

The Turners

Dave and Dara Turner & Family
Missionaries to Eastern Europe

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Dear Fellowsaints,

We are Dave and Dara Turner. We have been Baptist missionaries for 22 years this year. We came to Bulgaria in 1992 to work with Dara's parents, Ralph and Sandy Cheatwood. They have been missionaries since 1975 working among Turkish speaking people, many of whom live in both Romania and Bulgaria.

The idea for Casa Julia came to Bro. Ralph about 13 years ago. For several years we had been starting churches among the Turks living in Romania in the area around the city of Constanta. In these churches, we sang hymns, preached the Gospel and prayed for God to move and save sinners. We also prayed for the sick and those with special problems and needs. Out of these churches, we began to give bread to needy families and eventually to provide hot meals once a day to children in the poorer neighborhoods of Constanta and in villages nearby. Our churches became known among the people as places where one could truly get help from God. As a result of our reputation for genuinely caring about the needy, we began to get asked if we could take babies who, for one reason or another, would be abandoned. From this was born Bro. Ralph's vision of what is now Casa Julia.

Casa Julia is our home now, and the only home these children have ever known. Dara and I have 6 children and one grandchild. Shalyn, our oldest and only girl, turns 20 this year and lives in the States. Noah Cross, our youngest, went to be with the Lord 8 days after he was born two years ago. We live here with our other 4 boys and the 11 children in the Home. All of the children call me "Daddy" and Dara "Mommy". We got most of the children newborn, several of which are now 12 years old. We are very proud of what the Lord has let us do here and that He helped us realize Bro. Ralph's vision of having a place where we could raise unwanted children as our own in the hope of one day seeing them saved and maybe even staying here and serving with us in the work.

Bro. Ralph told us he did not want the children to grow up ashamed that they were raised in an orphanage. When they are asked where they live, he wants them to be able to hold their heads up and say proudly "I live there, in 'The Father's House'".

Bro. Ralph taught us that all of the work should be an extension of the local church, in which he believes strongly. We always keep the church as the center of our work here and also the Children's Home. Each week we have a Turkish meeting here on the grounds which the children attend. We also have an English meeting each week in the Children's Home on the top floor which we built to be our church. The children love to sing and know many of the English and Turkish hymns. It is such a comfort to know they are being raised under the Gospel and are given this opportunity to grow up knowing Jesus.

Besides Dara and me, our 4 boys, and Ralph and Sandy, another missionary family, Nathan and Teresa Reed and their children also live here on the property. Nathan, his son

Jacob, and our national pastors take care of the village meetings. There are five other missionary families in our group who live in Bulgaria. Over the years, the Children's Home has become somewhat of a 'safe haven' for the other missionary families. Three times a year, we have a week-long campmeeting. The missionaries and their families come and stay here and we have two services and three meals a day. They are able to get away from their every day work, relax and get a spiritual refreshing here at the meeting. We also open the home to them whenever they want to come up for a weekend to have church with us or if they just need a day or two away. We provide a comfortable place to stay and meals so they can rest and get whatever help they may need. This is just one outreach that we have been able to be a part of by having the Home.

About 4 years ago, we met some servicemen stationed at the nearby American military base. We invited them to church at the Home. They came on Sunday to church, stayed for lunch, and spent the rest of the day playing with the kids. This began a very special relationship with our servicemen and women. As their mission here is rotational, we have a steady flow of Marine, Army, Navy and Air Force men and women coming through the base.

We stay in contact with the military, making sure they know they are more than welcome to attend our services or just come and spend time with the kids. This has enriched our lives and those of the kids so much and, from what many have said, been a great blessing to these men and women. Several have said that it was the first time they had ever been to church.

We are very thankful that several of the children have people in the states who have taken a special interest in them. These are people, mostly in churches, who have heard about the children and have taken it upon themselves to help with things like birthday presents, Christmas gifts, and cards at holidays. A few of these even write back and forth with the children. It is so special to the kids to have someone in America to call their own. To the children, America seems to be some far-away magical place that must be wonderful since that's where Mommy and Daddy came from. There are others who on occasion send gifts to all of the kids....Easter candy, presents, school supplies. These types of things help us give to our Home children a little of what kids in America take for granted. We really appreciate those who have taken the time to do something special for our children.

When we talked about what we would tell you about Casa Julia and our children, we discussed telling you the story of how we found each of the children in the Home....of the dreadful conditions, of the lack of love, and in some cases, of the terrible abuse. We decided that we would rather give you the picture of how we see our children. They are bright, loving, adorable little people who have been as much a blessing to us as we could ever be to them. We thank the Lord for calling us to this work and we feel blessed beyond measure for the wonderful life He has given us.

We believe that God has a very special plan for each one of these children He sent our way and whatever that plan is for their lives, we want to care for them and raise them in a way that will bring them to know Jesus Christ as their Savior.

In Christ,

Dave and Dara Turner

"If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be..." John 12:26