

Moldovan Orphans Minister God's Grace to Kids

Constanza, 22, spent most of her childhood in an orphanage where the walls were covered in black mold. Though the children slept together in single cots to keep from freezing to death, she was isolated because she had lice in her hair when her mother left her there.

“Every night I went to bed hungry,” she remembers. “Every morning I put on clothes that were too large, shoes that were too small. It was all I had.”

But on Friday, June 24, Stella's Voice brought her and 14 other former orphans—girls and boys who aged out of the Moldovan state-run orphanages—to minister to the children at Nashua Children's Home in Nashua, N.H.

The Nashua Children's Home was first established as an orphanage in 1899. Today, the organization responds to the needs of at-risk children in the Nashua area. They are committed to the care, welfare and educational achievement of children and youth unable to remain with their families and supportive housing for youth that have aged out of state care in New Hampshire.

In contrast to the “homes” in Moldova, the Nashua Children's Home is a lovely facility containing all the modern conveniences. Located just off Main Street, the home offers warm beds, good food and even a gymnasium for the children to play in.

Stella's Voice Founder Philip Cameron, along with 15 Moldovan orphans, arrived on site with burgers, hotdogs, chips and ice cream as a way to testify of God's amazing grace and provision and to share hope with the young residents of The Nashua Children's Home.

The Moldovan orphans were shocked as their van pulled into the driveway of the Children's Home. "This is an orphanage?" one of them asked, confused.

Yet the Moldovan orphans were here with a mission.

"Jesus Christ changed my life," said one orphan who calls herself Dasa Cameron (not her real name). "I learned of Jesus because of Stella's Voice. Now I know I am loved, I am worthwhile, that God has a plan for me."

Stella's Voice began in response to Stella, an aged-out, handicap orphan from Moldova who was trafficked and died at 19 years old after contracting HIV. (See the article in the February 2011 issue of *Charisma*.)

An easy target, these orphans are often snatched by sex traffickers and sold for as little as \$3,500. They are then used 30 to 50 times per day while their trafficker profits as much as \$350,000 per year.

After working with orphans for 20 years in Moldova, in 2007, Cameron opened Stella's House, a safe house for aged-out orphan girls. The home gives orphans a chance at a new life. They receive their education, learn life skills, and function as a family.

In 2010, Simon's House opened to house aged-out orphan males who are often sold into Russia. In addition, Cameron opened Stella's House Two and acquired Cupcui Orphanage in 2011. The state-run orphanage was recently renovated and named Providence House and has the capacity to house 130 children.

"My heart's desire is to offer a loving Christian home for every orphan in Moldova—all 12,500 of them," said Cameron. "There is a place for every aged-out girl and boy to go." In recent years, 400,000 women and girls have gone missing from Moldova.

Approximately 20 children between the ages of 12 and 18 gathered in the Nashua Children's Home gymnasium to listen to the testimonies of these former orphans. Tears were shed as three of the girls shared alarming stories of their pasts.

The gymnasium was silent except for an occasional sniffle as many of the children had likely felt similar feelings of despair and hopelessness and were touched by the personal stories.

Natalie was the last girl to speak from Moldova. She told the children that the past does not dictate the future, that they can become whoever they want to be, and that Jesus loves them more than anything in the world.

Though she once believed the lie that she was worthless, she is now determined to share the truth with young people.

Despite a small crowd, the gymnasium erupted with applause as the girls returned to their seats on the linoleum floor.

Hamburgers, prepared and served by the Moldovan orphans and volunteers, were served immediately afterwards. While many kids found their way to the food stations, there were a number of girls who stayed behind wanting to talk with the girls who spoke. Hugs were exchanged and words of encouragement were shared.

"Our kids have been moved to tears over the visit in a very good and positive way." said Residential Training and Recreational Coordinator Laura Benevides said. "I have spent the last four days meeting with many kids who have requested talking to me about the impact their visit had. The kids cannot put their books down and are sharing their experience with anyone who will listen—their social workers, our staff who were not here that day, their parents. ... Those girls and boys have certainly persevered and are a true testament to all things good!"

At the end of the presentation, one of the children, intrigued after hearing a number of testimonies, asked if it were possible for him to attend church that weekend. When given the name of the church, Christ Church, the young boy asked how to spell "Christ."