



# The Kids First Fund

2019 ANNUAL REPORT

### From the President

Two words summarize my 2019 letter to you:

Good Works.

The Kids First Fund became 20 years old during 2019. What began as a dream and a desire to give back in 1999 has made a difference in the lives of thousands of children. I am humbled by the money donated, the help extended, and the services offered by everyone who has touched this organization ... board members, partners in Latvia and Moldova, and of course you as donors.

Good Works. I love this phrase because it operates as a description and a command. People of faith interpret these two words as the actions or deeds that reflect a love for all people. Another definition compels us to act; doing good is how we create a better world. I embrace both definitions as these define my reasons for founding and leading this organization for 20 years. Going forward, the work we do will be shaped by the changes in our world wrought by the corona virus.

We are distinctive because we have chosen to operate in two areas that traditionally saw very little light: the topic and geography of our mission. Sexual and physical child abuse are taboo topics because this represents the very worst in our humanity. Good people don't talk about this and it is a topic best left to police, judges, and doctors. In terms of geography, we chose Latvia and Moldova because they were off the maps of traditional charities. They were overlooked and underserved. Since our founding, Latvia has joined the European Union and enjoyed newfound prosperity due to this visibility and inclusion. Moldova still struggles mightily.

But when we started we quickly learned that even the police, judges, and doctors were not talking about child abuse. As is the habit of human nature unchallenged, they too wanted to ignore the inconvenient truths of children who are bloodied by adults. I recall vividly an early encounter at our police training class in Latvia where officers became engaged in active debate. The translator changed tactics and began to describe to the American instructors what was being said by the audience members.

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## From the President continued

Two police officers told the others of a recent domestic disturbance call to an apartment. They could hear the man striking a woman behind a locked door. Punch, punch, punch. So they knocked on the door to request entry. No answer. Punch, punch, punch. The man was killing the woman. They debated knocking down the door. What stopped them was the knowledge their superior would then demand the two officers be responsible for the expense of replacing the door. They did not intervene and abandoned the woman. This was Latvia in the year 2000; the situation is better in 2020. But very likely this describes what can happen in Moldova today.

**Our training made a difference there. Your money made a difference there. Together we made all the difference in the world.**

A few years back, I sat in on a class in Moldova for child abuse training for teachers. It was a fascinating experience because it involved three levels of participants. First there was the very gifted instructor from CRIC, which is our partner there. Second, there was a classroom of high school students. The instructor and students were surrounded by a semi-circle of teachers, who represented the third level of participants. They were watching the interaction between the instructor and students to learn how they could duplicate the methods in their classrooms.

I remember one girl in particular who was very quiet and withdrawn. Her discomfort increased as the topic of sexual abuse was introduced. The students were actively participating and really seemed unaware they were being observed. Kids are great because they can so naturally speak truth to power. But this girl remained quiet; something bad had happened to her and she was inwardly reliving it. After the students left the instructor and teachers shared notes on the experience. It was a teaching moment and the quiet girl was highlighted for intervention.

**Our training made a difference there. Your money made a difference there. Together we made all the difference in the world.**

In the passage of 20 years there have been thousands of similar moments in which our good works have saved children from sexual and physical abuse. During this time, we have raised more than \$688,000 from donations and travel auctions. More importantly, we granted nearly \$570,000 for projects in Latvia and Moldova to fulfill our mission. Amazingly we achieved this without a penny deducted for overhead expenses. It's a wonderful record of accomplishment.

### **About the 2019 cover image:**

*A Latvian school boy participates in the child abuse prevention program which uses the mascot called Dzimba.*



**KidsFirstFund.org**

## From the President continued

The pandemic creates new challenges for preventing child abuse. Our traditional methods of relying on schools to deliver the message direct to children has been paused. We are working with our partners in Latvia and Moldova to explore alternatives and of course to provide support to their professional staffs during these challenging economic times.

My next mission is one of renewal. I plan to step back from leading our organization to supporting it. Twenty years is a great record, but even the best loaf of homemade bread eventually becomes stale. That's likely a terrible analogy, but I want to find someone who will embrace the challenge and continue our good works. If you have an interest, or can recommend a candidate, please reach out. Together we have done great things and I hope our good works continue for another 20 years.

Thank you for the privilege of allowing the Kids First Fund to be a faithful steward of your donations.

For the kids,



Jay Sorensen, President and Volunteer

“Together we have done great things  
and I hope our good works continue  
for another 20 years.”



