



The Kids First Fund

2015 ANNUAL REPORT

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From the President

Our work has made a difference. But sometimes we need to go back and do more.

Four volunteers from Wisconsin traveled to Latvia during May 2003 to give day-long seminars on “An Introduction to U.S. Laws Protecting Children and Women from Abuse.” The seminars were designed to introduce US justice, legislative and social welfare professionals to their Latvian counterparts and to exchange ideas about the two countries’ systems. The seminars concentrated on legislative and legal issues related to child and domestic abuse. One of the four seminar locations was Liepaja on Latvia’s western sea coast.

PHOTO: INGA OZOLA / LATVIJAS RADIO



The people of Liepaja said “enough” regarding the absurdly light sentence given to child abusers in their community.

Let’s move ahead 12 years. During July 2015, a local court in Liepaja handed down shockingly soft sentences to a pair of men convicted of sexual abuse of a child over a five-year period. The abuse began when the child was five years old. The father and son pair of pedophiles was not sentenced to prison, but only received fines and community service. The court justified the light sentence by saying the men had not actually raped the child. But apparently, they did just about everything else short of rape.

It’s events like that that make me wonder if our work has had any effect.

But there is another side to this story, and that’s the universal anger of Latvians to these insulting sentences. The image on this page shows 500 angry locals demonstrating in Liepaja. According to eyewitness reports, the protest included members of a motorcycle gang, mothers with baby carriages, and retirees shouting “Shame on the court!” There was another demonstration in the capitol of Riga that day. This was accompanied by a feeling of disgust in the hearts of every Latvian. The country’s political, judicial, media, and NGO apparatus also became engaged in protest.

I believe our work – powered by your donations – has created change in Latvia and Moldova.

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From the President continued

The story of this miscarriage of justice in Liepaja became a very visible scandal in Latvia and elsewhere in the world. A Google search of the topic shows media coverage throughout the Baltic region and as distant as China. But most importantly, a regional court subsequently ruled to fully reverse the earlier verdict.

True success would have been prevention of the initial child abuse. More success would have been the issuance of appropriate sentencing for these criminals by the first court. But there is success here and that makes all the difference. Plus, there is a movement to correct the situation so it never occurs again. The adage that guides any difficult process is, “two steps forward, one step back.”

For 2016 your Kids First Fund is already engaged in working with partners to create a second wave of educational effort for Latvia’s judges on this topic. Please know this truth – we are steadfast and unchanging in our mission to prevent child abuse before it happens and to bring comfort and healing to children who are abused. That is our promise to you as we continue our good work in Latvia and Moldova.

For the kids,



Jay Sorensen, President and Volunteer

On the cover: The image shows a 15-month old boy (who obviously loves berries) in Latvia participating in a Mother’s Day event organized by the early abuse prevention program called Guardian Angel.

Image credit: Center Dardedze, Latvia



KidsFirstFund.org

Numbers Help Tell Our Story

The 2015 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 US Internal Revenue Service, are available for download at KidsFirstFund.org.

Revenue from donations and the travel auction represent the engine of our good works. Annual cash contributions have ranged approximately between \$7,000 and \$15,000 for the 2008 through 2015 period, as shown in the table below:

Cash Contribution Trend – Past 8 Years

2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
\$8,810	\$8,143	\$14,397	\$8,023	\$7,270	\$15,709	\$7,596	\$10,280

Kids First Fund, Inc. 2014 and 2015 Income Statement

	2014	2015
Contributions		
Cash donations	\$7,596.01	\$10,279.84
Interest from savings account	\$76.07	\$73.97
Dividends/change in market value securities	\$409.49	(\$330.94)
In-kind items (see note a)	\$0.00	\$0.00
Online Travel Auction for Kids (see note b)	\$12,415.48	\$19,025.47
Total Contributions	\$20,497.05	\$29,048.34
Expenditures and Distributions		
Grants made to support mission	\$15,000.00	\$22,500.00
Salaries, compensation & benefits	\$0.00	\$0.00
Professional fees & fundraising	\$0.00	\$0.00
Other expenses	\$0.00	\$0.00
Total Expenses and Distributions	\$15,000.00	\$22,500.00
Excess Funds – Deposited to Bank Account	\$5,497.05	\$6,548.34

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 eBay auctions were 11-12% of the gross amount raised.

