

# The **BOTTOM** **LINE**

September 2011

## It's Official Integra is Now in **ALBANIA!**

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK...



A few years ago, Albania was not even on my radar. Integra had been asked to help launch businesses to provide employment for believers, but to be honest, we had more than enough to do where we were. I tucked it in the back of my mind, thinking that if God wanted us there, He would make it clear.

Well, make it clear He did. Over the next three years, a phrase repeated itself in my head: "Albania has a population of 3 million Muslims and only 2000 Christians." I also kept meeting people who were somehow connected to Albania—people like the Albanian limo driver who brought me home from the airport... or the Albanian waitress who—little would I have guessed!—would one day translate our training materials for use in Albania.

At last, I started listening. In no time, I was off on an exploratory trip to Albania, where it became clear that God had plans for us there. I have since been back nine times to build relationships, find a working partner in Radstock Ministries (a church-planting ministry based in England), and decide where to settle. We chose the capital



***"Albania was not even on my radar,  
but God had plans for us there!"***

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## Intern Close-Up: Jack Quinn

Jack Quinn has served as the most recent Integra office intern this summer. Jack is entering his junior year at DePauw University, majoring in Economics/Management. Jack also plays Outside Linebacker on the DePauw football team.

Though he studies in Indiana, Jack's roots lie in Wheaton, Illinois. He grew up about five blocks down the street from the Integra office, and graduated from Wheaton North High School. He was connected to Bob Kuhlman through a contact at Integra's accounting firm, Cedarstone Partners, and began his internship in late May.

Jack's work at Integra has consisted primarily of writing articles for the

website and blog, as well as keeping the Facebook page and donor databases updated. Jack was also fortunate enough to join Bob and board chairman, Joe Feth, on a trip to Eastern Europe. "It was an incredible experience," Jack says of the trip. "I not only learned a lot about the business side of things, but I was also able to see the unique culture of a different part of the world, and how God is working there. It was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity!"



## Intern Close-Up: Aubrey Hoepfner

Aubrey Hoepfner, a senior at Pepperdine University and a Chicago native, was looking for an internship abroad to match some hands-on experience with her international studies degree. She met Bob Kuhlman through a close friend, and they began talking about the possibility of her interning with Ellie Tasheva in Bulgaria.

Having visited Romania while in high school, she had an interest in the

people and development of Eastern Europe. A summer in Bulgaria sounded like a great learning opportunity, so off she went. Aubrey spent most of her time there co-teaching business English classes with Ellie, as well as holding individual conversation classes with each student. The personal interaction proved to be the greatest source of cultural education and ministry opportunity.

"Our students were wonderfully open, and I got to know them on a personal level," Aubrey said. "I learned so much about their joys and struggles, and had the chance to pray specifically for them and even speak encouragement into their situations." Aubrey's time with Integra Bulgaria provided her with rich cultural and personal growth experiences.



# Miri Khaji:

→ By Jack Quinn

## A Man with a Knack for Making Things Work

Miri Khaji has a knack for making things work. The owner of Kingdom Farming, he is a hard-working man and Integra's first client in Albania. His ingenuity is evident in basic things like repairing the tractor he uses on his herb farm, but it's clear in the bigger business decisions as well.

Miri decided to start an herb farm because of Albania's history of exporting herbal crops. In 2010, he experimented with growing blue malva, a crop used in cosmetics and herbal supplements. He sent a sample to a German company, which soon offered him a contract. However, Miri could not grow enough blue malva to meet their terms. He had only four acres of land, so he had to pass on that opportunity. However, he has continued building his business with an eye to the future.

He has rented eight more acres of land, and just planted his first crop in July. First, he had to overcome another challenge. With his sample harvest, the amount of seed was small enough to plant by hand. A larger crop would need to be planted with a seeding

***“Kingdom Farming is the only Christian business in the area. This alone makes Miri’s company a strategic one for the growth of the Kingdom in Albania.”***

machine, but the seeds were too small. The plants would end up too close together and much of the seed would be wasted.

Through trial and error, Miri determined the right amount of sand to mix with the seeds to plant them evenly.



