The Colourful Life of Volunteering in Europe

Italy
The Netherlands
Poland
Serbia
United Kingdom
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As a young doctor at the end of the ‘90s, I came into contact with palliative care in a small hospital in Bonn. In our anesthesiology department we had the opportunity for a year’s rotation in a palliative care unit. From day one, I was infected by the palliative care virus. The possibility to work in a team of health care professionals alongside the patients and those close to them, to learn so much about my own personhood, to learn to accept things without being inactive or giving up, and being part of a successful effort to move an important idea forward were eye-openers for me. But not only health care professionals were integral part of that palliative care team, but also volunteers supported us in the everyday struggle to achieve best possible care for the severely ill patients and their next. With and through those individuals, who unconditionally gave their time, commitment, empathy and wisdom to the patients I personally learned a lot for my professional career.

As President of the European Association for Palliative Care (EAPC), I want to thank the authors for collecting, analysing and presenting lived experiences and activities of volunteers from a true inside perspective, hence by the volunteers themselves. Volunteering has increasingly become an important field of action for the EAPC in recent decades. The EAPC is an association of almost 60 national palliative and hospice societies from 33 European / non-European countries and currently 320 individual members from a total of 52 countries worldwide. It brings together many who work in hospice and palliative care, both full-time and on a voluntary basis. Through our members and our activities, the EAPC aims to make sure that we advocate for and support the development of palliative care to improve the experience of patients and families. Hospice and palliative care is very well developed in many countries in Europe and around the world; yet - to this day - not everyone who needs it receives adequate care even in these countries. This is becoming particularly clear in the ongoing CoViD-19 pandemic with its overwhelming wave of suffering world wide.

Not only the authors is to thank, I also want to thank those volunteers from all over Europe who shared their impressive and touching stories with us. Through your narratives it becomes evident that - even if shapes, structures and contents of volunteering in our field may differ between countries – volunteers are a backbone of our work. In a textbook on palliative care, the first sentence of the chapter on volunteering states “Volunteers are key members of the hospice and palliative care team.” Hence, volunteers are not a supplement, not an add-on, not a nice to have, but part of the foundation set of hospice and palliative care.

Prof. Dr. med. Christoph Ostgathe, President of the European Association for Palliative Care (EAPC), Universitätshospitalklinik Erlangen/Germany

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The names of patients or family members included in the stories have been changed.
Volunteers are such a vital part of hospice and palliative care and to the support that is offered to patients and their families. This European Association for Palliative Care (EAPC) Task Force on Volunteering project was inspired by the recognition that the stories of the experiences and activities of volunteers are often told by paid staff and motivated by the desire to hear directly from the volunteers themselves.

The stories published here tell of the deep impact upon volunteers of being alongside people who have palliative and end of life care needs and also their families. They describe the meaning and importance of volunteering, the deep human connections made through conversation, listening and even through silence. Volunteers describe being inspired by patients and families and the great privilege of being trusted to accompany them at such a difficult time. Volunteers do not undertake their work in hospice and palliative care casually. Often it provokes significant reflection and changes the volunteer’s perspective on life, death and their own mortality.

The stories were collected from nine different countries, written by volunteers in their own language. Task Force contacts in each country were involved in identifying several volunteers who were willing to write personal accounts of their hospice and palliative care volunteering experiences in their own words and language. Two questions were asked to help to give a framework to volunteers for their story. These were:

- “What do you do as a volunteer?”
- “What does volunteering mean to you?”

The stories are presented in two parts. Part One stories from (Austria, Finland, France and Germany) and part two (Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Serbia and United Kingdom) in order to make this story publication accessible to as many people as possible, the stories are published in the language of the volunteer alongside an English translation.

These stories were collected before the COVID-19 pandemic. Volunteering has been greatly affected by the pandemic, with very many volunteers being prevented from volunteering because of safety concerns for patients or for the volunteers themselves. Some have been involved in innovative new ways of providing virtual support to patients and families. It is important, however, to highlight the significance of the contribution of volunteers to hospice and palliative care prior to the pandemic and to build on the best of pre-pandemic times as hospice and palliative care evolves as COVID-19 recedes.

Acknowledgements

The success of a project such as this depends on many people. We are indebted to all the volunteers who were so willing to take part and tell their stories so openly and honestly and allow these to be published. We would also like to acknowledge the Task Force members and country contacts who collected the stories, all those who were involved in translation, editing and designing and collating this publication. We are also grateful to EAPC for hosting the publication on the website. A list of all those involved is available at the end of the document.

We hope that you enjoy reading all these wonderful and touching stories. They can give you a great overview of the colourful life of hospice and palliative care volunteers around Europe!

Ros Scott and Leena Pelttari,
Co-Chairs EAPC Task Force on Volunteering
Italian Stories by

Cristina Pozzebon
Silvana Polarolo
Laura Stopponi
Laura Bargelli
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ITALY

POPULATION:
Around 60 Million

ASSOCIATION/UMBRELLA ORGANISATIONS FOR HPC VOLUNTEERS:
(Italian) Federation for Palliative Care – FCP, www.fedcp.org

NUMBER OF HPC VOLUNTEERS (2020):
Around 7,000 (70% female)

WHERE DO VOLUNTEERS WORK?
Adult and children hospices, home, day hospices, ambulatory palliative care, care homes.

IN WHICH FIELDS DO VOLUNTEERS WORK?
Being with the patient and his/her family – caregiver in direct care, education, bereavement support, fundraising, communication, board members...

HOW ARE HPC VOLUNTEERS IN THIS COUNTRY TRAINED?
Italy has a national core curriculum that provides for homogeneous processes of selection, learning (min. 20 hrs) and internship (min. 20 hrs). An update of the nationwide training courses is currently underway.
Sono Cristina, volontaria a Casa dei Gelsi da diversi anni. Durante le mie tre ore di servizio entro in stanze diverse su richiesta dell’operatore e mi rendo conto che gli ospiti mutano il loro animo seguendo i cambiamenti della malattia.

A volte accade che io busso, apro la porta e dico “sono la volontaria e sono qui per lei” e che il malato risponda “oggi ho bisogno di stare da solo”. La cosa più bella è uscire e pensare che quelle parole me le ha dette in piena libertà, perché la cosa più importante non sono io e quello che faccio, sono i malati il cuore di quello che si fa qui.

Quando entro non riesco a dire il mio nome, dico sono una volontaria, do solo il mio sorriso perché dentro quella stanza vale soprattutto la persona che la abita. Mi sento parte di qualcosa che non è solo mio, un frammento di un cuore molto più grande. A volte le condizioni dei malati non rendono necessario il mio intervento e noi passeggiiamo nel corridoio dove possiamo incontrare persone che vedono il nostro cartellino, se noi
rallentiamo il passo diventiamo un’anfora nella quale possono riversare ciò che hanno dentro.

Mi chiedono come faccio a passare da una situazione all’altra, da una stanza all’altra. A me piace ricordare questo pensiero: possiamo entrare e stare accanto se siamo “nudi e spogliati di noi stessi”. Ho capito col tempo che devo prendere la forma del bisogno che c’è in quel momento. Posso avere davanti una persona allegra, che ha voglia di ridere con me, o una persona che sta in silenzio e che ha solo bisogno che le tenga la mano.

Posso dire che io qui dentro non respiro la morte, ma la vita. Nel libro che c’è in ingresso ho trovato una frase scritta forse da un familiare che dice: “La vita è un cammino fantastico, non possiamo decidere quanto durerà ma possiamo decidere di rimanere vivi fino all’ultimo centimetro”.

room and stay beside an ill person just if we are “naked and stripped of ourselves”.

I realized over time that I have to “take the form, have the shape” of the need I am dealing with at that moment. I can have a cheerful person in front of me, who wants to laugh with me, or a person who is silent and just needs me to hold his or her hand.

I can state that at the Hospice Casa dei Gelsi, you breathe life and not death. In fact, as I read in the guest book at the entrance of the Hospice, where relatives and visitors leave a thought, “Life is a wonderful path, we cannot decide its length, but we can decide to stay alive until the last centimetre”.

Dolomites - photo by Lucas Wesney from Unsplash ©

Colosseum in Rome - photo from Freepik ©
Mi chiamo Silvana Polarolo e sono una volontaria dell’Associazione Gigi Ghirotti dal 2010.

Come e perché sono diventata una volontaria? Dopo essere andata in pensione, ho sentito forte il bisogno di continuare, anche se in altri campi, a svolgere attività che mi portassero comunque ad avere contatto con le persone e quindi a non rinchiudermi nel privato; poi, il marito di una mia collega si è ammalato ed è morto per la SLA. Durante la malattia sino alla morte l’associazione, con i suoi volontari e i suoi operatori, è stata vicino a lui e alla sua famiglia. La mia collega mi ha raccontato del grande aiuto e conforto che la sua famiglia ha ricevuto lungo un anno e mezzo di malattia, dell’umanità degli operatori tutti. Quest’ultimo avvenimento mi ha spinta ad iscrivermi al corso per volontari che mi ha dato una ampia conoscenza di questa organizzazione e mi ha stimolata ancora di più a diventare volontaria.

Da allora sono una volontaria dell’ Hospice di Genova Bolzaneto ogni giovedì mattina e una domenica al mese, sempre di mattina.

L’attività del volontario in Hospice è molto ampia; ci occupiamo delle colazioni, aiutiamo i pazienti che non sono autosufficienti, parliamo con i parenti e svolgiamo anche lavori di semplice amministrazione in supporto ai dipendenti dell’ Hospice.