Kids First Fund, Inc. 2014 and 2015 Balance Sheet

	Dec. 31, 2014	Dec. 31, 2015
Assets		
Cash and investments	\$100,687.26	\$107,235.60
Other assets	\$0.00	\$0.00
Total Assets	\$100,687.26	\$107,235.60
Liabilities		
Accounts payable	\$0.00	\$0.00
Other liabilities	\$0.00	\$0.00
Total Liabilities	\$0.00	\$0.00
Net Assets and Fund Balance	\$100,687.26	\$107,235.60

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

Cash contributions for 2015 increased from the prior year due to more donors and a higher level of giving among established donors. Results from the annual travel auction also increased very nicely due to a larger selection of items available to bidders.

Two significant cash distributions were made to fund our program in Moldova; and an initial distribution was made for the new program in Latvia. The board authorized two \$7,500 grants for ongoing support of the child abuse prevention project operated by the Child Rights Information Center in Moldova. The Kids First Fund provided \$15,000 during 2015 for spring and fall programs in rural regions of the country. The first grant of \$7,500 for the “Preventing child abuse in rural areas of Latvia” was distributed to our partner in Latvia, Center Dardedze in Riga. Additional details for the Moldova and Latvia projects are provided later in this report.

The Kids First Fund continued its tradition of operating on a zero-overhead budget and did not incur expenses related to salaries, fundraising fees, and travel. Our cash and investments balance at year-end was a very healthy \$107,235. The Kids First Fund anticipates it will provide \$15,000 to support a full year of work in Moldova during 2016 in addition to \$15,000 for work in Latvia. The financial statements were drafted by Bob Bahlman, treasurer of the Kids First Fund. 2015 was the fourth year in a row in which revenue exceeded expenses and this resulted in an increase of our net worth.

Training Kids for Real Life Emergencies in Latvia

An elementary teacher in Latvia, when contemplating our new child abuse prevention project, said, “In schools, the safety message has been limited to emergency issues, such as a fire. How often will a child encounter a fire in a school? Probably never. Yet, imagine how much time we have spent training for fires, and no training for something that is far more likely to happen, such as abuse.” The early feedback among educators and social workers about our new project in Latvia is universally positive.



Here the Dzimba doll is being used to teach children about inappropriate behavior by adults and what to do if it occurs.

It's good practice to share good practices. The education-based program in Moldova has been used as a template for new activities in Latvia. As is our policy, the Kids First Fund always works with a local partner to implement and operate projects. Center Dardedze was selected after interviews were held to choose the right combination of partner and project for Latvia. The new program borrows two attributes from years of success in Moldova. First, it relies upon educational programming for teachers, social workers, students, and parents to create awareness of child abuse and how to prevent it. Secondly, all activities focus on low income rural areas where resources are traditionally scarce.

The initial work in Latvia is occurring in the municipalities of Ludza and Karsava. These local government units expressed strong interest in the concept and were willing to add their own resources to the task. Ludza and Karsava are in the Latgale region and are approximately three to four hours east of Riga and near the border with Russia. The population of this region is poor, with high unemployment, and a reputation for alcoholism. These

very same factors create conditions that make high-risk families become more prevalent.

The two programs administered by Center Dardedze are called Dzimba (pronounced “Jimba” in English) and Guardian Angel. Dzimba uses a hand puppet (of the same name) to engage children in conversations about child abuse. Topics include what adults are not permitted to do and what a child should do when they feel at risk. Dardedze trains teachers, school administrators, and counselors to provide classroom-based sessions for children. “Guardian Angel” provides social workers a new tool of group discussion and therapy to help high-risk families. Dardedze instructs social workers how to conduct the group discussion. For both programs, Dardedze provides ongoing support and measures outcomes.