[KidsFirstFund.org](https://KidsFirstFund.org)

## Numbers Help Tell Our Story

The 2019 annual report represents a continuing commitment to donor disclosure by including the annual financial statements for the Kids First Fund. In addition, filings made with government regulators, such as the U.S. Internal Revenue Service, are available for download at KidsFirstFund.org.

Revenues from donations and the travel auction represent the engine of our good works. Annual cash contributions have ranged between approximately \$7,000 and \$22,000 for the past decade, as shown below:

### Cash Contribution Trend – Past 8 Years

2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
\$7,270	\$15,709	\$7,596	\$22,033	\$10,280	\$8,491	\$7,028	\$10,793

### Kids First Fund, Inc. 2018 and 2019 Income Statement

	2018	2019
<b>Contributions</b>		
Cash donations	\$7,028	\$10,793
Interest from savings account	\$213	\$259
Dividends/change in market value securities	(\$330)	\$1,613
In-kind items (see note a)	\$0	\$0
Online Travel Auction for Kids (see note b)	\$18,357	\$12,410
<b>Total Contributions</b>	<b>\$25,268</b>	<b>\$25,075</b>
<b>Expenditures and Distributions</b>		
Grants made to support mission	\$15,000	\$29,772
Salaries, compensation and benefits	\$0	\$0
Professional fees and fundraising	\$0	\$0
Other expenses	\$0	\$0
<b>Total Expenses and Distributions</b>	<b>\$15,000</b>	<b>\$29,772</b>
<b>Excess Funds – Deposited to Bank Account</b>	<b>\$10,268</b>	<b>(\$4,697)</b>

Results are not audited, but reflect amounts reported to the IRS.

(a) Items were donated that support the mission of the Kids First Fund.

(b) Net results from the annual online travel auction. All items are 100% donated. Selling expenses associated with online auctions were approximately 15% of the gross amount raised.

### Kids First Fund, Inc. 2018 and 2019 Balance Sheet

	Dec. 31, 2018	Dec. 31, 2019
<b>Assets</b>		
Cash and investments	\$121,959	\$117,262
Other assets	\$0	\$0
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$121,959</b>	<b>\$117,262</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>		
Accounts payable	\$0	\$0
Other liabilities	\$0	\$0
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>Net Assets and Fund Balance</b>	<b>\$121,959</b>	<b>\$117,262</b>

Results are not audited, but reflect amounts reported to the IRS.

In total, the Kids First Fund distributed grants totaling \$29,772 in 2019 to provide school and family-based prevention awareness and education programs. Center Dardedze in Latvia received \$14,272 and the Child Rights Information Center Moldova (CRIC) received \$15,500. These activities are described in the latter pages of this report.

Our cash and investments balance at year-end was a very healthy \$117,262. The Kids First Fund has already undertaken 2020 grant activity of \$30,000 as emergency support for Center Dardedze's staff activities in Latvia; and \$6,000 on an emergency basis to support especially vulnerable families in Moldova through our longtime partner, CRIC. The financial statements were prepared by Bob Bahlman, treasurer of the Kids First Fund.

There is cause for fund-raising concern going forward due to the cancellation of the online travel auction for 2020. This was due to the coronavirus which has done tremendous damage to the travel industry. It is also believed auction activity would be significantly depressed by the cessation of travel caused by the pandemic.

## Steady as She Goes

Ancient Greek fabulist Aesop was a pretty smart guy. His best-known contribution to human thought remains as relevant today as 2,500 years ago: Slow and steady wins the race. The two organizations we support, Center Dardedze in Latvia and Child Rights Information Center in Moldova, continued their methodical approaches to enhancing youth safety and development in 2019 – educating children, teachers, law enforcement officials, counselors and parents. Whether it's puppet shows in Latvia or school workshops in Moldova, our two partners have for years now been effectively advancing the idea that all children need and deserve safe environments in which to live, learn, play and grow.

By now, literally hundreds of thousands of children have benefited – more than 22,000 in 2019 alone. So we believe we are funding not just education, we are supporting hope and progress. The world may have changed radically, but the work continues.