Un’ampia parte del nostro lavoro è dedicata all’ ascolto e al conforto sia del paziente sia dei parenti, attraverso i loro racconti si ha uno
spaccato di vita familiare: affetti, rimpianti, dolore, insomma tutto quello che da un senso alla vita.

Farci carico, in parte, del dolore dell’altro é il nostro compito e in questo scambio esce fuori la grandezza di questa associazione e di chi vi opera: umanità, accoglienza, conforto, sono le parole che sento maggiormente pronunciate dai malati, dai parenti, dagli amici e rende l’hospice non un luogo di solo dolore ma anche un luogo di amore.

S., M., F., S., P., M. alcuni dei tanti pazienti che ricordo con amore; ognuno di loro ha lasciato un segno, nessuno di loro ha mai disturbato, anzi loro mi hanno arricchita e mi hanno insegnato il significato vero della parola umiltà.

feel less worried, unhappy or upset are the words that I hear most pronounced by them. This makes the hospice not only a place of pain but also a place of love.

S., M., F., S., P., M. are a few among the patients that I remember with love: their thoughts or actions as a laugh, a cup of coffee, a song has made me feel better and they have taught me a deep sense of humility.

Dopo la formazione obbligatoria, che ritengo assolutamente necessaria, ho iniziato a fare i turni di presenza nel reparto. Conoscevo già da tempo le cure palliative e l’accompagnamento al fine vita, e l’associazione permette una partecipazione ed il riconoscimento di un ruolo che rende il mio semplice gesto individuale l’elemento di un progetto collettivo di società civile, solidale, evoluta e quindi libera e rispettosa della dignità di ciascun individuo. Ciò che materialmente viene fatto in hospice è in realtà piccola cosa: cucinare una merenda buona, leggere un libro, asciugare una lacrima o ascoltare i ricordi, le paure, le speranze dei pazienti e dei loro familiari. Ed è proprio attraverso queste piccole cose quotidiane, consuete, semplici che l’esperienza unica, complessa e definitiva della morte trova la sua dimensione umana.

Quando sono di turno, in coppia con un’altra volontaria, o volontario mi lascio attraversare dalle storie e dalle emozioni di coloro che ascolto e questo crea l’occasione per un incontro autentico, profondo, di anima e cuore e non di testa, durante il quale una sola parola o uno sguardo, una carezza o il perfetto silenzio, diventano parte della mia storia e della storia dell’altro.

I began to commit my time to volunteer at the age of 18. Now I am 61, and I’ve always done so ever since, in different contexts of solidarity and caring for others. I believe that sharing, being next to those in need, open and curious about everything “other” than myself, helps me to be much more myself, and to authentically express my nature. With this idea guiding my life, in 2013 I met the association “L’Abbraccio”, in English “The Embrace”, which operates in the hospice called “La Farfalla” (“The butterfly”) in Montegranaro (which is in the Marche region).

After the mandatory training, which I believe is absolutely necessary, I started volunteering shifts in the ward.

I already knew palliative care and end-of-life support: the association allows participation and recognition of a role that makes my simple individual gesture the element of a collective project of civil society, solidarity, evolved and therefore free and respectful of the dignity of each individual. What is materially done in hospice is actually a small thing: cooking a good snack, reading a book, wiping a tear or listening to the memories, fears,
La comunione profonda, che così si realizza, ci avvolge per interminabili istanti sotto il mantello delle cure palliative, dentro l’abbraccio nel quale possiamo abbandonare il giudizio e la paura, lo sconforto e la solitudine della malattia. Durante il turno, le attività sono molto libere così da lasciare tutto lo spazio possibile alle richieste di pazienti e familiari o alle necessità che si presentano al momento. Questa modalità presenta aspetti complessi perché occorre sempre essere pronti ad affrontare, stanza dopo stanza, paziente dopo paziente, atteggiamenti ed emozioni molto diverse le une dalle altre. Ma io penso che questa è proprio la caratteristica peculiare dell’hospice dove la precarietà della vita e l’imprevedibilità dell’evoluzione della malattia sono al centro di ogni intervento del personale sanitario e di noi volontari, per questo la formazione è continua e sono indispensabili gli incontri di supervisione ai quali partecipo almeno ogni tre settimane.

Ogni turno è un’esperienza unica ed irripetibile, ed ogni turno è un’occasione per fare i conti con me stessa, con la consapevolezza, l’autenticità, la disponibilità. I momenti più belli sono quelli in cui il mio interno coincide con l’esterno e riesco a sentire che ciò che faccio è esattamente ciò che sono e questo può accadere soltanto in un luogo come l’hospice dove le sovrastrutture debbono cadere per far sì che l’anima sia leggera e pronta per l’ultimo viaggio.

When I am on duty, paired with another volunteer, I let myself be traversed by the stories and emotions of those I listen to: this creates the opportunity for an authentic, profound encounter, of soul and heart and not “of the head”. A single word or look, a caress or perfect silence, become part of my story, and also of the other person’s story. Each shift is a unique and unrepeatable experience, and each turn is an opportunity to come to terms with me, with awareness, authenticity, availability. The best moments are those when “my inside coincides with the outside”, and I can feel that what I do is exactly what I am. This can only happen in a place like the hospice, where the superstructures have to fall to let the soul become light and ready for the last journey.
Potrei dire che faccio volontariato per mettere in pratica quei principi di solidarietà e fratellanza che da sempre ricoprono un ruolo importante nella mia vita, potrei dire che faccio volontariato per realizzare il mio impegno etico nel mondo facendomi carico della responsabilità di rispondere alla voce dell’altro che chiede riconoscendo la nostra reciproca dipendenza e queste sono tutte motivazioni vere e valide ma forse sarebbero sufficienti a motivarmi se non fosse che fare volontariato mi fa stare bene, placa la mia inquietudine e attribuisce un senso alla mia presenza nel mondo.

I could say that I work as a volunteer to put into practice those principles of solidarity and brotherhood that have always played an important role in my life. I could say that I volunteer to fulfil my ethical commitment in the world by taking on the responsibility of responding to the voice of the other which asks, recognizing our mutual dependence. These are all true and valid motivations but perhaps they would not be enough to motivate me if it were not that volunteering makes me feel good, calms my restlessness and gives meaning to my presence in the world.
Faccio QUESTO tipo di volontariato a causa di uno sguardo e di una malattia. Lo sguardo è quello di un uomo che muore, incrociato casualmente durante il mio volontariato con la Croce Rossa tanti anni fa, uno sguardo che mi è entrato dentro e che mi ha spinto a cercare di penetrare un po’ quel mistero ultimo dell’esistenza umana che è la morte, forse anche nel tentativo di esorcizzarla. La malattia è quella di mio padre che è stato colpito dal cancro e dal mio desiderio di conoscere il più possibile sul decorso di questa malattia in modo da potergli essere di aiuto e conforto anche nell’ultimo periodo della sua esistenza.

Dall’esperienza di volontariato ho imparato ad amare ed apprezzare la vita in tutte le sue forme, ho imparato a dare valore alle piccole cose di ogni giorno, ho imparato a vivere più intensamente il presente che, per una come me che viveva nella perenne attesa di un futuro migliore, è una grande cosa. Ho imparato che tutti, prima o poi abbiamo bisogno di aiuto perché la vulnerabilità e la fragilità sono insiti nella condizione umana in quanto tale perché siamo tutti esposti al fallimento, alla malattia e alla morte, che abbiamo bisogno gli uni degli altri e che chiedere aiuto non è un segno di debolezza.

I do THIS kind of volunteering because of a look and an illness. The glance was that of a man who died, casually caught during my volunteer work with the Red Cross many years ago, a gaze that got inside me and pushed me to try to penetrate a little bit that ultimate mystery of human existence which is death, perhaps even in an attempt to exorcise it. The disease was that of my father who was struck by cancer; mine the desire to know as much as possible about the course of this disease to be of help and comfort even in the last period of his existence.

From the experience of volunteering I have learned to love and appreciate life in all its forms, I have learned to value the little things of every day, I have learned to live the present more intensely. This, for someone like me who had lived in perennial expectation of a better future, is a great thing. I have learned that sooner or later we all need help because vulnerability and frailty are inherent in the human condition as it is. We are all exposed to failure, disease and death, we all need each other. Asking for help is not a sign of weakness.
ITALIAN

Ho iniziato la mia attività nel 2016 a seguito della morte di mia nonna che è stata seguita a domicilio dallo staff del dr. Bernardo. Dopo questi episodi sentivo il bisogno di rendermi utile per il sociale perciò ho deciso di unirmi al Papavero - der Mohn. Attualmente faccio parte del consiglio direttivo e mi dedico come volontaria all’hospice. Ho trovato tutto ciò che ho imparato durante i corsi di formazione utile non solo per il volontariato, ma anche nella mia vita lavorativa e personale fuori.

ENGLISH

I started my activity in Palliative Care in 2016 after the death of my grandmother, who had been cared for at home by the staff of dr. Bernard, MD.

After this episode, I felt the need to make myself useful in the social sphere, and I decided to join the organization called “Il Papavero-der Mohn”, in English “The poppy”. I am currently a member of the board of directors and I dedicate myself as a volunteer in the local hospice. Everything I learned during the training courses was useful not only for volunteering but also in my working and personal life. Among the courses provided, the ones I prefer are the meetings with the psychotherapist and the supervisors. These, which consist of groups of 15 people, see a professional playing the role of the moderator: this allows us to externalize and better understand our moods. We also have hospice meetings during which we discuss with two nurses and the head nurse about what we directly experienced with patients we met.