During September 2015, board members Jay Sorensen and Roger Grigulis traveled to eastern Latvia with representatives of Dardedze. Meetings were held with teachers and social workers who participated in the Dzimba and Guardian Angel projects. Your board members make regular visits to monitor the work done by grant recipients and project participants. This ensures your donations are spent wisely and efficiently. The following observations were gained from the meetings in Ludza and Karsava:

THE DZIMBA PROGRAM

- The curriculum addresses all types of child abuse. The teachers disclosed they knew very little about sexual abuse in advance of the training.
- It's important to talk to children in language they understand; the printed materials are excellent in this regard.
- Children who received Dzimba training shared one success story: Two kids were in a shopping area and a man approached and started touching them. One child froze. The other – who had Dzimba training – spoke to a shop assistant and the police were called.

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Training Kids continued

- The training provides teachers a higher level of abuse awareness, whereas before training the presence of abuse among children was not obvious.
- Parents more willingly permit their children to participate in Dzimba training. In kindergarten there was initial concern by parents that children were too young for this topic. But after viewing the materials, parents agreed it was an appropriate message.
- There is a survey at the beginning of the program, which assesses five situations and children's reactions. The same survey is provided at the end to assess the knowledge gained on critical behaviors. When the kids are given the first survey, many had no idea how to react to the situations presented.
- A parent commented the program will create confident children – who are unlikely to fall victim to abuse in the future.

Overall, the early results from this program indicate success. Children are reacting well to the content and learning from it. Teachers are becoming far more aware of child abuse and their role in identifying suspicious situations. Parents are accepting the training and likely discussing the Dzimba experience with their children.

GUARDIAN ANGEL PROGRAM

- The mothers participating in group therapy are selected from high-risk families. The qualifications are most likely a combination of violence, drug or alcohol abuse, mental disability, and lack of financial resources being present in a family. Within the Ludza municipality, there are 45 high-risk families out of a population of 14,500.
- Social workers also have an abundance of other clients, such as families in poverty; persons with disabilities; single pensioners; teenage criminals; ex-convicts; and former orphanage children. The Ludza social service organization provides aid to approximately 3,000 persons a year plus their family members.
- Guardian Angel attendance is voluntary and by invitation of a social worker. Ongoing attendance is ensured by three factors. First, parents sign an agreement to participate. Second, there is a coffee reception at the meetings, this is an attractive feature. Third, mothers get to participate in a mom's club – without social workers present.
- This program is truly appreciated by social workers because it provides another dimension for client relationships. For example, two young parents were from an orphanage, and did not have a working knowledge of how a family works. The instructors didn't believe the mother would return, but she was one of the first at the next session.
- The moms are happy to be in a different environment and to share their experiences with others. Life is not always very enjoyable at home, and this can provide a needed break. This atmosphere allows the moms to be more open – the social workers observed this at the first session.



The group in Ludza included Dardedze staff, social workers, municipal staff, teachers, and school administrators. Jay Sorensen and Roger Grigulis (far right) appear in the back row.

- Social workers assess parental skills (using a scale of one to five) prior to participation, midway through the program, and upon conclusion. Mothers are in the program for a maximum of two years; program support ends when the child becomes two years old.

This program appears headed for success. It does not offer the scale provided by Dzimba in terms of persons reached. However, the quality of contact is very high and reaches those most in need of assistance. Perhaps the most innovative benefit is the new skills being developed among the social workers involved.

