Bowling for VRRF

On February 19, 2016, the Saginaw Valley Adjusters Association (SVAA) held their 2nd annual charity bowling tournament. This year, two non-profit organizations were chosen as recipients, Vision Research ROPARD Foundation and I Support the 1%, an organization that provides food for veterans. The event was arranged by SVAA’s president Kim Czerewko and member Lisa LoVasco. in honor of Aria Lynne, Lisa’s two-year-old daughter who has familial exudative vitreoretinopathy (FEVR).

Held at the Stardust Lanes in Saginaw, Michigan, the event was well attended with 125 enthusiastic participants. With ongoing raffles and side bets, it was a terrific evening and VRRF was the grateful recipient of the adjuster’s generosity.

S.U.P.E.R. Students at the Eye Research Institute (ERI), Oakland University

Six undergraduate biomedical science students were selected for the 2015 Super Student Program (Summer Undergraduate Program in Eye Research). The Students will be carrying out research under the guidance of six ERI faculty members. The research will have application to many diseases and conditions, including diabetic retinopathy, retinopathy of prematurity (ROP), Norrie Disease, familial exudative vitreoretinopathy (FEVR), glaucoma and retinitis pigmentosa. This program is twelve weeks long and will end on July 29th when the students will present their results to faculty and an audience of interested family and friends.

Letter from the Directors

Dear Friends,

We thank you for your generous support which has allowed us to continue in our endeavors and for which we are grateful. As you saw in the 2015 Annual Report, the funds that you donate to Vision Research ROPARD Foundation are used to fulfill the three aspects of our mission, research, education and the Children’s Low Vision Resource Center. A very small percentage goes to administrative costs.

Education is a major priority and in this newsletter, you will see the new students in the S.U.P.E.R. Student Program at Oakland University. As you know, international scholars interested in pediatric retinal disease often visit Doctors Trese, Capone and Drenser at Beaumont Hospital. This year we formed a Doctor-to-Doctor program with physicians in Romania arranged by the remarkable Elaine MacEwan and the organization, Nobody’s Children. It all began with Carmen Maria, a Romanian child with Retinopathy of Prematurity. You will meet Dr. Geanina Totolici one of the Romanian physicians.

Fundraising is always on our mind and presently we need to find a mechanism for continuing support for the Children’s Low Vision Resource Center. In February, we received a generous donation arising from a charity bowling tournament held in Saginaw Michigan. Finally, on the subject of fundraising, VRRF is holding its second, Keep Your Eye on the Ball Golf Outing and Silent Auction in Rochester Hills, in September. Please join us for what will be a successful and entertaining event.

Very truly yours,

Michael T. Trese, MD                     Antonio Capone, Jr., MD
Co-Medical Director                     Co-Medical Director

Keep Your Eye on the Ball Golf Outing and Silent Auction

September 26, 2016
Great Oaks Country Club
277 Great Oaks Boulevard
Rochester, Michigan 48307

For information call Don Campbell at 248-514-4841
Email: dsc1948@gmail.com
Or visit our website at www.VRRF.org
Nobody's Children—Romanian ROP
Doctor-to-Doctor Program

When Elaine MacEwen and her husband Dr. Edward L. Youree adopted their son Jon in Romania twenty-five years ago, they discovered that Romanian medical health care was lacking in modern skills and equipment. As friends began donating funds and material goods, it became clear they needed to form an organization. Thus “Nobody’s Children” was founded as a 501(c)(3). Initially, it provided basic necessities for orphanages, such as blankets, warm sleepers and toys. But it soon expanded to include several programs: medical evacuations, AIDS work in Botswana, aid to refugee camps in Bosnia, projects in South America, aid to Romanian medical health care. The Doctor-to-Doctor program is both progressive and beneficial. When a representative of Nobody’s Children in a host country such as Romania identifies a child who needs medical or surgical attention not available in that country, the organization arranges for the child to be treated in the United States. From the outset, Elaine insisted that the child’s physician accompany the patient and observe the treatment. Since 1992, Nobody’s Children has brought more than twenty doctors from numerous countries to the US to introduce them to modern ideas and medical practices.

When Carmen Maria came to Royal Oak for treatment of Retinopathy of Prematurity (ROP) with Dr. Antonio Capone, Jr., she was accompanied by her ophthalmologist, Dr. Cristina Nitulescu. As Elaine learned more about ROP, she realized that change in the treatment of ROP in Romania would require more than educating ophthalmologists. Because the best way to prevent the progression of ROP is through screening, educating neonatologists was also essential. As a result, when a child and her ophthalmologist visit the retina doctors at Associated Retinal Consultants, a neonatologist attends. Dr. Cynthia Pryce, head of neonatology at William Beaumont Hospital and her team have welcomed visiting Romanian specialists in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). Since Dr. Nitulescu came with Carmen Maria, four ophthalmologists and four neonatologists have visited Beaumont and taken valuable information back to Romania. By November 2016 a total of 15 Romanian physicians from across the country will have had one month educational “obsevervations” in Royal Oak.