Personally, an experience that unsettles me a lot is to face the death of a young person; this does not mean that the death of an elderly person, instead, is valueless, but it strikes me that these people might be of my age or even younger than I.

My personal way to unload the emotions accumulated in the hospice is to talk to my family once back home, obviously respecting the privacy of hospitalized persons.

Speaking of my approach to the ill person, I always ask a nurse which patients might be inclined to want to talk to me. In fact, I never...
che consistono in gruppi da 15 persone, nei quali un professionista svolge il ruolo di moderatore, questo per permetterci di esternare e comprendere meglio i nostri stati d’animo; inoltre abbiamo degli incontri in hospice nei quali ci confrontiamo con due infermieri ed il caposala su quelle che sono le nostre esperienze dirette con i pazienti.

Per quanto mi riguarda, un’esperienza che mi turba molto è l’affrontare la morte di una persona giovane, non perché la morte di un anziano valga meno, ma mi colpisce il fatto che queste persone possano essere mie coetanee o più giovani di me. Il mio personale modo per scaricare le emozioni accumulate in hospice è quello di parlare con la mia famiglia una volta tornata a casa, ovviamente rispettando la privacy degli utenti ricoverati.

Parlando del mio approccio con il paziente chiedo sempre ad un infermiere chi potrebbe essere propenso a voler parlare con me, non entro mai direttamente nelle camere dei pazienti, un po’ per il mio carattere un po’ per rispetto delle persone ricoverate, preferisco stare un passo indietro che uno avanti.

Lavorando non è sempre facile conciliare i tempi, capita a volte che debba prendere permesso dal lavoro e recuperare le ore in seguito per poter partecipare alle riunioni, ma sono dei piccoli sacrifici che vanno fatti, insomma è più facile mollare che andare avanti!

Nell’associazione migliorerei alcuni incontri che rientrano nella formazione permanente.

Se dovessi definire il mio lavoro in tre parole, queste sarebbero:
IMPEGNO – AFFIDABILITA’ – SERIETA’

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Because I work, it is not always easy to reconcile the times; sometimes it happens that I have to leave from work -- and recover the hours later -- to be able to participate in meetings, but these are small sacrifices that must be made. It is easier to give up than to go on, but I will go ahead!

If I had to define my work as a volunteer in three words they would be:
COMMITMENT - RELIABILITY - SERIOUSNESS
Netherlands stories by
Anny Masselink
J. Wydemuller
Margreet Vos
THE NETHERLANDS

POPULATION:
Around 17 Million

ASSOCIATION/UMBRELLA ORGANISATIONS FOR HPC VOLUNTEERS:
VPTZ Nederland, www.vptz.nl

NUMBER OF HPC VOLUNTEERS:
Around 12 000

NUMBER OF HPC VOLUNTEER TEAMS:
265

WHERE DO VOLUNTEERS WORK?
Hospice, almost at home home, nursing homes, hospitals (palliative care unit).

IN WHICH FIELDS DO VOLUNTEERS WORK?
Being with the patient and the families, gardening, board member.

HOW ARE HPC VOLUNTEERS IN THIS COUNTRY TRAINED?
The Netherlands have an intense training programme at the national level with obligatory and optional courses. 12 types of courses are provided yearly (some more than 1 day) and in total 160 training sessions on a yearly basis.
The last phase in life has always had my interest, and when I got more leisure time due to personal circumstances, I found that I had to return some of this leisure time to society. I applied in our district after a newspaper article from the end of life home care foundation. I followed the starters’ course and began.

This has proven to be a good choice. It gives me a feeling that I am doing something positive in our society. It also gives me energy, as well as the feeling that I am being needed. It is a useful way of spending my leisure time. I do that for the patient at his home, but also for myself.

Dying at home, in one’s own environment, own room, with a view on one’s own garden. The familiar sounds, familiar scents, family close by. That is what I am up to. It is very special to enter as a volunteering stranger in such a family situation, with an event of such intimacy in perspective. The family members who so much desire to provide care themselves but get confused because they have to be present 24 hours per day. Then I get the confidence to take over the care for their loved one from them. CONFIDENCE has become a word in capitals to me ever since I have been a volunteer with VPTZ [Dutch Volunteer Organisation at End of Life, AG].

One is being faced with one’s own mortality, especially when the patient is of the same age, or younger. It makes me grateful. Grateful that I may and can do this “work”.

Volunteering in end of life domestic care enlarges my joy of nature, birds singing, flowers flourishing. My vegetable garden, the little seed growing up to lettuce, or a beetroot, or a carrot. I wonder about it, it gives me energy.

Enjoying the here and the now. Material matters have less attention, are less important. It teaches me to look at life. To see what life really is about. Love for fellow human being.

The nine years I spent as a volunteer in end of life domestic care made me become more human, in love, in caring, in attention, but also thankful for everything around me. Thankful, because ... I am allowed to be there.
What volunteering with end of life domestic care means to me, is that it gives me great satisfaction.

I feel obligated towards my fellow human being and it is a small contribution to society to be active in this. You do something for another person, to “be there” when needed. As a volunteer you consciously do something for another person and it gives you a great experience. It comes from your heart and I am almost sure that others have the same feelings, it is about your fellow human being, isn’t it?

Every human has sorrows, pain and problems. We can share in their suffering and joy. Your life experience in this respect is being enriched and by that you can mean more for them. Because every time you are faced with new things, you can gain more influential reasons and your personal growth from this is of great value.

It is not only sad moments. I went through many good moments with ill people; situations that cannot be described. A sweet smile, a hand stretching out, full of understanding you grasp that hand then you see rest and peace come over them and that's what I call “good”. In care I experience that, although they are helpless, they still watch to see if you are present.

I was once being asked to be with someone. Then I looked up the address and went there. This man looked very ill and could barely stand on his legs.
I gave him my hand, introduced myself and said that I was from KAP [Dutch Volunteer Organisation at End of Life, AG].

I said: Please sit down. He said: That’s my decision to sit down or stand up.
In my turn I put up my thumb as a sign that I understood him.
I also experience things like this, isn’t that funny!!

The care provided by volunteers is also important for the surviving family members and that I personally consider as very important. How will they get on with the absence of their loved one? A volunteer with their experiences will be a great support for this group of people in understanding sadness. They also need aftercare as someone can fall into a large void and feel lonely. Loneliness is major sadness.

Volunteers are super stars.
For over ten years now I have been working in VPTZ Zutphen [Dutch Volunteer Organisation at End of Life], volunteering in end of life domestic care in Zutphen and its surroundings. At first mostly in ‘night shifts’, over the last years during the day, supporting family carers. This “job” gives me a lot, while my first concern is to contribute to the wish of dying people to pass away in the presence of beloved and/or dear ones.

In almost all cases a special exchange is concerned, if only by the fact that I as a stranger am admitted to the terminal patient (often in the middle of nowhere) if he/she allowed the presence of a volunteer. To me this seems a moment of surrender for the patient in his most vulnerable situation, which therefore demands a prudent attitude from me.

I have always experienced the many courses offered by VPTZ [Dutch Volunteer Organisation at End of Life, AG] as a welcome addition and a learning process that both contributed to a deepening of my “work” and an invitation to self-reflection.

“Can’t you really find something more pleasant to do?”, is a question often asked to me, as if I have to do with only doom and gloom. People are often highly surprised when they hear that in a patient’s terminal phase there is also laughter. For a dying person, for his/her family and for the volunteer a laugh can be liberating in many situations.

The feeling of “being there” offers satisfaction if it provides the patient with rest. It can also occur that people tell me events from his/her life that they never before dared to share. What confidence!

I do not believe as such that one cannot die unless “all unfinished business is cleaned up”, because some can die and choose to let things rest.

I have experienced that this work (also in the hospice) has had a purifying influence on me. It may seem so simple, dying, now that I am writing this down. It certainly is not. I was certainly scared of death, but a human dying has also often been an “example” to me. I experience dying as an “active deed” and as a large mystery, that
redeems man from his suffering. I would wish for every human, that he/she can end his life at home in a manner worthy of a human being.

How did I get to doing this work? After some types of volunteering, I more and more got the feeling of wanting to get on a deeper level. A counsellor to elderly people in our village pointed me to volunteering for domestic care years ago. After conversations with coordinators in this type of care, I decided to commit myself to this. By sharing many experiences with other volunteers during our meetings, I found that I had taken the right step then.

Only much later, I discovered that the death of my mother also contributed to my decision. She was dying, unfortunately had to go to hospital for her medication to be adjusted and because she was troubled by constipation. Although my brothers and sisters and I had just arranged 24 hours care, my mother nevertheless died in the hospital, at the age of 80.

I knew that she would have preferred to be laid out at home and to be brought to the crematory from her own house. However, this was the year 1980, and for my family members the vigil at home became too difficult assignment due to our emotions. Then she arrived in a mourning room. I have always regretted this terribly. If only I had known then, what I know now.

After a long time, I have come to understand that my mother helped me to commit myself to the person dying at home.
Polish stories by

Piotr Druet
Stanisława Przebindowska
Emilia Dąbrowska
Angelika Osior
POPULATION:
Around 38 Million

ASSOCIATION/UMBRELLA ORGANISATIONS FOR HPC VOLUNTEERS:
Polish Hospice Forum, www.forumhospicjum.pl

NUMBER OF HPC VOLUNTEERS:
In Poland (2019) were 74 PC centres for children and 587 PC centres for adults. Volunteers are present in most of them. There is no precise evidence of the number of volunteers involved, and it is fluid. There are groups of school pupils (18 years old), students, adults, and growing groups of ‘silver power’ volunteer’s generations of 60+ and 70+.