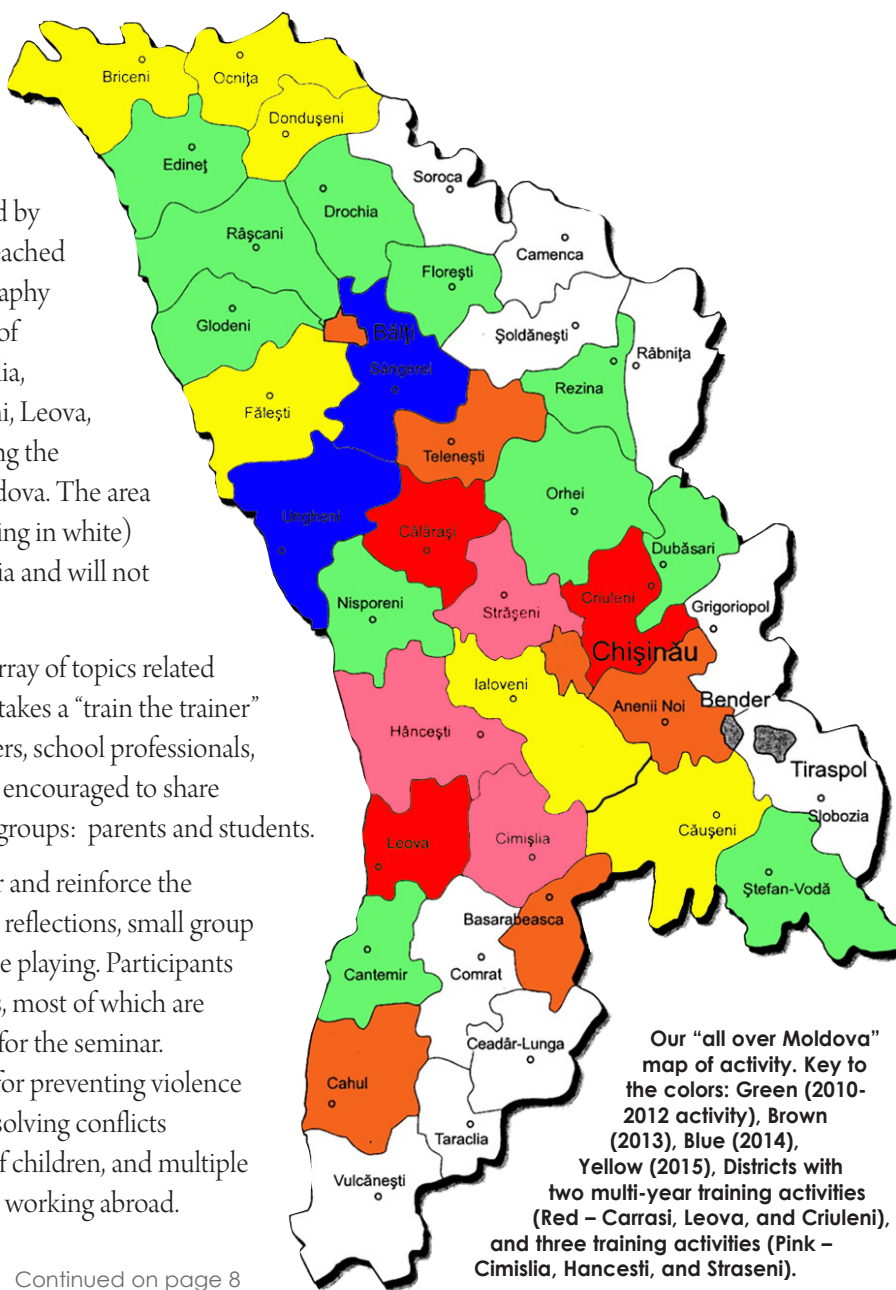
Abuse Prevention Activities in Moldova Reach 85 Percent of the Country

The Kids First Fund and its Moldova-based partner, the Child Rights Information Center (CRIC) began its sixth year of cooperation during 2015. CRIC operated the Child Abuse Awareness and Prevention Project with 100 percent grant support provided by the Kids First Fund. To date, this program has reached participants throughout 85 percent of the geography of Moldova. Training occurred in these regions of Moldova during 2015: Briceni, Causeni, Cimislia, Donduseni, Falesti, Hancesti, Holercani, Ialoveni, Leova, Ocnita, and Straseni. CRIC activities are covering the country as shown on the adjoining map of Moldova. The area in the upper eastern part of the country (appearing in white) represents the autonomous region of Transnistria and will not be included in the project.

The project reaches three groups with a broad array of topics related to child abuse and abandonment. The first step takes a “train the trainer” approach through two-day seminars with teachers, school professionals, and social workers as participants. This group is encouraged to share knowledge and experience with two additional groups: parents and students.