**All for one, one for all – against child abuse! This is the staff of Center Dardedze, which has been our partner in Latvia since 2015.**



**Dardedze created a portable “on the road” Dzimba safety program. Here children leave their fingerprints after the child abuse prevention lesson as a sign that they have become Dzimba safety inspectors.**

## Center Dardedze Latvia

No corner of the globe, it seems, has escaped the bad that comes along with the good of the internet – and that includes the scourge of online pornography. It's just one example of the ways our Latvian partners are adapting their highly successful Dzimba puppet program (now 10 years old) to the new decade. Three new films created in 2019 comprise part of the update, addressing personal safety, sexual abuse and bullying.

As well, Center Dardedze sponsored the translation and publication in Latvian of a Norwegian book, Click Here Tomas, addressing the dangers of online pornography, and is also working to translate program materials into Russian.

The center also added a “traveling Dzimba” project in 2019, which brings the puppet program and its child abuse prevention message to remote regions of Latvia in which children, teachers and other caregivers cannot easily travel to Riga to visit the Dzimba Safety House. The new program visited four outlying municipalities to present 60 sessions, reaching almost a thousand kids. Meanwhile, the original facility based Dzimba program in Riga has been shortened, made more interactive, and had its space expanded, all to accommodate more children. In the fall of 2019, more than 98 percent of the 1,629 children who visited the new Dzimba's house “liked” their session by placing a sticker on the wall. For the whole year, 10,083 children, 7232 parents, 2505 teachers learned about personal safety from Dzimba.



**Dzimba's living room, where Dzimba reads his big Safety Book to the children, which contains a lot of rules on how to be safe in a relationship.**



**Dzimba's working room, where good and bad secrets are kept in lockers. If you open a locker with a good secret, you can lock it and keep the secret there. If you open a bad secret locker, you have to leave it open to remember that the bad secrets must be told to someone you trust.**

## Child Rights Information Center – Moldova

In Moldova, CRIC staff member Vasile Coroi assumed a new role as executive director of the organization, moving up from his previous position as program coordinator.

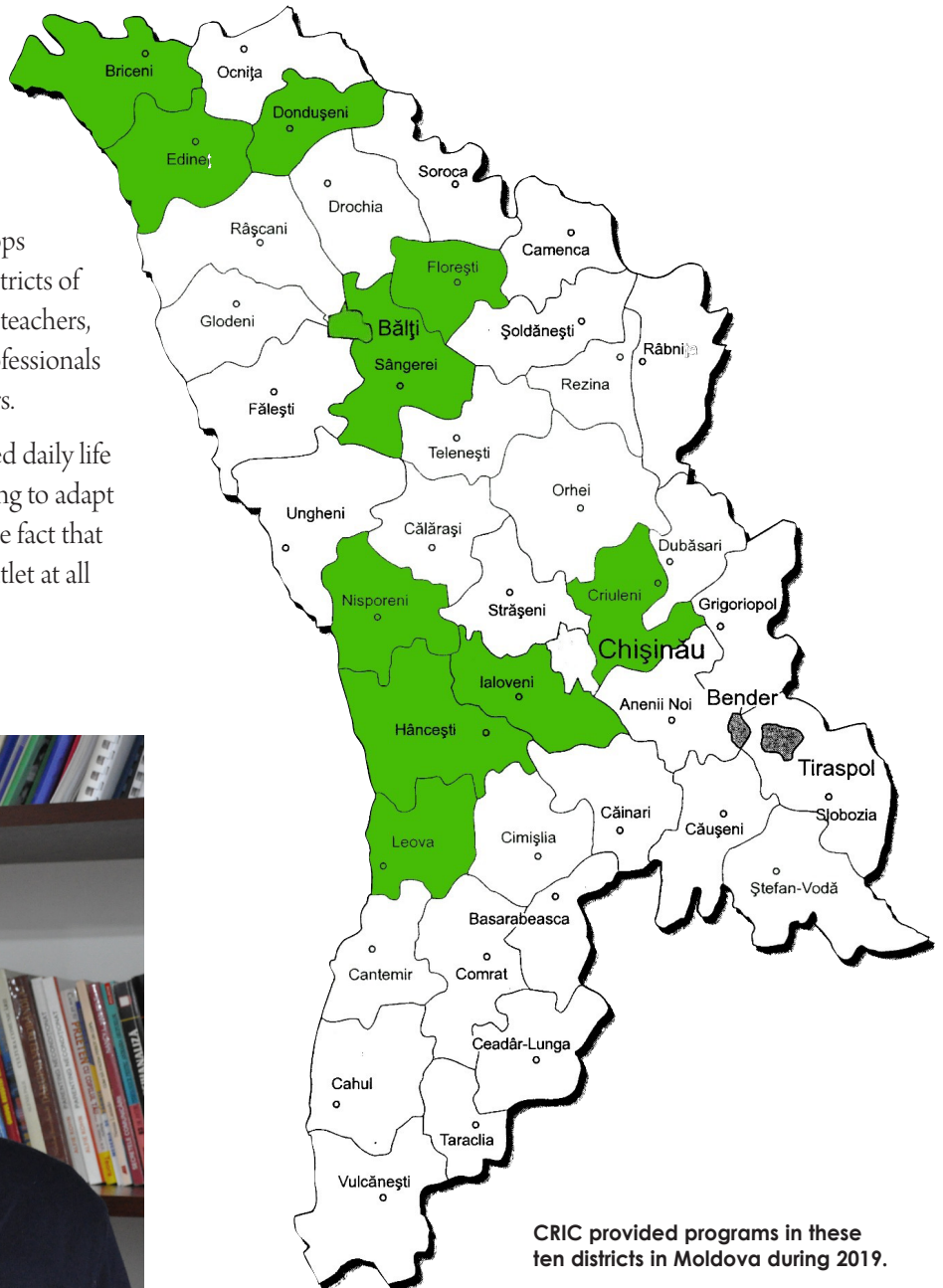
As in previous years, CRIC used KFF funding to support its extensive slate of educational workshops around Moldova. In 2019, presentations in 10 districts of the country brought child rights guidance to 327 teachers, 9,295 children, 5,540 parents and 2,839 other professionals such as counselors, social workers, and law officers.

