NEWSLETTER N° 2
In this newsletter we would like to share with you BELhospice’s key results from June to December 2020 and inform you of our projects and fundraising accomplishments.

This period was challenging for everyone due to the COVID-19 pandemic, especially for patients with life-limiting illnesses. Cancer patients experienced delays or lack of access to health care units due to COVID-19 restrictions and an overwhelming demand for community-based hospice services was encountered.

The BELhospice team is proud that we have been able to provide substantial support to the vulnerable group of cancer patients and their families in these hard times. We would not have been able to do it without the continuous financial and technical support of our partner organisation Hospices of Hope UK, and the great efforts of members of the Honorary Patrons Committee, the Management Board and the Assembly, who guided and supported the BELhospice team in all our endeavours.

We are grateful to all our international donors including the Royal Norwegian Embassy and the British Embassy in Belgrade, and corporate and individual donors for your donations and are honoured that you recognised the importance of our services for our beneficiaries and the overall community.

Thanks to responding to our call to action, we have all shown that solidarity matters!!!!

A huge thanks to BELhospice staff and volunteers for being dedicated in providing continuous help to cancer patients and their families in relieving physical and emotional distress.

Executive Director
The BELhospice multidisciplinary team composed of doctors, nurses, caregivers, social workers, psychologist and volunteers continued to provide palliative care services to cancer patients and their families through telephone and digital channels, that were especially important and valued by our beneficiaries during the COVID-19 pandemic. These services, which extended far beyond Belgrade, included support to patients in managing their pain symptoms, psycho-social support to overcome anxiety caused by the illness and social isolation. Also, assistance adopted to the needs of our patients was intensive in this period and included the provision of special equipment, transport of patients to hospitals for chemotherapy, radiotherapy and other medical appointments and provision of protective equipment such as gloves, masks and disinfectants.

During this period, the home services were organised in patients’ homes by doctors and nurses to maximise their quality of life as long as possible.

We hope to re-start Day Care services as soon as the conditions with coronavirus permit it.
Our Projects

1. The project “Urgent response to COVID-19 crisis for the most vulnerable groups” was realised from April to October 2020 and funded by the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Belgrade and Group 484. (108.000 EUR)

The project enabled the BELhospice team to help 964 cancer patients and 1190 family members supporting cancer patients in managing pain symptoms and overcoming anxiety from the illness and isolation resulting from the coronavirus pandemic. The services were conducted through 2636 telephone calls and 154 home visits that were organised for the most vulnerable patients. Protective equipment such as masks, disinfectants and gloves were provided to 224 cancer patients at homes. The needs of 170 patients were also covered through provision of free of charge equipment obtained through the project such as wheelchairs and anti-decubitus mattresses that enabled better quality of life of cancer patients in their last days.

The project also enabled BEhospice to assist palliative care units in the hospital of Zvezdara, the palliative care unit Pozega, Gerontology centre Novi Sad, Gerontology Center Nis, Center for Social Welfare Prijepolje, Center for social Welfare Uzice, Center for social Welfare Priboj and Residential home care Trunje in Blace, that were supplied with disinfectants, diapers, wheelchairs and anti-decubitus mattresses to support patients residing in their institutions.

A special thanks to the people of Norway and the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Belgrade for being with us during these hard times and for providing the funds that enabled BELhospice to implement this important project.
2. We started the implementation of the project “Palliative care community support” to cancer patients during COVID-19 from December 2020 to February 2020 (9,000 GBP)

The project will enable BELhospice nurses and caregivers to continue providing palliative care services directly to at least 150 cancer patients for the duration of three months. Practical support and guidelines will be provided to caregivers to ensure continuity of care for their loved ones. Additionally, 20 volunteers have been trained through this project to provide palliative care services and will join the BELhospice team to support the most vulnerable groups, cancer patients, by providing relief from the burden of caring for caregivers.

