

# **A Heartfelt Thank You**

## **A Mother's Smile Project sees completion**

Where does each of us begin our life journey? Nowhere else than in the “Temple of Life”—or in other words—in the maternity ward. Nowhere else but in the maternity ward did we see the daylight for the first time; loudly express our own opinion about this world for the first time; and feel eternal, overpowering love of our mother for the first time. For the residents of the city of Balti and for many others from nearby towns and villages, the Perinatologic Center is the “Temple of Life,” where each woman and a future mother searches for care and comfort.

Without a doubt, a highly professional medical staff of the Perinatologic Center has continuously attempted to provide fine medical care for its patients; however, the deteriorating conditions of the old hospital building have become an impediment for this task. One of the most acute problems was the aging, wooden windows that had been installed fifty years ago and since then have not been replaced. Fading paint, broken frames, and fractured windows have become a source of infectious diseases, pregnancy complications, and never-ending fear on the part of medical personnel for the wellbeing of their patients.

Indeed, it might seem absurd and even implausible that broken windows could become a cause of a high-risk environment for the newborns, their mothers, and even the medical staff. However, as a result of my numerous visits to the hospital and extensive dialogue with its personnel, the situation truly alarmed me. During the spring the hospital experienced dangerous invasion of mosquitoes and tree pollen. During the summer unbearable heat and clouds of dust easily penetrated the patient and operating rooms. During the winter the heating system, installed by the municipal authorities, seemed to be non-existent as the temperature in some of the rooms did not differ much from the outside temperature which at times could reach zero Fahrenheit. In light of the aforementioned conditions, it seemed erroneous and unethical to stand idly by and watch how the alliance of relentless poverty and government’s ignorance robs Moldovan women of the opportunity to give birth in a dignified and caring environment. Thus, as a result of joint efforts with the Greensboro Jewish Federation, the Bronfman Foundation, the NC National Guard, and United Jewish Communities, a “Mother’s Smile” project was launched in January of 2006. During the subsequent three years we worked very hard to collect the much needed sum of \$60,000, surpass numerous bureaucratic hurdles, and continue believing in our success. In June of 2009 we celebrated the successful completion of the project.

Today, one hundred and sixty new windows symbolize an act of incredible generosity and compassion, which has united many members of the Greensboro Jewish community as well as other individuals in an attempt to change the lives of those in need. Nothing can attest more to the tremendous value of the newly installed windows than the patients themselves. At the closing ceremony of the project we had the privilege to meet several mothers who enthusiastically continued to reiterate the words of gratitude to all people who generously contributed their time, energy, and funds in order to make this project a reality. No more tree pollen on the dusty window-sills. No more icy floors in the hospital corridors and rooms. No more tears, instead only grateful and genuine smiles!

On behalf of the patients and medical staff of the Perinatologic Center, municipal authorities, and all residents of the city of Balti, I express the deepest gratitude to every individual who assisted in the realization of “A Mother’s Smile” project by inspiring, welcoming, supporting, donating, and praying. Each one of you played a vital role in bringing the crucial changes to the “Temple of Life” in the small city of Moldova. Thank You!

**-Anya Romanets**

*Anya Romanets is a former Molovan madrich and translator at the Greensboro Jewish Federation's Beltsy Camp Delet, a graduate of the American Hebrew Academy, and a current senior at Connecticut College in New London, CT. She initiated "A Mother's Smile" as her Bronfman Scholar philanthropy project in 2006. Generous donations by the Greensboro Jewish community helped fund the windows that improve lives today in the Beltsy Women's Hospital.*