate of infection in a country with such a large population. Ethiopia is important as a large Orthodox nation. IOCC's partnership with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church allows us to harness the power of a 35 million person constituency.

***N&N: HIV was first diagnosed in Ethiopia in 1984. Are there any indications that programs for prevention are making an impact?***

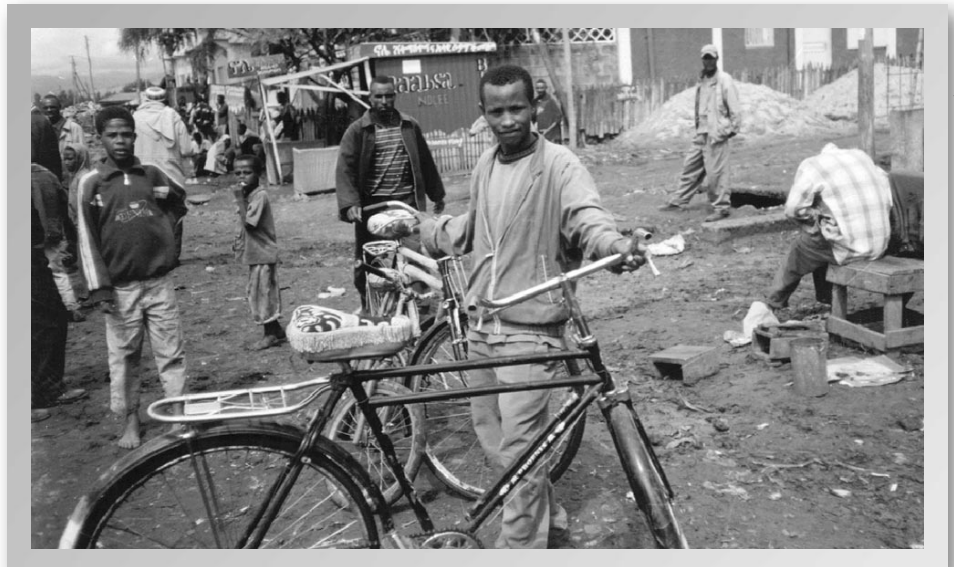
**KIVLAN:** We are starting to see some significant results. In 2004, the infection rate was 4.4% and now it is down to 1.4%, which is encouraging when you compare it to other African countries. Also, for a country as traditional as Ethiopia, we have seen the incidence of stigma and shame decrease. On World AIDS Day, the Patriarch gave the keynote address and was followed by several individuals living with HIV who stood up and spoke in the most beautiful and moving terms on how their lives had been transformed, not only through abstinence and faithfulness, but through the antiretroviral drug therapy. They spoke of having the strength and energy to return to active life and to work again. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church is in the vanguard of promoting dynamics of this kind. This, however, should not be construed to mean that the battle is won. It merely indicates that progress is being made and we are moving in the right direction.



Thomas Kivlan / IOCC

### **A Small Shop and A Lot of Dignity**

Though she had contracted the AIDS virus, Sufan was determined to become self-supporting. Through IOCC, Sufan, and eight other women with AIDS, received \$340 to open a convenience store in the rural town of Assela. Since then, four of the original nine women have died, but Sufan and the remaining four have kept on with their business, which provides Sufan with an income of about \$35 per week — a substantial sum for rural Ethiopia. Through IOCC's partnership with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and its humanitarian arm, DICAC (Development and Inter Church Aid Commission), 5,500 Ethiopian clergy have been trained in conducting HIV/AIDS prevention workshops.



Ken Baker / IOCC

### **Bicycles and a Brighter Future**

Tariku is a 17 year old orphan who lost both parents to HIV/AIDS. In 2004, he joined IOCC's program to support Ethiopia's orphans and was given monthly support for his food, clothing, and medical expenses. In 2005, IOCC's program shifted to more sustainable support and Tariku received money to start his own business. Tariku purchased a bicycle and began renting it to others. In less than six months he saved enough money to purchase three bicycles, which has doubled his income. Since 2005, 14,000 Ethiopian orphans have been assisted through IOCC's partnership with DICAC.