WHERE DO VOLUNTEERS WORK?
Volunteers work in residential hospices, patient’s homes (home care for adults and children) and palliative medicine wards.

IN WHICH FIELDS DO VOLUNTEERS WORK?
They are part of caring teams in direct-patients’ support and inpatients’ family and bereavement support. Volunteers provide information and education concerning PC, help in fundraising, and work in hospice admin. Volunteers work predominantly between 10 and 40 hours/month.

HOW ARE HPC VOLUNTEERS IN THIS COUNTRY TRAINED?
Volunteers participate in various types of training provided by PC centres, however there is no national curriculum. A set of textbooks for Volunteers and Volunteer’s Coordinators has been published by the Hospice Foundation in 2008 and 2009 and is used in most of HPC structures. Research from 2012 has confirmed that those tools are widely used in most of HPC centres in Poland.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK:
Volunteers’ rights are guaranteed in polish law, and their obligations in direct-patient care are associated with patients’ rights.
Na imię mam Piotr, mam 52 lata. Od siedmiu lat pracuję w Hospicjum im. ks. Dutkiewicza w Gdańsku jako wolontariusz opiekuńczy. Trafilem tam dzięki koleżance z pracy, która była wolontariuszką i opiekowała się apteką hospicyjną. Zaciekawiły mnie jej opowieści o pracy w hospicjum. Pobudziły mnie do głębszej repleksji nad samym sobą, wyzwoliły potrzebę zmiany i tego, by moje życie nabralo większego sensu.

Przełomowy okazał się ślub koleżanki, którego udzielał ówczesny dyrektor hospicjum, ks. Piotr Krakowiak. W trakcie ceremonii kilkakrotnie nawracał on na temat opieki hospicyjnej. Wywarło to na mnie takie wrażenie, że tego samego dnia podjąłem decyzję o pracy w hospicjum jako wolontariusz.

Ukończyłem kurs wolontariatu obejmujący szkolenie w zakresie opieki paliatywnej oraz wspierania pacjentów i ich rodzin. Do hospicjum chodzę raz w tygodniu – w sobotę. Pracuję z osobami dorosłymi. Na oddziale robię niemal wszystko, tzn. pomagam

My name is Piotr, I am 52 years old. For the past 7 years I have worked at the Father E. Dutkiewicz SAC Hospice as a patient-facing volunteer. I became involved in this work after talking to a friend, who was a volunteer pharmacist in the hospice pharmacy. I was interested in her numerous stories about her work in the hospice setting. They triggered deep personal reflection within me, which in turn helped me to realise a personal need for change in order for my life to gain a greater sense of meaning. The defining moment occurred during the wedding of my friend, which was officiated by Father Piotr Krakowiak SAC who is the National Hospice Chaplain at the Polish Episcopal Conference. Throughout the ceremony, he repeatedly referred to the topic of hospice care. His comments left such an indelible impression on me, that I made the decision to begin work in the hospice as a volunteer that same day.

I completed a volunteer training course relating to palliative care as well as how to support patients and their families. I go to the hospice once a week, on Saturdays. I work with adult patients. On the ward, I am involved in a wide range of activities, i.e. assisting with the distribution of meals, feeding and washing patients, changing bed sheets, washing floors. I am a companion for patients and I engage with them in conversation. From the start, I felt that this was the place for me. I discovered a great joy in helping others, even though sometimes this role is difficult. Interactions with patients have taught me many things, in particular patience and humility. Maturity, perseverance as well as an acceptance of human suffering are qualities that are often required in this setting. However, the joy experienced by sick patients

Dwa razy w roku odbywa się w hospicjum kurs wolontariatu. Kiedy na oddział przychodzą grupy praktykantów opiekuje się nimi, co sprawia mi wiele satysfakcji. Na początku robię im wykład o hospicjum i obowiązujących w nim zasadach postępowania, następnie oprowadzam ich po oddziale i przydzielam praktykantów poszczególnym wolontariuszom. Raz w miesiącu uczestniczę w zebraniu, na którym omawiamy bieżące sprawy z życia hospicjum i pracy na oddziale. Działa też grupa wsparcia dla wolontariuszy, od czasu do czasu odbywają się warsztaty z psychologiem. Jeździmy również na wyjazdy integracyjne. Wolontariuszami opiekuje się koordynator wolontariatu opiekuńczego, Basia. Wiele jej zawdzięczamy.


when they realise that they are not alone and that someone is thinking of them, is priceless.

Twice a year the hospice holds volunteer training courses. I mentor and look after the new trainees when they come onto the ward, which is a role that I find greatly satisfying. At the start, I provide them with a lecture describing features of the hospice and any applicable rules of conduct. Next, I take them around the ward and I match each trainee with an experienced volunteer. Once a month, I participate in a meeting that discusses any pertinent issues of current hospice life and the work that is performed on the ward. There is also a support group that operates for volunteers, which provides workshops with a psychologist from time to time. We also participate in team building trips. Volunteers are supervised by the patient-facing volunteer coordinator, Basia, for whom we are very grateful.

My role in the hospice has taught me a great deal. Above all, it has strengthened me as a person. It has allowed my life to take on a new dimension. In coming to the hospice, I am able to really be of help. I feel that I am needed by someone, and at the same time, I feel that thanks to the patients, I have become a more fulfilled person.

With time, this work has become a way of life for me. Thanks to the hospice, I have met a large group of wonderful people and made a new network of friends. As such, in my opinion, being a volunteer holds two-fold value. First, it allows the opportunity and gift of being a companion to sick patients in their ‘final journeys’, and secondly, it has built a community of volunteers, people with wonderful hearts. These are some of the best and most positive experiences of my life.
I began working in the St. Lazarus Hospice in February 1991. Initially, I was employed as an accountant at the hospice and since 1994 also as a volunteer in home care, where I cared for sick patients, close to my home. Previously I participated in training that prepared me to care for the patients. After my employment ended in 1995, I have been working in the Hospice solely as a volunteer. In 1998, I started ministry in the in-patient ward in the hospice. I also maintain order in the chapel and sacristy. For a few years, I also worked as a home care volunteer again when there was a shortage of volunteers. Currently, I perform various activities at the hospice ward on Saturdays, Sundays and during holidays.

During my visit:
• I help patients to eat at mealtimes
• I organise leisure time for patients by reading a book, magazines, and walking where possible.
• I accompany patients in prayer, if they so wish. When a patient is dying and family members are not present, I am with him or her, holding their hand in prayer.
• I talk with the families of patients, when needed. I help by making them tea or coffee, and also by creating simple meals.
• I also report any noticed changes in the patient to staff and possibly any requests made by him/her.
• I assist patients who wish to go to mass by taking them in a wheelchair or in their bed to the hospice chapel
• I walk with patients in their wheelchairs through the hallways of the hospice, or in the summertime when we have good weather, through our beautiful garden.
• Organizuję czas chorym poprzez czytanie książek, czasopism, spacery na ile jest to możliwe.
• Towarzyszę chorym w modlitwie, jeżeli sobie tego życzą. W sytuacji gdy chory umiera i nie ma przy nim rodziny, czuwam przy nim trzymając za rękę modląc się.
• Rozmawiam z rodzinami chorych, jeżeli wyrażą taką potrzebę, służę im pomocą w zrobieniu herbaty lub kawy, a także w przygotowaniu prostej posiłku.
• Zgodnie z obowiązkiem zgłaszam personelowi oddziału zauważone zmiany w stanie chorego oraz ewentualnie jego prośby.
• Chorym chcącym uczestniczyć we mszy św. umoiwiam to wywożąc ich na wózkach i łóżkach do kaplicy hospicyjnej.
• Spaceruję z chorym na wózku w holu, a w okresie lata przy dobrej pogodzie w naszym pięknym ogrodzie.

In addition, I look after the chapel in the Hospice, where masses are celebrated and patients worship.

My tasks include:
• The attention to layout and order of the chapel and the sacristy.
• Maintaining the cleanliness of the chalice linen and other liturgical garments.
• Supplying liturgical vestments in the sacristy.
• Preparing partial liturgy celebrations in the hospice as well as helping in the organisation of important events in agreement with the priest chaplain.
• In addition, on every Sunday and public holiday, I prepare all the necessary liturgical vestments for the altar.

As part of my responsibilities as a volunteer, I am also involved in raising funds for the Society of Friends of Patients in the Holy Lazarus Hospice in Krakow. These tasks include:
• Taking part in fundraising on behalf of the Hospice carried out in churches preaching about the activities of hospice care at all Masses.
• Driving my own car to funerals of patients that take place in distant towns.
• As part of the range of activities under the ‘Field of Hope’ initiative, I am responsible for leaving and collecting charity collection cans in several locations for a period of 2 months.
• Helping with administrative work: counting money collected from the charity cans and fundraising events and writing protocols.
księdzem kapelanem.
• Ponadto przez wszystkie niedziele i święta oraz stałe msze św. w tygodniu przygotowuję para-
  menty liturgiczne do ołtarza.
• Do moich zadań, jako wolontariusza należy
  także udział w pozyskiwaniu środków finan-
  sowych na rzecz Towarzystwa Przyjaciół Cho-
  rych Hospicjum im. Św. Łazarza w Krakowie. W
  ramach tych zadań:
  • Biorę udział w kwestach na rzecz Hospicjum
    przeprowadzanych w kościołach głosząc świ-
    adektwo na temat działalności hospicyjnej na
    wszystkich mszach św.
  • Wyjeżdżam swoim samochodem na kwesty ucz-
    estnicząc w pogrzebach głównie do odległych
    miejsc.
  • W ramach akcji „Pola Nadziei” obsługuję kilka
    punktów, w których pozostawiam puszki-skar-
    bonki na okres ok. dwóch miesięcy.
  • Pomagam w pracach administracyjnych: w
    liczeniu pieniędzy z puszek zebranych w czasie
    kwesty i pisaniu protokołów.

