

VAIKO VARTAI Į MOKSLĄ / CHILD'S GATE TO LEARNING

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*Donations are tax deductible.*



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Happy New Year! It is hard to believe that 2009 is already in the past. During the year, we were pleased to host the visit of our Lithuanian coordinator, Žydrūnė Liobikaitė. We took on the support of a new center in Jonava. Some officers visited supported centers in Lithuania. We greatly appreciate the support of various funds, our U.S. support groups, and all of our donors' generosity! Here are a few highlights from 2009...

**NEWLY SUPPORTED CENTER IN JONAVA**

In 2009, the 11<sup>th</sup> year since the founding of "Child's Gate to Learning", we began support of an 11<sup>th</sup> center, the newly founded, the Apostle St. Jacob parish center in Jonava. The center began operation on June 15th. The goal of the center is to minimize the influence from the streets on at risk families' children in Jonava, ensuring that they receive the necessities they need, have meaningful pursuits, involving character building and work with the families. The director of the center, Sister Loreta Ileikytė, a member of the Franciscan order, who earlier worked at organization's supported Žaliakalnis center in Kaunas. The two centers still maintain ties.

The center is able to accommodate 15 children, from ages 7 to 10. Sister Loreta receives help at the center from volunteer students and highschoolers. „Child's Gate to Learning” received financial support from the Lithuanian Foundation, which enabled the new center to purchase furniture and various necessities.

*Photographs-Center attendees and a guest from the U.S., „Child's Gate to Learning” treasurer, Ramojus Vaitys, during a visit to Jonava.*





## FUND RAISING

The organizations' support group coordinators think of innovative ways to raise funds in their cities—they participate in bazaars, organize luncheons, etc. We sincerely thank:

Teresė Landsbergis (Washington, D.C.), Stasė Kazlauskas (Cleveland, OH),  
 Rita Giedraitis and Rasa Karvelis (Detroit, MI), Teresė Gečys (Philadelphia, PA),  
 Bronė Nakas and Judita Mamaitis (Sunny Hills, FL).

*Photographs- fund-raising events in the Chicago area:*

*\*Sales of tortes, cakes, and coffee at the World Lithuanian Center Christmas Bazaar, Lemont, IL, December 12-13.*

*\*Young volunteers at a fundraising event in a private home in downtown Chicago, IL, November 8.*

*\*Rev. Alfonsas Lipniūnas & Pres. Stulginskis Lithuanian Catholic Federation "Ateitis" volunteers at the Harvest Lunch ("Derliaus pietūs"), Lemont, IL, September 27.*



Third from right-„Child's Gate to Learning" Lithuanian coordinator, Žydrūnė Liobikaitė, in April. The guest gave presentations in Chicago, IL and Ann Arbor, MI about social work with at risk families in Lithuania where she emphasized the importance of after school centers.



**"CHILD'S GATE TO LEARNING" CHARACTER BUILDING PROGRAMS**

The 5 organization character building programs' themes are innovatively presented at supported day centers and temporary shelters. The young people become involved in discussions and specially designed assignments. *Photographs- Through their arts and crafts projects, "Šypsniukas" attendees in Kazlų Rūda show what they learned.* In 2010, work is underway to update the first character building program, in preparation for a new printing and presentation at the biennial Kaunas seminar for supported centers' representatives in April.



## VOLUNTEERS IN LITHUANIA

During the summer of 2009, four Lithuanian-American high schoolers volunteered in Lithuania. Vaiva Lagūnavičius worked at the „Vilties Angelas“ center in Vilnius, while Vija Lietuvninkais, Emilija Pranckevičius and Andrėja Siliūnas worked at the „Vilties vėrinėliai“ center in Žemaičių Kalvarija. They played with the children and youths, showed them new crafts projects, sang songs, shared meals, helped where and how they could.

The „Vilties vėrinėliai“ center's website reflected the youths' impressions (loosely translated): *„We waited and waited and FINALLY they came!!! Almost at once, they became involved in the life of our center. Into our lives came new people, new games and activities, something out of the ordinary never before seen, but at the same time, very pleasant :)“*

Once the volunteers returned to the U.S. , “Vilties vėrinėlių” program director, psychologist Jolanta Virbickienė wrote: *“Inspired by our young visitors from Chicago, having had some real help, and having seen that young people, if prepared for the work, can help a lot, as of October, I will invite a group of upper class high schoolers to a volunteers' prep group. I will organize the group, will prepare them myself, and I hope that that some help will come out of it ...”*



The mission of “Child's Gate to Learning” is to help the children of Lithuania's at risk families experiencing difficulties, providing the children with opportunities for education and character building.

We encourage Lithuanian-Americans, particularly young people, to work as center volunteers.

We encourage supported centers to prepare volunteers from their communities for work at the centers.