As throughout the world, COVID19 has changed daily life in Moldova, and CRIC staff members are working to adapt their programs to online distribution – and to the fact that some children in their country have no safety outlet at all if schools are closed.

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Vasile Coroi is the new Executive Director for CRIC.



CRIC provided programs in these ten districts in Moldova during 2019.

“As in previous years, CRIC used KFF funding to support its extensive slate of educational workshops around Moldova.”



## Moldova continued

“The stay-at-home situation has an influence on all children’s possibilities to disclose abuse, still for most of them there are channels left available to reach out to authorities or trustful persons,” reports Coroi. “This is not the case of the most vulnerable and at-risk – with no internet, phone or other channels. This poses a challenge for ensuring as well the right to an education.”

Kids First Fund is proud to be supporting such vital work in Moldova, both with regular grant funds and the spring 2020 emergency grant



**CRIC creates programs that guide children of all ages in a discussion of their rights, which includes a right to be safe from abuse.**

### Child Abuse Awareness and Prevention Project – Moldova

Participant Groups	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	To Date
District representatives trained	220	343	174	*	3,415	2,839	7,316
Children receiving abuse awareness training	12,235	5,149	7,907	5,167	9,084	9,295	60,085
Parents/caregivers involved in effective parenting curriculum	3,206	480	453	2,924	6,705	5,540	22,442
Teachers benefiting from sessions organized by colleagues	626	207	197	278	424	327	3,590
	<b>Project Metrics</b>						
Total participation	16,287	6,179	8,731	8,369	19,628	18,001	93,433
Kids First Fund program grants	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$7,500	\$10,000	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$122,500
Program cost per participant	\$0.92	\$2.43	\$0.86	\$1.19	\$0.76	\$0.83	\$1.31

Source: Child Rights Information Center. Project began in 2010.

\* Included in teacher statistics for 2017.

## 2019 Online Auction Brings in \$14,998

Thirteen major travel companies provided 75 prizes for our 2019 online auction, while InsideFlyer.com and BoardingArea.com offered digital and publicity support. The top money-earner was Southwest Airlines, which offered six prizes that drew \$4,945 in bids. InsideFlyer said 1,996,000 views of the website banners occurred during the auction event. We thank our bidders and our donors for another successful year. In 16 years the KFF auction has raised almost \$330,000.

The Kids First Fund thanks our 2019 donor companies:



2019 InsideFlyer.com web banner



## Member Snapshot: Roger Grigulis

### When did you join the Board of the Kids First Fund?

My involvement with Kids First Fund started before the idea was actually born. I helped KFF President Jay Sorensen adopt his twins from Latvia in 1997 and we became friends. Jay was thankful for the adoption going well and decided to help Latvia somehow. We together searched for projects and came up with Family Care Center Bulduri, our initial recipient of funds. It was a shelter for orphans and was led by Dr. Valdis Rande who also became a good friend of ours. So my involvement as a board member was set in the cradle of the organization.