Wolontariat hospicyjny to bezinteresowność w
pełnym calu z własnego wyboru, potrzeby serca
służenie drugiemu człowiekowi w potrzebie.
Wolontariat hospicyjny wymaga ogromnej poko-
ry, wrażliwości, empatii, pozyskania akceptacji i
zaufania naszych podopiecznych, to towarzyszenie
chorym w ostatnim okresie ich życia.

W wolontariacie niezbędne jest przestrzeganie
zasad i przepisów obowiązujących w jednostce.

Jako wolontariusz jestem członkiem zespołu,
nie przychodzę tylko dlatego, aby wypełnić moje obowiązki, ale dla pracy w grupie.

Postuga wolontariusza w domu chorego istotnie różni się od jego zaangażowania na oddziale stacjonarnym.

Chory i jego rodzina w każdym domu czy też na oddziale stacjonarnym dla wolontariusza to nowe doświadczenie. Ciągłe poszukiwanie nowych rozwiązań. Odpowiedzialne zachowanie się wobec chorego i rzetelne wypełnianie obowiązków, których się podejmuje.

W służbie wolontaryjnej chory musi być na pierwszym miejscu. Podejmując obowiązki wobec chorego i rodziny należy wymagać od siebie dyscypliny.

Najtrudniej być przy chorym, który odchodzi z tego świata, a szczególnie wtedy, gdy jest osobą bardzo młodą, więc przychodzi przygnębienie i nie łatwo z tym się pogodzić. Gdy doświadczam odchodzenie młodej osoby dzielę się tym z innymi wolontariuszami.

Wykonywanie posługi wolontaryjnej w szczególnych warunkach jakie są w hospicjum umożliwia mi jako osobie głęboko wierzącej i doświadczoną przebityą chorobą nowotworową wdrażać w praktyce z potrzeby serca takie wartości chrześcijańskie jak miłość bliźniego, miłosierdzie. Pozwala mi na spojrzenie z dystansem na życie własne i odnalezienie priorytetów.
Zdecydowaną większość czasu, którą spędzam w hospicjum poświęcam na volontariat medyczny, czyli towarzyszę naszym podopiecznym. Przede wszystkim jest to czas na rozmowę z nimi jak również z ich rodzinami. Choć bywa i tak, że jest to tylko obecność bez potrzeby wypowiadania słów. Jest też czas na wspólne oglądanie telewizji, spacer, później na koncert, czy chociażby kilka chwil spędzonych przy kawie lub herbacie.

W sytuacjach, gdy nasi podopieczni, którzy już umierają, nie mają przy sobie bliskich osób – towarzyszę im w tych ostatnich chwilach życia. Pomagam również opiekunom medycznym przy sprawowaniu czynności pielęgnacyjnych nad chorymi, przy toalecie czy też przy karmieniu. Poza towarzyszeniem pacjentom, zajmuję się również osobami, które ukończyły kurs dla wolontariuszy i rozpoczynają swoją działalność w Domu Hospicyjnym. Służę im swoim wsparciem, pomocą i rozmową w razie pytań i wątpliwości. Staram się pokazać im w jaki sposób jako wolontariusze możemy wspierać i jak możemy pomagać naszym podopiecznym. Angażuję się również w działania akcyjne organizowane przez hospicjum takie jak Pola Nadziei czy też „niedziele hospicyjne”, gdzie w parafiach szerzymy ideę hospicyjną jak również kwestujemy na rzecz Domu Hospicyjnego.

Z każdym kolejnym rokiem mojego bycia w hospicjum volontariat nabiera kolejnego znaczenia. Na początku było to oczywiście pragnienie niesienia pomocy chorym i cierpiącym na ostatnim etapie ich życia. Ludziom, którzy często czują się niepotrzebni i zrezygnowani. Towarzyszenie im, wspieranie ich i dawanie im siebie. Pozostaje to zawsze podstawą i wszystkie moje działania.

Polish Story 3

Emilia Dąbrowska
St. Joseph’s Hospice Home of Caritas in Sopot

Definitely most of the time that I spend at the hospice, I dedicate to being a medical volunteer, that is, I am a companion to our patients. Above all, this involves devoting time to speaking with them as well as their families. Sometimes, however, all that is needed is your physical presence by the side of the patient, rather than spoken words. We also spend time watching television together, going on walks, concerts, or even spending a few moments together with a coffee or tea. In situations where our patients are dying, and they do not have close loved ones by their side – I am a companion for them in their final moments of life. I also help medical carers in the performance of their roles for patients, including toileting and during mealtime. In addition to being a companion for patients, I am involved in welcoming new volunteers who have completed a volunteer’s course and are just beginning their journeys in the hospice. I assist them by showing them support, answering questions and discussing any doubts they may have. I try to show them different ways of supporting and helping our patients. I am also engaged in public initiatives organised by the hospice, for example ‘Field of Hope’ or also ‘Hospice Sundays’, where we promote the principles of hospice care as well as raising funds for the hospice.

With every additional year, my role as a volunteer in the hospice gains greater meaning. From the beginning, I had a desire to help sick patients and people who were suffering in their last phases of life. People who often felt discarded and resigned to their fate. I offer them company, support, and my time. This remains the focus of hospice care and forms the basis of all my activities. At the same time, each experience and each patient that I meet highlights that being a volunteer is not only providing assis-
właśnie z tego wynikają. Jednakże każde doświadczenie i każdy spotkany człowiek w hospicjum powoduje, że wolontariat to dla mnie nie tylko niesienie pomocy, ale także chęć poznania innej osoby. Uważam, że zgoda podopiecznych na możliwość uczestniczenia w ostatnich i zapewne najtrudniejszych chwilach ich życia jest dla mnie zaszczytem. Wolontariat daje mi możliwość poznania ludzi, których z pewnością nie spotkałbym w swoim prywatnym życiu. Bywa tak, że bardzo się od siebie różnimy: mamy inne charaktery, inny światopogląd i podejście do życia. Jednak właśnie to sprawia, że uczę się szacunku, poszanowania jego godności oraz akceptować go takim, jakim jest. Wolontariat to dобра lekcja, gdzie można uczyć się cierpliwości, życzliwości i zrozumienia. Wst twigowania się w drugiego człowieka, odkrywania jego pragnień oraz potrzeb i jeśli jest to możliwe - pomoc w ich realizacji. Zdaję sobie sprawę z tego jak ważne są relacje z innymi ludźmi, że wszystko to, do czego przez całe życie dzieje się, co zabięga w pewnym momencie staje się już nieistotne bo najważniejsza jest druga osoba. Wolontariat to bardzo ważna część mojego życia. Pomaga mi w przełamywaniu moich barier i słabości, kształtuję mój charakter i osobowość, kształtuje mój charakter

i osobowość, a także buduje relacje z ludźmi, których spotykam poza hospicjum w moim codziennym życiu. Dobro i poświęcenie okazywane Drugiej osobie zawsze powraca a zwłaszcza, gdy nie oczekuje się niczego w zamian. Wolontariat także daje możliwość nabycia doświadczenia w jaki sposób należy troszczyć się nie tylko o ich kondycję psychiczną, ale także fizyczną: w jaki sposób pielęgnować ich ciało, jak postępować, aby czuli się jak najbardziej komfortowo i jak nie sprawiać im bólu. Jestem przekonana, że angażując się w wolontariat człowiek zyskuje o wiele więcej niż sam jest w stanie dać. Jednakże wolontariat to przede wszystkim wyrażenie miłości wobec drugiego człowieka.

tance, but also getting to know another person. I believe that it is a great honour to be permitted by a patient to be a part of their final and probably the most difficult moments of their lives. Being a volunteer allows me the opportunity to meet new people, who I probably would not have had the chance to meet in my regular life. Sometimes, it is apparent that the people I meet are vastly different to me – different characters, views on worldly issues, and lifestyles. However, it is these differences that are teaching me respect – to respect their opinions and

accept them for who they are as a person. Volunteering is a good lesson, where you learn patience, kindness and understanding. Listening to another person, discovering their dreams and needs, and if possible, helping to make them a reality. I am aware of how important relationships are among people, that everything that we strive for in life and work towards becomes insignificant, because the most important thing becomes the health and happiness of the other person.

Volunteering is a very important part of my life. It has helped me to break down my barriers and weaknesses, it has shaped my character and personality and helped me to build relationships with people who I meet outside of the hospice in my everyday life. Good deeds and giving people your time, will always come back to you – especially when you don’t expect anything in return.

Volunteering also provides the opportunity to gain experience in caring for a person’s physical and psychological health: looking after their bodies, what to do in order for patients to feel comfortable and to minimise their pain. I am convinced that in becoming involved in volunteer work, a person gains so much more than they are able to give. Volunteering, above all, is showing love to another person.
I have been a volunteer at the Little Prince Hospice for Children in Lublin, since spring 2011, as I met Jerzy (who was my first patient) in July of that same year and this is when we started our journey together, which continues to this day, even though this little boy has been discharged from hospice care.