The seminars use a variety of activities to deliver and reinforce the educational message: brainstorming, individual reflections, small group exercises, viewing and discussing videos, and role playing. Participants are provided a take-home library of publications, most of which are proprietary works created by CRIC specifically for the seminar. Publications include training support materials for preventing violence in schools such as child-focused cartoons for resolving conflicts between friends, brochures defining the rights of children, and multiple books addressing Moldova’s problem of parents working abroad.

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“The project reaches three groups with a broad array of topics related to child abuse and abandonment.”

Training in Moldova continued

Similar to the grant monitoring activities described for Latvia, Jay Sorensen visited Moldova in September 2015. He met with teachers, school administrators, and social workers in the districts of Ialoveni and Hancesti. The following comments were provided by participants as feedback during the in-school training sessions:

- The group oriented process uses social workers or teachers to lead meetings with parents. This is a unique experience because the parents attend voluntarily; whereas an individual meeting is often obligatory for the parent. The voluntary nature makes these meetings more productive.
- Mothers are initially scared of the group process. After the first session, the moms were more open to the format. The group setting represents a different type of relationship, in which the social worker is not checking and controlling. The relationship is more open; the social worker feels like a mom talking with moms.
- For many social workers, it's their first experience for running a group meeting. This is viewed as a good skill to develop.
- The establishment of trust between teachers and students is a positive outcome of the training. The activities helped children to be more open with their teachers. The method encourages an interactive environment that places children and adults on the same level.
- Usually the teachers feel they are the experts, but this methodology is different because it allows the children to feel they are empowered and can identify solutions on their own. After the experience, some kids volunteered to help and become involved in raising awareness. Furthermore, quieter kids tend to speak out more after their Grain of Sand experience, which is a training curriculum based on real-life situations. The application of the method to other areas of their lives validates its authenticity.
- The method uses scripted scenes and stories in videos, which are watched and stopped at critical moments. The guided discussion helps kids understand the outcomes of choices they can make when placed in similar situations.



Jay Sorensen with CRIC staff at their Chisinau offices.



Jay Sorensen with teachers, school administrators, and social workers in Ialoveni. Jay's son Anton is in the back row and was a candidate for adoption by the teachers to his right and left (hint – they have daughters).

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Training in Moldova continued

- Based upon what a teacher observed in the faces of the kids watching the videos, they were able to identify which kids may have abuse issues. The videos are based upon the realities of Moldova and are very relevant. This can create strong emotional responses, which can impede the discussions. In one example, the reaction of a student was observed by a psychologist, and the discussion was redirected to thoroughly cover issues related to migrant parents. The psychologist was subsequently contacted by a few students who requested therapy support.
- This guided discussion method is not appropriate for all teachers; you need certain skills and a certain attitude, and openness to how children react. Some teachers don't have adequate competence and communication skills to follow this methodology. It requires skills to empower children and is not as simple as providing information.

The overall situation facing children in Moldova is sad and stressful. Children are being left behind by parents who migrate to Europe, especially Italy. This is a condition of poverty and a lack of jobs and opportunities in Moldova. Uncontrolled use of the internet is a problem when computers become babysitters or a replacement for caregiver contact. When parents divorce or separate, their children are involved and can be used for blackmailing the other parent. There is far more family instability with parents moving to other countries, and sometimes taking children with them without permission.

It's not easy being a kid in Moldova. There are tremendous stresses on the family structure brought about by an economy that fails to deliver benefits for everyday citizens. The political system is viewed as highly corrupt and teenagers have a negative view of their future opportunities. The education-based and awareness-building project implemented by CRIC seems to be a lonely bright light of a program that efficiently delivers positive results by a team of committed professionals.

“The education-based and awareness-building project implemented by CRIC seems to be a lonely bright light of a program that efficiently delivers positive results by a team of committed professionals.”