We are thankful to the British Embassy Belgrade for recognising the importance of BELhospice services and for supporting the implementation of the project.
3. Strengthening effectiveness of local governments and social care practitioners to meet the needs of the vulnerable population and to better respond to COVID-19 pandemic and beyond - funded by GIZ

This project will enable implementation of the training Moodle platform so that BELhospice, partnering with the Republican Institute for Social Welfare, other local governments and health and social care users will be able to increase their knowledge and provide better quality of care to the vulnerable population.

Our partner, Hospices of Hope, will support the implementation of the project through networking, experience sharing and benchmarking of the training programs from partnering organisations in order to adopt them to the needs in Serbia.

We are thankful to the Deutsche Zusammenarbeit and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) gmbh for supporting this important project.
Letter from Jelena

“As a member of the Spasojevic family, from Borca, Belgrade, together with Darinka, the patient, Svetlana and Stanoje Spasojevic, I would like to express our deep gratitude to you all for your services, i.e., providing us with the necessary hospital bed for palliative care of our mother and wife when she became immobile and we were too distraught and dysfunctional to provide her with the care she needed most. Your help was immense and priceless for us, even more so as we did not manage to receive help from any of the numerous health and charity institutions in Serbia.

We are available to you in case you need our support (Nurse Katarina has all our contacts).

We send our regards from the bottom of our hearts in the hope that the health and social services in this country will recognise the necessity of your team and help you with your needs.

Wishing you all the success in the future.

Yours sincerely,
Jelena Spasojevic”

It is hard to go back through memories when we lose a loved one, because that makes us relive them all over again, but our beneficiary R.J. decided to share her experience with us due to her immense gratitude to the BELhospice team for their support in the most difficult times.
Letter from Radmila

“From the moment we found out about her cancer until her last breath, our whole family was focused on helping Mum cope with the illness. Despite the struggle, which lasted for a long time, we realised at one point things were not getting any better. This is when we really needed special support because we were running out of energy, mentally and financially. During the corona pandemic, we no longer even knew who to turn to for help, because no one wants to deal with patients once they get to that last stage of the illness.

Due to circumstances and out of despair, I found BELhospice not realising at the time how much these wonderful people will help me and my family, especially Dr. Ivona Jankovic, for whose kindness, support and advice I do not have enough words of gratitude. Thanks to her and the whole team only, my Mum at least got to live a few more months. This would not have been possible without their precious advice, kind words and genuine interest. I will never forget them for that”

Letter from Svetlana

“Dear Dr. Ivona,

I would like to use this occasion to express my gratitude for every moment you spent with us. You provided us with great support, as well as precise and clear explanations about everything that we did not understand, as well as guidance...you gave us all of that and you showed a great amount of care for us.

My father encountered this vicious illness (pancreatic cancer) at the age of 60. The diagnosis was confirmed at the Emergency Centre in May 2019. The tumour could not be operated on because it affected the portal vein. The council advised him to begin with radiation on the X-Knife, suggesting it is the best treatment for him. However, only then do we learn that the Clinical Centre does not have software for pancreas and therefore does not perform radiation on the X-Knife. The software was expected in September.

We found out about private HT treatment. He started with it immediately, as it was presented to us as the most effective, and the Clinical Centre could not offer it. We did not receive any follow-up of the patient or inquiries about his condition from the clinic that we were paying a lot to. To this day we wonder whether they keep any statistics of the survival rate or life expectancy.

Surprised and disappointed with the experience, we found out about you beginning of 2020. Both the patient and we, as family members, experienced with you so much understanding, patience, and an amazing energy overall.

Even though we did not meet because of the current Covid situation, you were constantly in touch over the telephone and we felt selfless support from you.

Sadly, our battle ended in August this year.

We would like to widely recommend the BELhospice organization, so that in this chaotic health system patients still receive empathy, patience, and many more beautiful and professional moments thanks to you.

Many thanks once again, first to Dr. Ivona and to all members of the BELhospice team.