As a volunteer, I visit Jerzy in his home usually once a week. I try to take some of the burden off his Mum, who has raised him alone as a single parent. When I ‘entered’ into Jerzy’s family, he had just turned 1, he was very weak and was very attached to his mother’s arms. In reality, he never was alone with other people and it was evident that he did not feel safe anywhere, but in his mothers’ (Anna’s) arms. Luckily, we quickly found a common thread and we both did not have any doubts about staying alone with each other without the supervision of Mum. During the time that Jerzy and I would play, Anna had some time to relax, make dinner or catch up on other home chores, and also importantly to spend time with her younger brother, who she also cares for and has taken on the role as mother (their mother passed away when Marcin, Anna’s brother, was 1 year old. Today he is a 12 year old teenager). On a normal day, I try to help Anna with activities including, among others, making larger grocery shopping trips (as she doesn’t have a drivers’ licence), in organising and lodging formal paperwork (i.e. NFZ associated applications related to buying Jerzy medical devices), or taking them on small trips, so they can, for a moment, forget about the issues of day to day life.

Additionally, from Autumn 2011 I also perform the role of a coordinator of one of the volunteer
cholog, która opiekuje się wolontariatem. Uczestniczę w comiesięcznych spotkaniach koordynatorów, podczas których omawiamy bieżące kwestie związane z wolontariatem oraz naszymi podopiecznymi, a także, w miarę możliwości, staramy się organizować spotkania w ramach naszej małej grupy.

“Wzniosłe uczucia nie decydują ani o moralności, ani o świętości osób(...)” (KKK 1768), natomiast nasze uczynki mogą wnieść wiele dobra w życie innych ludzi. Dla mnie wolontariat jest dawaniem siebie za darmo. To bezinteresowna milość do drugiego człowieka, przejawiająca się w najdrobniejszych gestach. Każdy z nas otrzymał jakieś łaski, talenty, które powinniśmy pielęgnować i dzielić się nimi z innymi, a wtedy dar naszego życia jest w pełni wykorzystany.

Myślę, że w każdym z nas drzemie iskierka, która może rozeświecić czyjeś życie. To co najlepszego możemy zrobić jako wolontariusze, to po prostu być przy kimś. Nierzad nie trzeba nawet nic mówić, nic nadzwyczajnego robić, natomiast sama obecność oraz szczerza chęć dzielenia trudów dnia codziennego, jest najpiękniejszym darem jaki możemy ofiarować drugiemu człowiekowi.

W dawaniu siebie innym odnajduję mój wewnętrzny spokój. W świecie pędzącym tak szybko do przodu moment, w którym się zatrzymuję by spotkać się z drugim człowiekiem, jest dla mnie chwilą wytycznienia i szczerej radości. Wolontariat jest dla mnie również sposobem na dobre spożytkowanie energii jaką w sobie posiadam. Być może zabrzmii to nieco egoistycznie, jednak ogromna potrzeba dawania się i czucia się potrzebną nie pozwoliłyby mi na zobojętnienie wobec krzywdy drugiego człowieka. Nie raz wychodząc z wizyty u Jerzy miałam wrażenie, że ta rodzina jest bardziej potrzebna mi, niż ja im... :)

In giving my time to others, I have found my inner peace. In a fast-paced world, the moment in which we stop to meet with another person is a time of respite and sincere joy. Volunteer work is also a good place for me to channel my energy. This may sound egoistic, however my great need to help by giving my time and in feeling needed, does not allow me to be passive in the face of another person's suffering. I have often thought after returning home following a visit with Jerzy that I need this family more than they need me. :)
Serbian Stories by

Minja Lazareski
Sandra Jereminov
Marina Nikolić
Sunčica Milićević
Miljana Dinčić
SERBIA

POPULATION:
Around 6 Million

ASSOCIATION/UMBRELLA ORGANISATIONS FOR HPC VOLUNTEERS:
None. Only BELhospice volunteer organization in Serbia

NUMBER OF HPC VOLUNTEERS (2019):
50 for adults, 0 for children

NUMBER OF HPC VOLUNTEER TEAMS (2019):
1 for adults

WHERE DO VOLUNTEERS WORK?
The patient’s home, day care and fundraising.

IN WHICH FIELDS DO VOLUNTEERS WORK?
Being with the patient and his/her family, Helping in Day Care in every activity, Fundraising, PR, board members, Bereavement support. In 2019 hpc volunteers for adults spent 550 hrs.

HOW ARE HPC VOLUNTEERS IN THIS COUNTRY TRAINED?
Serbia has a curriculum of 24 hrs learning (theory and sharing) and 10 hrs practice.
What is my role as a volunteer?

My role in working for BELhospice center is exactly what I was hoping it would be. I have absolute freedom in choosing what kind of work I want to do, whether it is working directly with patients or taking part in fundraising, and I still try to do both, depending on my circumstances.

My focus is the patients and what I can do for them. That could be visited in their homes, but above everything else, warm conversations that can last for a couple of hours. The time just flies by without us even noticing, as each visit feels incredibly special. On the day of the visit, (or any other day), we are at their disposal, in case they need us to do some shopping for them, get their medicine, take them to doctors appointments or just take a walk together. Volunteers are there for the patients to replace them in doing all those things that patients cannot do for themselves. In a way, we become like a family and our goal (and my personal goal) is to help them, so they never feel weak, dependent, or unworthy due to their medical condition. They are treated as individuals, with their own character and dignity, that stays with them even when their body starts failing them. Therefore, the conversations with them are always conversations between two equal persons, and they feel that. That is the magic of volunteering.

Apart from this side of volunteering and palliative care, there is also this fear that I will make a mistake or get too attached and suffer. I wouldn’t be entirely honest if I said I did not become attached to Milica, a wonderful elderly lady I regularly visit. I would also be dishonest if I said this work is...

Šta za mene znači biti volonter?

Ono šta za mene volontiranje za BELhospice centar znači je nešto što se teško može staviti u reči. To je pre svega jedan otkriveni svet pun svega onoga što je najlepše u ljudskom rodu. Dobrota bez očekivanja, svuda oko mene. To je prvi utisak, to je ono odakle polazimo, tj ono što vidim kod ostalih volontera i zaposlenih lica.

Ono što zatičem u radu sa korisnicima centra je neizmerna ljubav i iščekivanje naših poseta njima, pre svega razgovora sa nama, više nego neke praktične usluge. I u tome leži sve ono što je za mene veliko, i što zasta sam želela od volontiranja. Napomenula bih samo, da ja mnogo više dobijem nego što dam. Da od korisnika dobijem toliko mudrosti i priča prepričanih u razgovoru, da dobijem stisak ruke, nasmejane oči, nažal dečijim, čistom radovanju. Da otkrivam na taj način čitave svetove u ljudima koje sam mogla da nikada ne upoznam. Naravno da uz sve što sam navela dobijam i određenu tugu svaki put kada bi se čula neka loša vest. Ipak takse trenutke tuge ne mogu meriti sa tim koliko ima trenutaka sreće, i onda zaista vredi u ovo se upustiti. Kako je to samo Dostojevski znao da sroči: „Lepota će spasiti ovaj svet!”

There is nothing like walking down her street and seeing her waiting and smiling at me from her balcony. After that we usually just sit and chat for a while, make jokes or simply read, and it feels just natural and nice. Milica can have a conversation on any topic, she is aware of everything and accepts the flow of life and time in the best way possible.

What does volunteering mean to me?

Volunteering in BELhospice means so much to me that I can’t put it into words. It is like a newly found world of everything that is most beautiful about humankind. Kindness without any expectations all around me. That is my first impression, and that is what I see at the core of volunteers’ and employees’ work.

What I found in the work with patients in the center is endless love. I can see they are looking forward to our meetings and our conversations (even more than to some practical help). That is what I think is great about volunteering and that is what I was expecting from it. I must emphasize that I get back even more than I give. I hear so much wisdom and stories, I get a thankful handshake, I see smiling eyes and childlike joy. I am discovering worlds in these people that I normally would not have a chance to meet. Of course, there is always sadness when I hear bad news, but moments of sadness cannot even be compared to moments of happiness that make it so worthy to get yourself into this kind of work. As Dostoevsky wisely put it: “Beauty will save the world.”
Volunteering is, or should be, everyone’s intellectual, spiritual, and emotional need, because voluntarism grows from this need and willingness to better ourselves and our surroundings. I believe that the sum of little efforts we make daily, creates a stable base for general progress of our species.

Volunteering in BELhospice is somewhat specific. More and more people are facing incurable diseases. Our patients face the certainty of near end, and what is worse, an inevitable sense of powerlessness when it comes to spending the time they have left in a dignified way. On the other hand, their loved ones often feel paralyzed in their feeling of inadequacy and inability to give them appropriate care. Our role is to join our forces to fill that gap and overcome the horrifying feeling of helplessness. This task is extremely complex and to complete it we need not only the
nastojanja onih koji učestvuju u radu Hospisa već svih onih koji su spremni da gaje dobročinstvo.

