



# INTERNATIONAL ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHARITIES NEWS & NEEDS

SHARING GOOD

SUMMER 2012

## FROM STRUGGLING STREET VENDORS TO VALUED SHOEMAKERS



Jake Lyell/IOCC

Without the money to pay for an advanced education, Mesafent, 21, could only dream about attending college as he eked out a living shining shoes for a few dollars a day. Working in cooperation with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church-Development and Inter-Church Aid Commission (EOC-DICAC), IOCC recruited Mesafent and five other street vendors into a training program that took them off the streets and into a workshop making sturdy custom leather boots for thousands of impoverished Ethiopians

recovering from podoconiosis, a debilitating and disfiguring disease that affects the feet.

The current staff of six shoemakers, ages 21-35, cut, stitch and sole a dozen pairs of boots a day, and are earning enough to support themselves and their families. "I am twice blessed," says Mesafent. He explains that his new shoemaking skills not only help podoconiosis sufferers realize their dreams of pain-free walking, but also provides him with sufficient income to pursue his own dream of earning a college degree.

Mesafent and co-worker Meneychel trim leather into custom-made boots. Through your support of IOCC, this shoemaker training provides much needed footwear to podoconiosis sufferers and much needed skills for these young men to earn a steady income.

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## HELPING OUR NEIGHBORS NEAR AND FAR

Over the past 20 years, the underlying goal of our work around the world has been to provide God's most vulnerable children with the tools they need

to lead better lives and ensure a better life for their families.

Together, we have accomplished much towards helping those in need, thanks to the

foresight of the visionaries and hierarchs who founded IOCC in 1992, and the leadership of a Board of Trustees guided by my predecessors. As IOCC moves forward, it will be through the compassionate hand of our supporters that homeless families will find safe shelter, that small children will have enough food to grow healthy and strong, and that elderly will live their senior years with dignity. So I call on you, brothers and sisters in Christ, to move forward with us and build on this legacy of service to help our neighbors near and far.



Michael S. "Mickey" Homsey  
IOCC Board Chairman



IOCC Board Chairmen, past and present: (l to r) Charles Ajalat, Bert Moyar, Alex Machaskee, Michael "Mickey" Homsey (John Rangos and Andrew Athens not pictured)

Eddie Arrossi/IOCC

## IMMUNIZATIONS FOR GREECE'S MOST VULNERABLE CHILDREN

*No shots, no school* is the policy in Greece for school admittance. For unemployed and uninsured parents, the price tag for their children's immunizations may be too steep to pay, leaving young children out of school and in jeopardy of contracting serious illnesses. IOCC is providing immunizations for underprivileged children at a clinic in Thessaloniki. The series of immunizations will ensure that come fall, these children will join their friends at school to continue their learning. The immunizations are part of a larger response by IOCC to provide healthcare to vulnerable children and elderly in Greece.

(right) Through your support, Greek schoolchildren like this young boy will receive the immunizations he needs to protect his health and his access to school come September.



MDM/Greece

International Orthodox Christian Charities, Inc. (IOCC) is the official humanitarian aid agency of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of North and Central America and a member of the ACT Alliance, a global coalition of churches and agencies engaged in development, humanitarian assistance and advocacy.

*IOCC, in the spirit of Christ's love, offers emergency relief and development programs to those in need worldwide, without discrimination, and strengthens the capacity of the Orthodox Church to so respond.*

Published four times a year by IOCC, News & Needs is edited by Mark Hodde and Rada Tierney.



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## BOSNIAN ENTREPRENEURS NURTURE POST-WAR PROSPERITY

Radinka's rented workshop hums with activity each morning as she and her employee, Jelena, cut and stitch leather and textiles into custom made belts, slippers and clothing. She's come a long way from selling handmade clothes from her cramped Banja Luka apartment, using her sewing skills to support a husband and two sons during the Bosnian War in the 1990s.

For the past ten years, IOCC has helped nurture the entrepreneurial spirit of more than 2,000 enterprising people like Radinka with loans averaging \$1,700 to help them grow their businesses and make a strong positive impact on the economy of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The economic success of the loan recipients has translated into an impressive repayment rate of 97% and in turn, creates sustainability for IOCC's program to continue to offer new opportunities to entrepreneurs wishing to build businesses in agriculture, services, trade and small-scale production. Says the grateful entrepreneur, "IOCC was there for me and my family when there was no one else to turn to, and helped me create financial stability and security during the most critical period of my sons' lives, their childhood and the teenage period."



Nenad Prelevic/IOCC

The three micro-loans Radinka received and repaid helped her buy new equipment and hire a worker to keep up with the growing demand for her custom handiwork.



## GEORGIAN YOUTH TRADE TROUBLED PASTS FOR PROMISING FUTURES



Zaza Macharashvili/IOCC

Rehabilitation classes included team building exercises that helped them practice patience and develop skills to become more adaptable to change.