Kind Regards,
Svetlana Đ. (patient’s daughter)”
To watch a loved one leave forever marks the soul permanently. That is why some of us find solace, and new strength and courage in selflessly helping others. That is the case with Minja L. (21), an Art History student at the Faculty of Philosophy, who is, for the third year in a row, helping along with numerous BELhospice volunteers. According to her, the decision to become a volunteer was almost a matter of fate:

“I had been researching charity organisations for a long time where I could get involved and BELhospice happened by fate, because when a person thinks about something then they somehow come upon it. To be fair, my aunt died from cancer and a friend of mine from high school had won the fight with cancer. We went through various stages of the illness together and it is then that I learned how many difficulties a person encounters in such a situation, hence my desire to help - especially people who have no one to be by their side during such moments in life.

It is difficult for me to hear that one of our beneficiaries has passed away, but I never ask myself: “Why did I need this”, but instead I feel grateful that I had the honour to have met that person while they were alive. Overall, we, as volunteers, are united by the same desire – to make life better for those who are at the end of their lives. That is why BELhospice is of great importance to many of its beneficiaries, providing them with something that is much bigger and more important than all materialistic things, and we get the satisfaction of putting a smile on their faces.”
This Christmas, the BELhospice team brought joy to 60 cancer patients and to 50 children whose parents and beloved ones are ill or died from cancer by delivering presents to them. We thank Lidl Serbia and DexyCo for their generosity.
BELhospice OPEN 2020 was held on 5th October 2020 at Novak Tennis Center. 85 players participated in the tennis tournament and we managed to raise 7,560 EUR. Many thanks to Novak Tennis Center, our sponsors - Generali insurance, Ernst & Young and TeleGroup - and our donors - Adecco, Apatinska pivara, Bel Medic, Grand Casino, KPMG, Merck, Movem Fashion, Ortopedija Novi Život, Pharmanova, Sitel, TeleSign, Termovent, Uni Point, Zuhlke, and many individuals.
The campaign Run and Walk for BELhospice started in October 2020. The campaign promotes healthy lifestyles through active physical activity. You can run and walk anywhere and collect numbers of km run through the PACER application. Companies can donate 1000 EUR for the involvement of at least 100 participants. Individual runners can pay a minimum of 1000 RSD on the Belhospice account or on the website runandwalk page of our partner Hospices of Hope UK. Winners with the highest scores are announced each month and will receive the modest prizes.

The campaign was largely supported by corporate donors and individuals from Serbia, UK and other places from abroad. We managed to raise 22,900 EUR by the end of December 2020. Over 1,000 participants from the corporate sector and over 250 individuals joined the campaign. BENU pharmacy was the key sponsor of the campaign with 10,000 EUR and donors were Asseco, Manpower, Mozzart, Bekament, Generali, Ernst & Young, Catena Media, ROCHE, Muehlbauer, Apatinska pivara. Also, big thanks to Christoffer Villadsen a young student from Vienna who joined our campaign and accomplished to raise 565 GBP out of 800 GBP pounds raised on our partner Hospices of Hope platform !!!!! Great thanks to all!!!!

Due to high interest, the campaign will continue until June 2021. Please join us and help BELhospice continue to provide free of charge palliative care to cancer patients and their families. For more information on how to get involved into runandwalk campaign please ask on email: ksenija.milovanovic@belhospice.org
Your Product Can Add A Smile to Someone’s Face

The campaign was supported by sponsor BENU pharmacy as a part of celebrating World Hospice Day. Companies dedicated a percent of the profit from sales of their product to donate to BELhospice. Gomex donated 2.500 EUR. Currently, Computerland Mi Store, Ušće Shopping mall, Chrono rs, Life coach & HR Milica Malesevic will held their actions until end of February 2021. The campaign will continue in 2021.

Christmas Appeal

This online event was organised with the aim of gathering BELhospice friends to support our operations in providing free of charge palliative care services. We managed to raise 18.000 EUR via online auctions and charity lots. Many thanks to the numerous donors for providing their products for the auctions and our sponsors Harrisons, Bekament and Generali. Thanks to all our donors who attended the event and participated at our auctions.

We would like to thank our partner organisation Hospices of Hope UK, Honorary Patrons Committee, our Sustainability Club members and all our corporate and individual donors for being with BELhospice and helping us in caring for the cancer patients and their families in these hard times!!!!