Rad sa našim pacijentima zahteva građenje takve uzajamnosti koja podjednako oplemenjuje naš i njihov život. Pružanje pomoći drugima nije moguće pretočiti u neki univerzalni obrazac jer ta aktivnost nije jednosmerna i ne zavisi samo od nas. Pružanje pomoći je neprekidni proces usklađivanja naših dobrih namera i mogućnosti sa realnim potrebama, željama i voljom pacijenta da prihvati određeni vid pomoći. Drugima možete dati samo ono što su voljno spremla da prime i samo onoliko koliko ste vi spremni da primate od njih ono što nude. Tako gospođa Jelisaveta i ja podjednako delimo njeno iskustvo, talog radosti i strepni njenog staračkog doba kao i ne sasvim jasne iskre mog mladalačkog puta, jednog novog doba sa istom konačnom neizvesnošću. Njoj to pomaže da održi lepotu i vrednosti svog života, ma koliko da još traje, a meni da svoj život učinim boljim i svršishodnijim. Zato joj hvala.

efforts of everyone involved in the work of Belhospice, but also the help of all people ready to nurture charity.

Work with our patients demands developing such a level of mutuality that, eventually, enriches our and their life, equally. Giving help to others is not possible to define with some universal pattern, as this is never a one-way activity and doesn’t depend only on the giver. Giving help is a continuous process of aligning our good intentions and abilities with real needs, desires and will of the patient to accept a certain form of help. You can give to other people only what they are ready to willfully receive and just as much you can take in return. That way, Mrs Jelisaveta and I share her life experience, the joys and fears of her old age, just as much as we share still weak sparks surrounding the path of my youth, and of my equally uncertain future. It helps her keep beauty and value in her life, no matter how long it may last, and it makes my life so much better and more meaningful. And for that I am grateful to her.
BELhospice is a place where you can meet many wonderful people, from employees, who do their job with love, to amazing volunteers of all generations, and finally to incredible people we meet at their homes.

One of them is our Jelena, a great woman full of life, who never let her illness stop her from looking forward to every new day. Those days turn into months and months into years. We shared those years, the eight volunteers and all the employees of BELhospice. She had us and we had her, we had each other. Complete strangers became friends. We used to take walks along the river, paint, cook, watch TV shows, crochet, make hairdos, have coffees on the corner, share lives and pets, laugh and cry. Together we grew and learned about ourselves and others.

She let us into her life and became part of our (lives) and forever infected us with her optimism and her spirit. There were good days and there were bad days, but every moment was worth living. Jelena always knew we were there for her. She could get a doctor or a volunteer at any given moment if she needed anything. And sometimes, all you need is a loving voice, a voice of someone you trust, like she trusted us. And that is exactly what makes this story a happy one. Our support isn`t just about taking care of the physical needs of a patient – it is also about the person inside who wants to live and feel joy. And our Jelena knew so well how to do that.
Volunteering in the BELhospice Centre is a wonderful experience and I believe it should be part of everyone’s life. It brings a lot of joy and satisfaction, even though, from outside it may look exactly the opposite. I’ve become aware of that because people around me kept asking me why I am doing it.

I remember my training which was very well organized: what I found to be most valuable for me was the rich experience of other volunteers, that made me realize I will surely find my place there. At first, I assumed I would be helping with fundraising activities, however, gradually I found myself more and more drawn to working directly with patients.

Volunteers’ coordinator invited me to come to the Daily Care Centre (DCC) and these are my fondest memories. I would usually eagerly wait for the patients to come, and then we would spend hours doing different things such as taking long walks in the yard, playing games, painting, making jewelry, reading poetry, listening to their favorite music, or just having their hair cut and styled.
The nurses would do some light physical exercise with the patients, and they would share between themselves any useful advice or experience in relation to their medical condition. But what was most important to them – they would share mutual support.

There was always a sense of great atmosphere that you can rarely find even amongst healthy people, who are typically bad-tempered and always complaining about something. Our patients appreciated every minute of their life, and in their eyes, there was so much joy despite their painful physical conditions. “It will pass”, they would say. We would also talk to them about their pains, fears, and discomforts, but, funny enough, they were least interested in that sort of conversation. The reason for that was not that volunteers were not willing to listen to them, but because they were simply more interested in engaging in daily activities and planning for the next time. They were incredibly grateful for us being there and showing understanding. On the way home they would always say they had a great time and that they are looking forward to coming back. They loved DCC!

Exactly those words I would often hear from nice old lady Ljiljana whom I met in DCC. She invited
jmanje žali na svoje tegobe, željna je razgovora i druženja i pita me kako je u mom životu. Hrabro je prolazila sve analize i preglede kada sam joj bila pratnja do lekara pre operacije koja je bila samo jedna u nizu njene bolesti. Vreme nam proleći i ja uglavnom odlazim pre vesti, koje ona očekuje uveče.

Uvek me isprati uz osmeh i kaže: “Hvala dušo, ljubim te puno, znači mi tvoja podrška!” A ja joj odgovaram: “Hvala Vama!” I zaista tako i mislim. Jer ono što ja njoj pružam nije ništa u odnosu na ono što dobijam: zarazni osećaj da ste nekome potrebni, sjaj u očima i zvonak glas kada me dočeka i ispraća i saznanje da ste usrećili nekoga na nekoliko sati ne može biti davanje, već primanje pozitivnih vibracija i osećanja.

Upoznala sam ljude u DC koji više, na žalost, nisu sa nama. Ne želim mnogo da razmišljam o tome kako ću se osečati kada saznam da im se baka Ljiljana pridružila. Ali, ko zna, život nas često iznenadi. Ukoliko slučajno dođe moj red pre njenog, znam da ću imati jos jednog andela na zemlji koji će se moliti za mene kao za svoje dete, isto kao što cu ja to činiti za nju kada nas napusti.

me to visit her at her home and I accepted with great honor. She is my inspiration, and I admire the courage she shows in dealing with her illness. She doesn’t have any family left in this world, but she has a lot of friends and she has us, as she often points out. She often says we are like her children. She has her cat Žika that she loves dearly. When I go to visit her, I also buy some snacks for him and get her everything she needs. We talk about all kinds of things, and even though I want to know how she is doing, she just wants to chat, hang out and wants to know how I’m doing. She bravely went through all the medical procedures and I accompanied her through check ups preceding her surgery. Time with her usually flies and I leave just before her evening news.

She always sees me out with a smile and says: “Thank you my dear, your support means a lot!”. In return, I thank her, and I really mean it, because what I give to her is nothing compared to what I get: her shining eyes and cheerful voice, the amazing feeling of being needed and knowing you made somebody happy for a few hours – all that is receiving the good vibes rather than giving.

I met people in DCC, people who are no longer with us. I don’t want to think too much about how I am going to feel when Ljiljana joins them. But who knows, life often surprises us. If by any chance my turn comes before hers, I know I will have an angel on Earth who will pray for me the same way she would pray for her own child. I know I will pray for her when she leaves us.
Za sve vas koji niste (nažalost) imali priliku da upoznate Sonju, volela bih da vam kazem neke stvari o njoj.

Sonja ima 17 godina, nepokretna je i leči se od tumora na hipofizi i trenutno je u fazi intenzivnog lečenja, što obuhvata redovna zračenja i hemoterapije. Međutim iako je odvojena od svoje porodice, prijatelja i okruženja na koje je navikla, iako je ograničena i potpuno zavisi od drugih, Sonja je jedan pravi borac.

Kada se javila BELhospisu, saznali smo da ima veliku želju da nastavi da uči engleski. I uči ga, svake nedelje, po dva sata, bez pauze, bez izgova, bez kukanja i izigavanja žrtve. I ne samo da se trudi, ona uspeva u tome. Iz nedelje u nedelju sve više napreduje i daje sve od sebe. Čita knjige na engleskom, gleda serije, uči pesme napamet, traži načine da razgovara sa ljudima na engleskom. Ona je jedna mlada osoba koja jednostavno ne želi da odustane od sebe i da prestane da radi na sebi, iako ne zna kakav će

I would like to say a few words about Sonja, to all of you who (unfortunately) haven’t got a chance to meet her.

Sonja is seventeen and has a tumor of the pituitary gland and she is receiving treatment for pituitary gland tumor. She cannot move and is currently undergoing intense treatment, including regular radiation and chemotherapy. However, even though she is away from her family, friends, and her familiar environment, and despite her condition and total dependence on other people, Sonja is a real fighter.

When she first got in touch with BELhospice, we found out she has a great desire to continue learning English. And she does – every Sunday, for two hours, without breaks, excuses, or self-pity. She not only tries, but she succeeds. Sunday after Sunday, she is making progress and doing her best. She reads books in English, watches TV shows, learns songs by heart, and looks for ways to talk to people in English. She is a young person who simply refuses to give up on herself and doesn’t stop working on self-improvement, even though she doesn’t know what will be the outcome of her illness, and what awaits her in the future.

For all of you who don’t know her, I hope you will get a chance to meet her, because this young person is such a source of inspiration for me: every Sunday she waits for me, smiling and ready to study and then two hours later, she sees me off, tired, but content. Without excuses, she pushes her boundaries daily and teaches us what passion and desire for learning and life itself can bring out of us.
biti ishod njene bolesti i sta je čeka u budućnosti.

Za sve vas koji je ne poznajete, nadam se da ćete dobiti priliku, jer je ova mlada osoba meni izvor inspiracije svake nedelje kad me nasmijana i orna za učenje dočeka, i umorna ali zadovoljna isprati. Bez ikakvih opravdanja i razloga za odustajanje, ona svakodnevno pomera svoje granice i uči nas šta strast i želja za znanjem i samim životom mogu da izvuku iz nas.