# IOCC Elects Alex Machaskee as New Board Chairman

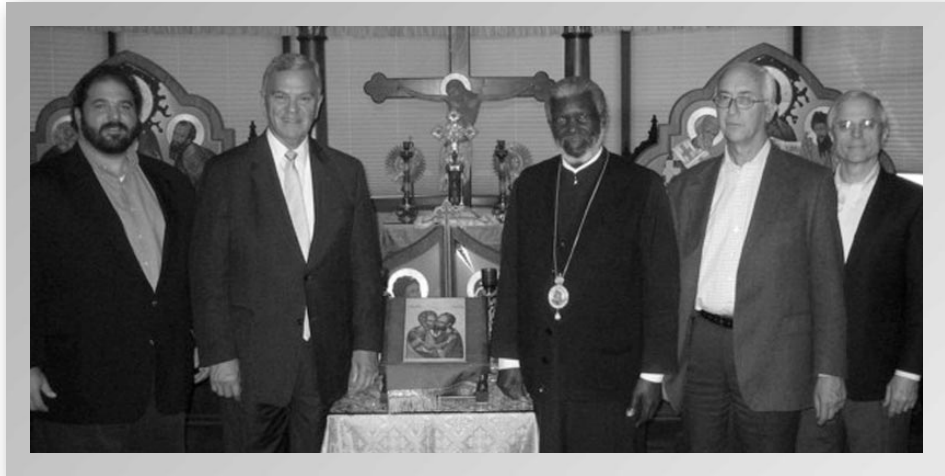
*Retired Publisher and Prominent Serbian-American Brings Many Years of Civic Leadership*

**BALTIMORE (IOCC)** — Alex Machaskee, retired publisher of *The Plain Dealer* and a prominent Serbian-American businessman, was elected Chairman of the Board of IOCC at its board meeting at the Antiochian Village in Bolivar, Pennsylvania. He succeeds Bert Moyer, who has served IOCC as board chairman since 2002, and as a board member since 1995.

*“Wherever IOCC has gone — the Holy Land, Lebanon, Russia, and Ethiopia — it has distinguished itself for programs that minister to the whole person and whole community.”*

Machaskee was publisher, president and chief executive officer of *The Plain Dealer*, Ohio’s largest newspaper, from 1990 until his retirement in 2006. An active and dedicated member of leading civic organizations, Machaskee has been presented with numerous awards throughout his career including the Urban League of Cleveland’s Whitney M. Young Humanitarian Award, and the World Trade Center of Cleveland’s International Executive of the Year. Currently, he is president of Alex Machaskee & Associates, a public relations and marketing firm based in Cleveland.

Archbishop DEMETRIOS, Chairman of the Standing Conference of the Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas



Retired publisher of *The Plain Dealer* and long time IOCC board member Alex Machaskee was elected Chairman of the IOCC Board at the October Board Meeting. Pictured left to right: IOCC CEO Constantine M. Triantafyllou, Alex Machaskee, Metropolitan JONAH of Uganda, former Director of Oxfam, David Bryer, and outgoing IOCC Board Chairman Bert Moyer.

(SCOBA), congratulated Machaskee on his election. “Working with the dynamic IOCC staff, we are certain that IOCC will continue to be the outstanding example it has been of what we Orthodox Christians in America can do together to fulfill our Lord’s commandments to love our neighbors and to help those in need.”

Machaskee, who will preside over IOCC’s continued implementation of a 5-year strategic plan, also plans to travel regularly to the organization’s field operations. “Wherever IOCC has gone — the Holy Land, Lebanon, Russia, and Ethiopia — it has distinguished itself for programs that minister to the whole person and whole community,” says Machaskee. “I look forward to working with our U.S. headquarters and field staff to expand

IOCC’s presence in Africa, the Middle East, and right here in North America, as well as increasing its visibility among our Orthodox constituents,” he continued.

Machaskee is Chairman of the Cleveland Council on World Affairs, and a board member of St. Vladimir’s Orthodox Theological Seminary. He holds several other board memberships, and has been an IOCC board member since 2000. In 2004, he was named Lifetime Director of United Way Services.

Also elected to IOCC’s Executive Committee at the Pennsylvania meeting were Dr. Frank Cerra of Minnesota as Vice Chair; Mark Stavropoulos of Michigan as Treasurer; and Presbytera Maria Mossaides Apostola of Massachusetts as Secretary.







# VOICES of:

## ALL STAR PHILANTHROPISTS

*As IOCC marks its 15th Anniversary, we lift up the voices and actions of those who support us in responding to our Lord's call to help our brothers and sisters in need.*

**BALTIMORE (IOCC)** — All have a common purpose: to give back to countries and communities that have been the foundation of their success and to give opportunities to others. Since 1997, a very special group of athletes have been creating signature initiatives with IOCC that accomplish this dual purpose.

Retired National Basketball Association (NBA) All-Star Vlade Divac, one of the first international players in the NBA to have an impact on the court, has been a leader in helping others off the court as well. Divac and the Group Seven Children's Foundation he founded with six other Serbian basketball players, including Predrag Danilovic, Aleksandar Djordjevic, Zarko Paspalj, Zeljko Rebraca, Dejan Bodiroga, and Zoran Savic, has sponsored a total of \$5 million in IOCC humanitarian projects and educational programs for children



Peja Stojakovic of the NBA's New Orleans/Oklahoma City Hornets shares time with children at a basketball camp. The All-Star athlete has supported projects assisting children in Serbia, Montenegro and Greece.

in Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, the United States, Indonesia and Ethiopia.