### Tell me about your family.

I am born in Latvia and have a brother and a sister; my father is actually from Russia and I have not seen him since childhood. I have two beautiful children Yasmin and Gabriel who are half Brazilian and half Latvian, since my ex-wife is from Brazil.

### Your profession?

I have been a businessman since my early 20s and CEO of my various companies in consulting, international trade, tourism and production. For the last 3 years I have run one of the biggest state companies – a national railway operator. I wanted to try to make a state company more business-oriented rather than bureaucratic. It seems to be a success story.

### Favorite destination?

USA national parks, Brazil, Indonesia and Europe, mostly destinations with nature and scenery.

### What interests you about the KFF mission?

I too have grown without my parents being much around me and mostly spending time with my grandparents and I see society nowadays is running too fast and spending so much time apart from their families. I believe that helping kids through our programs we can bring values in their lives which sometimes they lack and give some guidance and protection in their early ages.



Roger has been a board member since the Kids First Fund was founded in 1999.

### Where do you see the Fund five years from now?

I am worried about Kids First Fund at the current moment, as you know our president Jay is willing to resign, I think he is the soul and glue for this organization, so I am hesitant to foresee how it will develop without his leadership. It will definitely need a leader with passion and the big heart of Jay to guide the organization in the right direction.

### What is the most important thing we do?

We give hope to those who sometimes have lost it!

“We give hope to those who sometimes have lost it!”

## About the Kids First Fund

The Kids First Fund helps abused and abandoned children. We protect children from abuse. We empower young adults with a positive future. We strengthen families. We build awareness of child abuse. We operate in countries where resources are very limited. Current projects provide support for children in Latvia and Moldova. The Kids First Fund supports programs to educate child welfare professionals such as police officers, judges, social workers, teachers and prosecutors on child abuse issues. Direct assistance is also given to centers providing care for abused children. The Kids First Fund does not incur any expenses since all staffing and services are donated. The organization has been granted special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

## Special Thanks

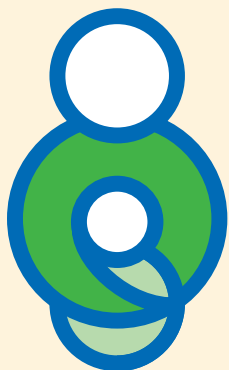
This annual report is courtesy of the services contributed by Amy Thomas, who operates field|works, a graphic design firm in Glendale, Wisconsin, and Eric Lucas, who helped write and edit the document.

Hosting and updating of the KidsFirstFund.org website is donated by Matthew Frederick, who operates DigitalPerceptions.com, an interactive web media development firm in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Scott Wiseman and the crew at Auctionjam have been excellent administrators of the annual Kids First Auction for 16 years.



AUCTIONJAM



### Learn More and Donate Online

[KidsFirstFund.org](http://KidsFirstFund.org)

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## Board of Directors and Officers

**Bob Bahlman, Treasurer**  
(Atlanta, Georgia)

**Liliana Calmatui** (Chisinau, Moldova)

**Roger Grigulis, Director** (Riga, Latvia)

**Irma Kalnina, Director** (Riga, Latvia)

**Hamid Ladjevardi**  
(New York City and Riga, Latvia)

**Eric Lucas, Director and  
Communications Representative**  
(San Juan Island, Washington)

**Doug Mullen, Vice President**  
(Washington, DC)

**Indra Petersons, Director** (New York City)

**Liliana Rotaru** (Chisinau, Moldova)

**Debbie Sievert** (Atlanta, Georgia)

**Jay Sorensen, President**  
(Shorewood, Wisconsin)

## United Nations Representatives

**Jay Sorensen and Doug Mullen** are designated representatives to the Economic and Social Council at the United Nations headquarters in New York.

**Roger Grigulis and Irma Kalnina** are the designated representatives to the Economic and Social Council at the United Nations headquarters in Geneva and Vienna.

## Media Contact

**Eric Lucas**, [ericplucas "at" yahoo.com](mailto:ericplucas@at.yahoo.com)

## Kids First Ambassadors to Children

**Dr. Valdis Rande** (Riga, Latvia)

**Dr. V. George Nagobads**  
(Minneapolis, Minnesota)