Miri (right) shows off the new well at his farm.

For now, Miri will focus on domestic sales. In a couple of years, after he has had time to develop his business model, he will seek to export his herbs. He is also working on organic certification, which will command a better price and a larger market.

Kingdom Farming is the only Christian business in the area. This alone makes Miri's company a strategic one for the growth of the Kingdom in Albania. As his business grows, he plans to employ workers from his village, who have limited opportunities for work. This will go a long way to spread Miri's influence as a Christian. Miri also hopes to give back to local churches much-needed support in this mostly Muslim country.

Miri's next challenge is trying to gain a long-term lease on his land. Land reforms after the fall of communism left land owners without deeds, which makes legal transactions difficult. Despite this complication, Miri carries on optimistically with his plans for expansion. And we have little doubt that he will make it work!

city of Tirana, and the surrounding area, which turned out to be the right choice.

### First Steps: On the Ground...

This past spring we invested in our first business in Albania, an herb farm called Kingdom Farming. During communist times, Albania was known for exporting medical and aromatic plants (MAPs) in Europe. Today, MAPs are an ever-increasing market, and Albania's climate and low labor costs make it an ideal place for such a business. In addition, Albania is seeking membership in the EU, so opportunities are great.

Miri Xhaji, the owner of Kingdom Farming, is an enthusiastic young entrepreneur and a godly man. In July 2010,

he planted blue malva herb as an experiment. A German company's enthusiastic response to his samples convinced him he was on the right track.

With the help of Integra and Radstock, Miri is establishing Kingdom Farming as a limited liability company. For the first two years the company will sell only in Albania. Once the business model is established, Miri will begin exporting his products.

Besides being a solid business investment, Kingdom Farming will also be salt and light in the community, providing a great social and spiritual influence. It is the only Christian company in the area and will support local churches in reaching people for Christ. It will also provide employment to many villagers

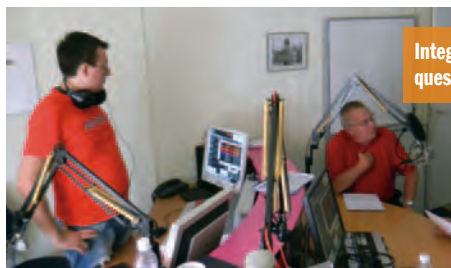
## Christian Radio in Albania Having a Great Impact

*“Together with my family we listen every day to Radio 7. From morning until late evening we find great delight listening. The Bible teaching and the worship music fills my home and my working place with praises to God.”* —AJKENA, KOSOVO



*“I come from a Muslim family and I became a Christian some months ago. My only Christian friend is Radio 7. Please pray for a church in my town. Please pray for boldness to share with my family.”* —GENTIAN, MONTENEGRO

Integra's Peter Tashev and Joe Feth prepare to go on the air with Radio 7.



Integra Board member Joe Feth is briefed on questions for an interview on Albania's Radio 7.

***"Albania is seeking membership in the EU, so opportunities are great."***

who have no other opportunities.

It has been an exciting journey watching Kingdom Farming come into being. I am extremely thankful for the fruit we are already seeing from our labors. (See page 3 for more about Kingdom Farming.)

### **...And in the Airwaves**

We are also working with a young woman who began the only Christian radio station in Albania several years ago and now reaches 70% of the country. We are looking to help her expand her reach to the 4 million Albanian Muslims who live outside of the country, mainly in Kosovo. Another project with her will be to begin Christian TV broadcasting in Albania, a tall order but one we are eager to tackle. More on this in a future issue...

For me, God's leading to Albania was a personal blessing. My walk has grown ten-fold, as has my belief that what Integra is doing in this region is very important for the Kingdom. My dilemma, however, is how do I get

the word out so others can be blessed as I have through serving alongside the people of Albania?

My answer: *through you!* Integra's best advertisers are those who pray, support, and encourage the work of Integra. I need you to tell our stories to others so our work can continue. Please consider sharing our vision and mission with those you know. You will not regret the blessing that will come from it.



Bob Kuhlman (right) consults with Miri about his farming techniques.