Group Seven-IOCC initiatives have included programs that use information technology for "Connecting Kids" in 17 Serbian and Bosnian schools and foster dialogue between students. The program was recently extended through a Group Seven grant to include schools in the southern Serbian province of Kosovo. The foundation has also supported an IOCC dental hygiene education and awareness campaign that reached more than 24,000 elementary school children in Serbia's eight largest cities, providing them with dental kits and training, and encouraging them to make healthy lifestyle choices.

And their humanitarian concern has extended to their adopted country as well. Divac, a recipient of the IOCC "Good Samaritan Award", personally drove supplies to an IOCC emergency response center in Houston, Texas following Hurricane Katrina. "The devastation caused by this hurricane reminds me of the destruction caused by war in my homeland," said Divac. "I am especially concerned for all the innocent children who have suffered from this disaster."

Serbian NBA players that Divac introduced to IOCC include: Peja Stojakovic, an NBA-All Star with the New Orleans/Oklahoma City Hornets, who has provided for several containers of medical supplies, medicines and equipment to Serbia, Montenegro and Greece; Dragan Tarlac, who played for the Chicago Bulls; and Rasho Nesterovic of the NBA's



Retired NBA All-Star Vlade Divac has contributed to a number of IOCC programs to benefit children in Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Ethiopia and Indonesia. During the 2005 Gulf Coast hurricanes, he personally drove a truck of emergency supplies from California to Texas.

Toronto Raptors, who joined with IOCC in 2005 to provide 280 wheelchairs and vocational training for disabled people in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Tarlac, whose family is from the village of Ridjica in northern Serbia, has supported several projects in Ridjica through IOCC including equipping the local medical clinic and supporting efforts by area farmers to increase their production by providing critical farm machinery.

"It is very significant that these athletes have not only contributed generously, but have also given their personal support to common projects," said IOCC Executive Director Constantine Triantafilou. "They've achieved extraordinary success, but have not forgotten their roots and those that are hurting throughout the world. This sets a powerful example to all the people who admire and respect them, both in the U.S. and in the Balkans."





## VOLUNTEER IN THE GULF COAST



IOCC is sending volunteer teams every month through July 2007 to build new homes for families who were devastated by the 2005 Hurricane season.

**Find out how you can serve on a one-week work crew at [www.iocc.org/gulfcoast](http://www.iocc.org/gulfcoast), or call 1-877-803-IOCC (4622).**

## Education and Innovation: Projects Promise Renewal in Georgia

*continued from front cover*

IOCC Georgia is also aiding deprived populations in the southern and western regions of the country with a micro-finance and credit program.

IOCC has provided loans to more than 1,700 borrowers in Georgia since 1999, including people like Vasil, a welder in western Georgia. Vasil wanted his own business but did not have enough for the start-up capital, nor was he able to qualify for a bank loan. In 2002, he received his first loan from IOCC, which he used to purchase an iron cutting machine. Over the next three years, Vasil received other loans from IOCC to purchase additional machinery and equipment and to employ other welders. One of the most rewarding aspects, says Vasil, of running his own business has been to provide employment for others.



# VOICES of: FAITHFUL PHILANTHROPISTS

"My husband and I are converts, so Orthodoxy means a lot to us, and having that Orthodox presence around the world with IOCC means a lot to us. You are helping people in really practical ways, like your work with women in the West Bank. It's not like you are there for a couple of months and take off, but a real long-term commitment. People are always asking for money but what IOCC is doing is really meaningful. We are happy to be supporters."

**Catherine Hattrem, Lansing Michigan**  
*IOCC annual supporter since 1993*

"I support IOCC because it is the charity of our Eastern Orthodox Church and takes in all of our churches. I think IOCC is very dependable and I am quite certain that the money goes where it should go. I always look forward to getting your newsletter and reading about your work. Well handled and well supervised, I think IOCC is one of the best and finest organizations."

**Nicholas Dzubay, Barron, Wisconsin**  
*IOCC annual supporter since 1993*

"IOCC has responded so well in all the humanitarian work that they have been doing, and I see humanitarian work as a kind of mission work. Another thing that pleases me is that it is pan-Orthodox. It gives Orthodoxy a presence around the world. I think IOCC has done an outstanding job in its short history."

**George Dandalides, Virginia Beach, Virginia**  
*IOCC annual supporter since 1992*



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