Through the Doctor-to-Doctor program, Elaine has helped to improve infant health care in Romania. With their new-found knowledge, the visiting doctors are enthusiastic about caring for premature infants. They return to Romania prepared to meet the challenge of improving infant health care. Such a program could be translated into programs in other countries with similar medical care systems as Romania. Progress continues and Elaine’s next wish is to provide the ophthalmologists who have visited the US under the program with indirect ophthalmoscopes. Read more at www.nobodyschildren.org.

Geanina Totolici

Dr. Geanina Totolici came to Royal Oak, Michigan in May 2016 to observe the work of Drs. Trese, and Dr. Capone. Dr. Totolici is an ophthalmologist in her last year of residency in Galati, Romania. She was accompanied by Dr. M. Trese, a neonatologist and Dr. Capone, Nobody’s Children’s representative in Romania. They were the 6th team of physicians to come through the Doctor-to-Doctor program set up by Nobody’s Children to improve the education of pediatric physicians in Romania.

Since she was six years old, Dr. Totolici wanted to become a doctor. Encouraged by her family, she worked hard to acquire the education that she needed. Her program involved six years as a university undergraduate, followed by a four-year residency when she chose to specialize in ophthalmology. Recognizing that the two pediatric ophthalmologists in her community would be retiring soon, she decided to concentrate on pediatric ophthalmology.

The trip to Royal Oak was a dream come true for Dr. Totolici. She accompanied Drs. Trese and Capone at their clinics and in the operating room. She marveled at the equipment available at Beaumont. In her hospital in Galati, due to the lack of equipment, doctors must be more creative in the care they provide. She was delighted by Drs. Trese and Capone who, she said, obviously cared that she learn as much as possible. They were generous with their time and their knowledge for which she was grateful. She was amazed at the open and collaborative relationship among the doctors and nurses and returns to Romania with the hope of adopting this model in her home medical environment.

The month flew by for Dr. Totolici and Dr. Bradeanu. They spent most of their time at the hospital and, except for a short weekend trip to Chicago, had no time for sightseeing. Dr. Totolici hopes to return to visit her many new friends in the future.

Carmen Maria

In March, 2015, Elaine MacEwen, Director of Nobody’s Children saw a photo of a beautiful child on a Romanian friend’s Facebook. The child, Carmen Maria, was less than a year old. She lived in Romania and was blind as a result of Retinopathy of Prematurity (ROP). For many years, Nobody’s Children had been operating in Romania and other countries to improve child health and physician education. Twenty years ago, they had brought Victoria, an orphan, to Boston for treatment to restore her vision. Elaine arranged for Victoria who has since become a physician in Romania, to contact Carmen Maria’s family. Meanwhile, Elaine learned everything she could about ROP, a condition that she was unfamiliar with.

In her research, Elaine learned that Carmen Maria’s only hope was delicate surgery performed by Dr. M. Trese and/or Dr. Antonio Capone, Jr., in Royal Oak, MI. She also learned that in four days Dr. Capone would be holding an ROP clinic in Rome. Quickly she arranged for Carmen Maria, her mother Emilia and Dr. Capone.

Carmen Maria was in Stage 5 ROP. Her retinas were becoming detached and surgery that she had had in Romania was ineffective. Only hope was delicate surgery performed by Dr. M. Trese and/or Dr. Antonio Capone, Jr. in Royal Oak, Michigan. In June, when she was 10 months old, Nobody’s Children brought Carmen Maria, Emilia and their Romanian ophthalmologist, Dr. Cristina Nitulescu, to Royal Oak for treatment.

During the June visit and at a follow-up visit in October, Dr. Capone and his colleagues performed multiple operations to remove scar tissue with the aim to allow her retinas to reattach. They were able to repair her right eye, although repair of the left was less successful.

Today, at 22 months, Carmen Maria is back with her family in their hometown of Constanta, Romania. Emilia reports that Carmen Maria is now able to walk around their home without support or holding her hands in front of her. By all accounts she is a busy, happy toddler. She has been observed copying her brothers’ actions and facial expressions. One year ago before her first trip to the United States, she was in a world of darkness. She is now experiencing light.