## **Albania by the Numbers**

- Potential clients consulting with Integra: 15
- Business plans currently being considered: 3  
(TV station, advertising agency, merchandising consultancy)
- Projects already invested: 1  
(Kingdom Farming, herb production and export)
- Attendees at new quarterly Christian business club: 30
- Integra staff visiting Albania to date: 8
- Vision trips for American business people: 3
- Business training workshops: 2

# Impressions of Albania

→ By Jack Quinn

Before my trip to Albania, I knew that the vast majority of the country identified themselves as Muslim, and that it was the least-developed country Integra is working in. Long regarded as the most closed country in the world, Albania changed from a communist government to democracy in the early 90s, along with most of the eastern bloc nations. However, elections were not considered free and fair until about 1997, and elections to this day are rumored to be riddled with fraud. This political corruption has held Albania many years behind Bulgaria and Romania. Knowing these facts going in, I wondered how and why Integra would try to make contact with Christian entrepreneurs.

After spending a small amount of time in Albania, I was both surprised and encouraged by the work God is doing there. With the help of Radstock Ministries, a church-planting organization from the UK with contacts in Albania, Integra has been able to establish connections with some incredible Christian business people.

God is changing hearts through Radio 7, and has led us to many business connections.



God is changing hearts through a Christian radio station. Our driver played Radio 7 non-stop in his car, and couldn't help singing along even in the often hazardous driving conditions

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in Albania. Through all our meetings it became clear that Leda is highly respected in her church community, and she has led us to many business connections. We are now working to help her move into television broadcasting.

Kingdom Farming has just planted its first crop, and entrepreneur Miri has already started plans to expand his medicinal herb farm. Both Christianity and the economy are developing quickly in the country.

One of the first things I noticed was the sense of community in Albania. Every night near our hotel in Durres, a seaside suburb of the capital city Tirana, people flooded the streets from about 9 to 11 to enjoy carnival rides, eat at food stands, and simply spend time together. The friendly atmosphere covers up many underlying problems in Albania that need to be addressed, including human trafficking and organized crime, but also lends itself to a fast-growing network in Albania. With strong business plans in place (in the case of Kingdom Farming) and developing, Integra is beginning to show Albanian believers, as well as non-believing observers, that business can be carried out in a Christ-like manner.

# Helpful Resources on Business as Mission

## Two Ways to Get the Latest Integra Info!

To find out what's new in the world of Integra, check out our blog or friend us on Facebook. Stay up-to-date with what's happening with our clients, comment on mission strategy, or even send a word of encouragement to staff and clients overseas. Our Facebook page is a great tool for introducing others to Integra too.

On the blog, you can find more stories of our interns' adventures in Bulgaria and Albania. You'll enjoy seeing these countries and our work from their perspective.

Find the blog at [www.integrausa.org](http://www.integrausa.org). From the home page, click on "Connect with us" at the lower-right corner. On Facebook, search for "Integra Ventures." Be sure to "Like" us so you'll see our updates as they are posted.



### Join Bob Kuhlman at "Work as Worship" Conference!

**November 3, 2011, Dallas TX**

Bob will be one of several speakers addressing business leaders who are passionate about combining business and ministry.

For more information, visit  
[www.rightnowconferences.org/work/](http://www.rightnowconferences.org/work/)

## NewsShorts

### Bulgaria: God Is Simply Still There

In intern Aubrey Hoepner's last blog post from Bulgaria, she shares two things she learned:

**1 God does things.** Skeptics might question God's presence in this part of the world; academic analysis... says that authentic Christianity is dying out faster than fun-fair goldfish... The academic statistics fail to portray the vibrant community of committed Christians that have risen up... God's Word has not returned void, and He is still accomplishing much in Bulgaria...

**2 God's people do things.** I was constantly challenged by the way the believers I met are willing to follow God's call. They give up comfortable jobs to start churches. They adopt orphans. They minister to Muslims. They share money with others. They uproot their lives and families to do missions work. They live in faith knowing that God will provide for them and that He will not lead them astray... My faith was strengthened and stretched as I encountered these examples of boldness in Christ.



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