They came together sharing a common thread...92 young men and women on probation for troubled pasts filled with anti-social behavior, petty crime and substance abuse. Left on their own, young men like Levan, 20,

seemed destined for a life outside the law. When he was selected to participate in a new rehabilitation project offered by IOCC in partnership with the Anti-Drug Center of the Patriarchate of Georgia, Levan saw it as a waste of time. "In the beginning I did not expect anything good at all, I saw distrust and skepticism in almost

every participant's eyes. I could not tell what I was doing here." Antisocial behavior among young people is one of the biggest problems facing Georgian society today. The IOCC project included at-risk juveniles as well as young

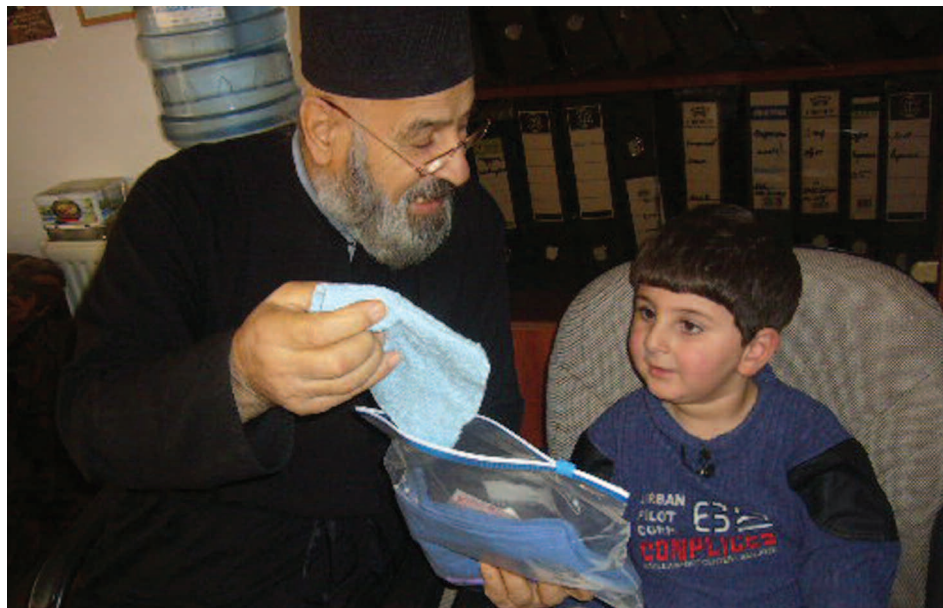
probationers over 18 who were in more critical need of rehabilitation. During a month of intensive group counseling sessions with psychologists and a Georgian Orthodox priest, Levan and his fellow probationers learned new communication and coping skills needed to help transform their rebelliousness into constructive life skills. "I learned a lot here, and decided to become a successful man," said Levan. "I became more communicative, I saw that other probationers too are ordinary normal people. The rehabilitation really exceeded my expectations." For 23-year-old mom, Aleona, it inspired a new career path. "This training has really helped me. Now I want to become a psychologist myself."



# THE LIGHT OF CHRIST ILLUMINES ALL

Fr. Leonid Kishkovsky

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for more  
about IOCC



Felomain Nassar-Batstone/IOCC

St. Seraphim of Sarov (in 19th Century Russia) used to greet all who came to him with the words “Christ is Risen, my joy!” He did not confine this greeting to the Paschal season. Welcoming all who came to him to seek his counsel and his prayers, bringing their troubles and their sins to him, St. Seraphim saw the Risen

Christ in their faces. He regarded the distraught and anxious men and women not as a burden, but as joy. In this way of living the Christian life, St. Seraphim gives us the antidote to the poison of popular 20th Century philosophy. A French philosopher summarized his worldview with the words “Hell is other people.”

St. Seraphim insists that other people are the joy of Heaven. Christ is Risen, my joy!

International Orthodox Christian Charities defines its task in the mission statement:

*IOCC, in the spirit of Christ's love, offers emergency relief and development programs to those in need worldwide, without discrimination and strengthens the capacity of the Orthodox Church to so respond.*

This mission statement gives practical expression to the proclamation “the light of Christ illumines all.” We revere the image and likeness of God, the very face of Christ, in those whom we serve in their need. And we perform our ministry because the light of Christ has illumined our lives. Our programs to help those in need are expressions of living faith. And we meet those who are in need not as burdens, but as the joy of the presence of the Risen Christ. Christ is Risen, my joy!

## LEAVE A LEGACY THROUGH IOCC'S ST. BASIL SOCIETY



IOCC's “St. Basil Society” honors and recognizes the generosity and vision of those who, like St. Basil, have chosen to leave a legacy of compassion to the world through IOCC. If you have included IOCC in your estate, please contact William Brown, Director of Development, toll-free at 1-877-803-4622.

## IOCC Prayer Journal COMING SOON

*My Prayer Journal*, a free publication created by IOCC for Orthodox children, will soon be available. Find out how to get your copy at [iocc.org/prayerjournal](http://iocc.org/prayerjournal)



Jaime Lyell/IOCC

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