

A Bright Light During Stressful Times

an interview by Delorys Welch-Tyson with Baroness Cecile DeMassy, Founder of Ladies Lunch Monaco

***“We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future.”
~Franklin Delano Roosevelt***



This blog is about a worthwhile charity I discovered recently here on the coast.

Many years ago I created an art gallery specializing in art made by children. The goal of my gallery was to present a public forum to the creative visual expression of young people between the ages of 6 and 18. My interest in helping children convey their feelings and observations through painting, drawing and sculpture, of the world around them was met with enthusiastic participation from children from the US and many countries from around the world.

Despite the fact that I am now a working writer living in the South of France, my interest in issues concerning the development of young people has never waned.

Not long ago, while surfing the net, I ran across information about an organization called *Les Enfants de Frankie*.

Les Enfants de Frankie is a charitable organization dedicated itself to helping the morale of disadvantaged children through various social activities. The organization reaches these young people through various social services agencies, hospitals and orphanages. Although the children of the Alpes Maritimes benefit from the efforts of the organization, *Les Enfants de Frankie* is based in Monaco.

Some may find it ironic that such an organization would exist in Monaco. *'Disadvantaged children on the French Riviera?'* one may ask, with perhaps a certain degree of astonishment.

When one thinks of Monaco one thinks of luxury yacht harbors, high rolling jet setters, leisure carefree life of indulgence. A population far removed from the concerns of every day people. Nevertheless, regardless of our station in life it is imperative that we know that no child is immune to the vicissitudes of life's natural progressions.

Through *Les Enfants de Frankie* I discovered the *Ladies Lunch Association d'Aide à l'Enfance et à l'Adolescence*, also based in Monaco and founded by *Baroness Cecile DeMassy*, cousin by marriage

to *Prince Albert of Monaco*.

I contacted her for a request for an interview about her organization which she graciously accepted.

But first let me give you a bit of a background on Monaco.



Monaco is the second smallest country, by size, in the world. It is also the world's second smallest monarchy and one of the world's most densely populated countries. Monaco has ten state-operated schools, including: seven nursery and primary schools; one secondary school, *Collège Charles III*; one lycée which provides general and technological training, Lycée Albert 1er and one lycée that provides vocational and hotel training, Lycée technique et Hôtelier de Monte-Carlo. There are also two grant-aided denominational private schools, including Institution *François d'Assise Nicolas Barré* and *Ecole des Sœurs Dominicaines*, and one international school, *The International University of Monaco*.

A new Constitution in 1962 abolished capital punishment and provided for women's suffrage, and established a Supreme Court of Monaco to guarantee fundamental liberties.

One of Monaco's main sources of income is tourism. The principality has successfully sought to diversify into services and small, high-value-added, non-polluting industries, such as cosmetics and diathermies.

The country has no natural resources...*except its people, of course.*

Monaco's population consists of all nationalities and socio-economic groups which enjoy an excellent quality of life in spite of the global economic and social crisis.

The Ladies Lunch Association d'Aide à l'Enfance et à l'Adolescence was founded by Mme. DeMassy six years ago.



Welch-Tyson : How was the program of the Ladies Lunch conceived ?

Mme. DeMassy: Our association was designed following the guidelines of the *Geneva Ladies Lunch*. It was back in 2004 when my friend *Mrs. Monia El Fitouri* from Geneva and other friends like *Mrs. Safia Al Rachid* and *Mrs. Christiane Dawson* encouraged me to create the Ladies Lunch Monte Carlo. The association consists of an Action Committee of 7 women who provide their continuous assistance on a volunteer basis, each in their area of expertise. Plus an Honorary Committee of 6 highly accomplished, international women. In 2009, *Miss Charlene Wittstock*, our Future Princess of Monaco, became our Honorary President.

WT: What are the goals of the program?

DM: The goals of our association are to raise funds to assist other charity organizations to help children and adolescents in the Principality of Monaco.

WT: What are the needs of the children for whom you are raising funds?

DM: The needs of these children and adolescents are exactly the same as all others, ensure their wellbeing and help them move forward in their development.

WT: Do the funds you raise go to a charitable organization or to a specific service provider?

DM: The funds are reversed to the charitable organizations that help children and adolescents . For example, we have raised funds for Special Olympics, Ecoute Cancer Reconfort, Action Innocense, Jeune J'Ecoute, Les Enfants de Frankie, just to mention a few.

WT: What type of media outlets do you use to reach those people to whom you wish to participate in your fundraising efforts?

DM: To reach the women who wish to participate in our twice-a-year lunches, we have a comprehensive mailing list that is continuously updated and enlarged by the friends invited by the women already registered. We have loyal followers but we are open to newcomers. We work closely with the printed and audiovisual media, at the local and international level and internet outlets. Of course it is important to mention that we have a very informative website that we update regularly: www.ladieslunchmontecarlo.org.

WT: I understand that you have different events at your lunches, for instance your fashion shows. Have you had other events featured at your lunches, for instance theatre, dance or other cultural events?

DM: Our original concept included a famous jeweller as our main sponsor, and a fashion show by a top designer. But we are flexible and open to new ideas. For example, for the last two events the main sponsors have been institutions like *Julius Baer* in November 2010 and *UBS* in March 2011.

Furthermore we once had the performance of a violinist and yet another time we had a singer in the program. Another time we had the wives of the players of the Monaco Football team as models for the fashion show. Most recently, one of our partners, *Lavida Travel*, offered to raffle a 5-day stay at a top luxury hotel in Vienna, among the guests at our Ladies' Lunch. Our objective is to continuously innovate and offers an attractive program to our guests in return for their generosity.



British designer *Osman Yousefzada*, organizer of Ladies Lunch Fashion Show November 2010

WT: What are some specific examples of how your organization's funding have helped the children?

DM: We have helped the *Department of Pediatrics of the Princess Grace Hospital* in acquiring Respiratory Monitors for newborn children. We made it possible for the association *Monaco Disease Power* to begin the construction of a holiday home for disabled children. We have helped restore a recreation room at the *Foyer Sainte Devote*. We participated in the construction of "La Maison de Vie" by the association *FIGHTAIDSMONACO* for people affected with the disease. And our work continues.

WT: Do many people who attend these fundraisers come from outside of Monaco?

DM: Our guests come from Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Russia, Switzerland, UK, USA...from all over the world, really.

WT: Do you work with other charitable organizations that help children?

DM: We collaborate with organizations that help children and adolescents in Monaco. We collaborate with associations that help women to nurture a healthy mother-child relationship.

WT: What type of relationship does your organization have with government social services agencies?

DM: We are here to help if the government social services so require. We meet with them to discuss their needs and do our best according to our means. The way we did three years ago with the

Pediatric Ward of the Princess Grace Hospital.

WT: What are the plans for the future of the organization in regards to helping the Children of Monaco?

DM: We organize two events a year, in March and November and we select a charitable organization each time. Last March, we raised funds for the *Academy of Dance Princess Grace*, for which we received generous donations that will enable children of lower income homes to have the chance of becoming great dancers.



Next November we will benefit an association that deals with youngsters who suffer from schizophrenia. They really need our help and I happen to be personally touched by this problem.



I would like to thank Mme. Cecile DeMassy for taking time from her busy schedule for this interview. I am personally certain that due to the dedication of these women *The Ladies Lunch* will continue to be a bright light of social consciousness in Monaco.