Kids First Fund Names George Nagobads as Ambassador

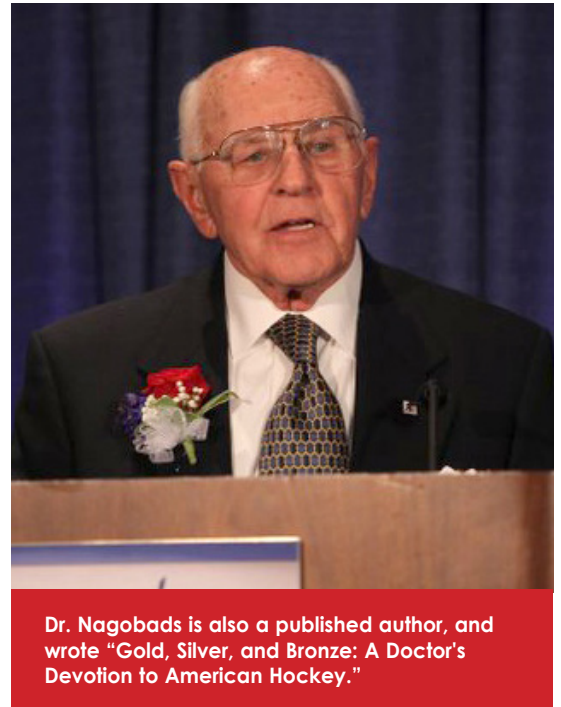
Dr. V George Nagobads of Edina, Minnesota was named an Ambassador for Children on 17 November 2015. Dr. Nagobads was chosen to serve as Ambassador for Children in honor of his work helping young people, for providing them with a safe environment, and for his passionate and tireless work as an advocate for Latvia.

Dr. Nagobads grew up in Latvia and received his medical degree from Black Forest University in Germany. He moved to the United States in 1951 to begin his surgical residency in Minneapolis at the Swedish Hospital (now the Metropolitan Medical Center). He went on to serve as a team physician for the University of Minnesota's men's ice hockey team, the Gophers, for 34 years. It was during these years that he and his wife welcomed a number of young hockey players into their home, providing them with a stable and nurturing environment.

Simultaneous to his duties with the Gophers, Nagobads was the team physician for the World Hockey Association's Minnesota Fighting Saints from 1973 to 1976, and the National Hockey League's Minnesota North Stars from 1984 to 1992. Additionally, he was named the team physician for five U.S. Olympic Men's Ice Hockey Teams, including the "Miracle on Ice" squad that won the gold medal at the 1980 Olympic Winter Games in Lake Placid, NY. Dr. Nagobads has received numerous personal and professional awards for his work in the medical field and the sport of hockey.

"Dr. Nagobads' professional qualifications and personal qualities are in perfect alignment with the objectives of the Kids First Fund," said Kids First Fund President Jay Sorensen. "It is his humble roots in Latvia and a lifetime of hard work and dedication to helping young people that make him an outstanding representative for the Kids First Fund. I am so impressed with his life story; it is truly a Hollywood movie in the making!"

Dr. Nagobads shares the role of Ambassador with Dr. Valdis Rande of Roja, Latvia. Mr. Rande was Chief of Pediatric Surgery in Riga and operated Latvia's first center to conduct child abuse interviews. He was an early KFF board member and moved on to become an Ambassador after his professional and board retirements..



Dr. Nagobads is also a published author, and wrote "Gold, Silver, and Bronze: A Doctor's Devotion to American Hockey."

"Dr. Nagobads' professional qualifications and personal qualities are in perfect alignment with the objectives of the Kids First Fund."

— Kids First Fund President Jay Sorensen

Topbonus, Southwest and Etihad Guest Receive Kids First Teddy Bear Awards

The Kids First Fund The 11th Kids First Auction Sponsored by FlyerTalk.com was launched on 08 May 2015. New for 2015 was the “Auction of the Wild and Weird” that offered a selection of the world’s most unique and unusual travel experiences from Viator.com. In addition, the auction featured a treasure chest of items from airberlin, Avis Car Rental, Budget Car Rental, Delta SkyMiles, Etihad Airways, Southwest Airlines, Spirit Airlines, Tune Hotels, and other travel companies. The Kids First Fund also recognized the top three highest performers with Teddy Bear Awards on the evening of 04 November 2015:

- Topbonus donated packages totaling 400,000 frequent flier miles, to redeem on airberlin and program partners such as Etihad Airways, which generated over \$4,800 in total bids – more than any other single corporate donor.
- Southwest Airlines provided seven unrestricted tickets that generated the second highest bid activity, which was in excess of \$4,700.
- Etihad Guest, the frequent flier program of Etihad Airways, generously provided packages totaling 400,000 miles, which were auctioned at FlyerTalk.com. These generated the third-highest bid activity for any single donor company, bringing in \$4,080.

Topbonus, Southwest, and Etihad Guest each received a Kids First Teddy Bear Award in recognition of their support for this year’s auction. Each bear has been custom crafted by the Vermont Teddy Bear Company with the logo of the Kids First Fund and a sash recognizing the recipient company.

The recognition event occurred during the MEGA Awards Gala on 04 November 2015, in San Diego, California and was associated with a global airline industry conference hosted by Airline Information. Accepting Teddy Bear Awards that evening were Sascha List from airberlin (for the topbonus program) and Clint Calley with Southwest Airlines. The third bear flew all the way to Abu Dhabi on Etihad Airways into the arms of Yasser Al Yousuf, the Managing Director of the Etihad Guest program.

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Kids First Teddy Bear Award recipient in San Diego on November 4, 2015 (left to right): Jay Sorensen, Kids First Fund and Clint Calley, Southwest Airlines.

“Topbonus, Southwest, and Etihad Guest each received a Kids First Teddy Bear Award in recognition of their support for this year’s auction.”

Teddy Bear Awards continued

“The Kids First Auction for 2015 was a big event with lots of airline tickets, frequent flier miles, travel experiences from Viator.com, and hotel certificates,” said Jay Sorensen, president of the Kids First Fund. “The Teddy Bear Awards have become a fun part of the evening ceremony at the MEGA Event conference held each November. Fortunately for the Kids First Fund, donor travel companies are increasingly eager to compete for a bear by donating top items to the annual auction.” The 2015 event raised in excess of \$19,000 with the help of Auctionjam, the Canadian firm which administers the auction at the eBay and Flyer.com sites.



Board Member Snapshot – Bob Bahlman

This report continues an annual tradition – the board member snapshot. Bob is pictured at right with Kaylee, his three-year old Brittany.

Joined board: 1999 (founding member)

Family: My girlfriend and I manage a household of five dogs (three Labs and two Brittanyys) and two cats. Thankfully we have a nice backyard and pool for the dogs to cool off in the Phoenix heat.

Current profession: Vice President, Business Intelligence for International Cruise & Excursions. In other words, I manage some smart people who complete business analytics and create financial reporting for the company.

Favorite activity or destination: Fishing in Canada. I have been going to the same lake in Ontario for over 20 years. It's great to spend time with my brothers and friends, and catch and eat a few walleye.

What interests you about the KFF mission? In my international travels earlier in my career I was awakened to how fortunate I was and how there are so many places with such basic needs. As Jay was formulating his thoughts around the start up of the KFF it seemed easy for me to support a mission that really helps those that need help most. And Jay was adamant that every dollar contributed to the KFF would go to support the mission, and not one penny for administrative costs. It was easy for me to support that too.

Where do you see the Fund five years from now? Hopefully, we will keep growing and extend our grants to other countries as well. There is such a need, and unfortunately we only help the tip of the iceberg.

What is the most important thing we do? I like the fact that we have provided both a tangible project in building a shelter for people in need, coupled with our recent initiatives to provide training to educators, social workers, police officers and others to help better understand the issues of abuse.



“Hopefully we will keep growing and extend our grants to other countries as well.”

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 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.

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.

The Kids First Fund is a charity recognized by Airline Information, which provides generous financial support and includes the Teddy Bear Awards in its annual MEGA Event airline industry conference.



Scott Wiseman and the crew at Auctionjam have been excellent administrators of the annual Kids First Auction for 11 years.



Vermont Teddy Bear provides custom crafted teddy bears for the annual Kids First Teddy Bear Awards.



Learn More and Donate Online

KidsFirstFund.org

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United Nations Representatives

Jay Sorensen, Stuart Benzal 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.