Znam da nam je svima u životu ponekad teško i da sve deluje uzaludno i da je ponekad teško naći svrhu, ali molim vas da samo na trenutak probate da zamislite tu devojku, koja i pored svih svojih problema i izazova svakog dana iznova nalazi motivaciju i ogromnu želju za životom, i to ne za pukim životom, već i za napredovanjem. Nadam se da će nam biti učitelj i izvor inspiracije još mnogo godina.

Due to my obligations at the faculty, I haven’t visited her for some time. Yesterday, I found out she is in the hospital, so we agreed to visit her there. I stayed with her for three hours. During those three hours, she was receiving chemotherapy, and believe it or not, she was studying. She was learning English. And not just faking it. She was totally into it, motivated and interested as always.

I am writing all this, because I am so impressed, even more than usual. I always try to see her as a healthy person, but today, for the first time I saw her in a hospital environment, and it was a bit of a challenge not to see her as one of the patients. But again, she demonstrated her strength. Without any issues, and, one would think, no obstacles, she studied for three hours, as if she had no worries in this world but to learn a foreign language.

I know sometimes it gets difficult for all of us, and sometimes, everything seems in vain, especially finding some purpose. I ask you to imagine this girl just for a moment, a girl who in spite of all her problems every day finds motivation and desire for life, and not only mere existence, but a life of meaning and progress. I hope she will be our teacher and source of inspiration for many years to come.
UK Stories by
Ruth Laidlaw
Georgie White
Catharine Browning
POPULATION:
Around 67 Million

ASSOCIATION/UMBRELLA ORGANISATIONS FOR HPC VOLUNTEERS:
AVSM (Association of HPC Volunteer Managers in UK) Promoting, innovating and developing best practice in the management of volunteers in palliative care. www.avsm.org.uk

Additionally there are umbrella organisations for hospice and palliative care. Hospice UK, https://www.hospiceuk.org/
Together for Short Lives (Children’s palliative care) https://www.togetherforshortlives.org.uk/
Scottish Partnership for Palliative Care, https://www.palliativecarescotland.org.uk/

NUMBER OF HPC VOLUNTEERS:
Estimated: 125,000 – 160,000 with economic value of £200 million

WHERE DO VOLUNTEERS WORK?
Patients’ and families’ home, inpatient hospices, day hospices, palliative care wards in hospitals, a small number of care homes.

IN WHICH FIELDS DO VOLUNTEERS WORK?
Being with patients and their families (practical, social and emotional support), bereavement support, administrative support, fundraising, charity shops, PR, board members.

HOW ARE HPC VOLUNTEERS IN THIS COUNTRY TRAINED?
Volunteers are trained by the hpc organisation where they work. Volunteers receive introductory, role specific and ongoing training and support.
My name is Ruth and along with over 600 others I volunteer at St Columba’s Hospice. I volunteer as part of a partnership and that partner is my beautiful eight year old Labrador cross Golden Retriever named Yassie.

I became a volunteer at the Hospice through the Canine Concern Trust Scotland. Through their association with St Columba’s Hospice I was lucky enough to be selected as one of the first Therapet volunteers at the Hospice. Yassie’s temperament and disposition were assessed before she was deemed suitable for this type of work as it is vital that the dogs are calm, friendly, relaxed and comfortable in the Hospice environment.

Our fortnightly visits take us both on to the wards and to the day hospice and in short I talk to the patients and Yassie is made a fuss of, but it is also so much more than that.

Unsurprisingly the conversations I have, particularly with the patients on the ward, are dog related. I usually begin by telling them a little about Yassie and what she does but we very often move on to chatting about current or previous pets they’ve had. When I witness this I can see just how important animals are to so many people. Many patients really stick in my mind as great dog lovers and for them, Yassie’s visits are all the more valued. It is especially rewarding when some patients specifically request a visit from us.

I believe that having a dog in the room even for a brief time gives the patient a little bit of light relief; a distraction from the normal routine.
and for some, great joy - and this brings me such pleasure.

Our visits to the day hospice are a little different in so far as we get to see some people on a regular basis and as a result have the opportunity to get to really get to know them. In this environment we can sit with them and other volunteers as a group and enjoy talking to, or about, the dog but the conversation is often wider than this. Having Yassie with me gives me more confidence and an opening into building a friendship with the patients over time.

I know from comments I’ve received that Yassie’s visits are looked forward to and it’s noticed when we’ve been absent which reinforces the good that her visits are doing. It can be surprising how the conversations can develop from an opportunity to stroke the dog. On one occasion a seemingly shy lady was stroking Yassie and I asked her if she had a dog. She opened right up and told me all about her and her husband’s extensive experience with dogs and I was able to learn so much from her. It was a lovely experience to share with her.

It’s not just the patients that seem to enjoy and benefit from Yassie’s visits, the staff and other volunteers always greet her with great enthusiasm and in many cases will stop for a few minutes to stroke her and talk to us. I get the feeling that they feel a little guilty but I reassure them as I believe the Therapets benefit all who encounter them.

I enjoy meeting so many people through my volunteering and despite the patients’ circumstances Yassie and I are met with friendliness, interest and appreciation which brings me back time and again.
My name is Georgie White, and I work as a volunteer at Mountbatten on the Isle of Wight, England. (It provides expert care and support to anyone on the Isle of Wight who is facing death, dying and bereavement.) It is a very remarkable and unique organisation of which I feel passionate about.

When I retired, I immediately thought of Mountbatten having visited friends there over the years. My main drive was the appreciation of how privileged I am to have my good health, and I wanted to give something back to society.

In this modern-day world, no individual can change the tragic events that are happening all around us, but in our small way if we can help someone, somehow, that is what life should be about. I volunteered at Mountbatten, open minded where I would be able to help. My first role, one that still remains, is that of a ward receptionist, meeting and greeting people. This is often the very first point of contact, so I think it is important to welcome and make everyone comfortable, at ease, to be approachable and always helpful. I always keep an eye out when anyone leaves to make sure they do not look distressed. I will always ask them if they need to sit down for a moment or even talk to me or a nurse.

Mountbatten Policy is not only just for the patients, but for everyone involved. Whether it be family, friend or associate, we care and support.

Five years ago, I trained as a Bereavement Support Volunteer Worker for the Psychological Service Department. I take this role very seriously and it is often a challenge. I am genuinely interested in people. I work from my heart, and my own life experiences, and it is a responsible duty working with all the emotion and grief that I encounter. Working is usually six sessions, on a one to one basis with the bereaved. I find this work so interesting and rewarding. The key is to listen and let them know they are heard and understood.
The grieving client is perhaps at their most vulnerable time of their life, suffering pitts of despair. In the session, there is time for them to release their fears, offload their darkest secrets and even hidden issues from the past, their cocktail of emotions.

I feel honoured they have gained trust in me and can confide. It is soul searching for them and it is rewarding to see a client grow in acceptance and gain some hope. Whilst life will never be the same, their life must go on. Invariably they need permission to even think this way, but by gentle discussion and reassurance they can form this opinion by themselves.

Some cases can be extremely complex and take many sessions to combat, before grief can be tackled, but eventually we always get there.

Knowing in some small way I have helped someone at a devastating time in their life is fulfilling for me.

I also help run a monthly Bereavement Group, which is more like a self-help group with various topics discussed.

Quarterly, the Hospice provides a Memorial Service in our Chapel, and our Chaplin gives a lovely service for the bereaved to say another goodbye. I help out at this event and afterwards we have a coffee and a chat for those who attend.

Another one of my involvements is with the School Project. Where groups of eleven-year olds are shown around the ward and our John Cheverton Centre, explaining what services are provided.

It is hard to put into words just how fulfilling being a volunteer makes me feel. Without exception, every time I walk through the entrance to the Mountbatten. I still get the same feeling I felt the very first time I entered. The hospice, in the work they do, exudes an atmosphere of care, positivity and love.

The staff are wonderful in the work they do and are constantly thanking us volunteers for all the time we give. I personally feel very valued and appreciated and am working with like minded people. It is such a worthwhile cause.

Volunteering and helping people puts life’s small worries into perspective and as I said before I truly appreciate life and count my blessings.
“Volunteers come in all shapes and sizes” said the Volunteers’ Manager beaming at me and brandishing a cartoon of two seemingly unlikely volunteers - the one appeared to be an elderly dowager duchess whilst the other was a very young and trendy member of a punk band! And how right she was. There is a place in volunteering for everyone, each bringing a variety of motivations, talents and experience.

Like so many of the volunteers at the Wisdom Hospice my reason for applying was in gratitude for the wonderful care given to my mother in law during the final weeks of her illness. I started out 20 years or so ago as a volunteer driver. Patients are picked up at home and driven to the hospice or to a clinic appointment and the driver’s task is to make the journey as comfortable and as enjoyable as possible.

Some years later I helped in the day hospice serving meals, chatting to patients and taking part in the many activities provided such as artwork, quizzes, and other forms of entertainment.

Now I am a member of the spiritual care team which is a very special privilege. Our role is to listen sympathetically and to offer a friendly welcome to all the patients and their families at the hospice. It is natural that people arrive with
feelings of anxiety and uncertainty, and we try to help by greeting them and giving them reassurance. Each day we go on the ward to provide whatever support we can offer. Sometimes a patient may like to talk or maybe express a worry. At other times they may enjoy a chat about the family, the grandchildren or events in their lives. Photographs of celebrations such as weddings can bring back many happy memories as do the pictures of loved pets. If requested I can give communion or offer a prayer with the patient. The staff are very glad to arrange for a visit from a member of the clergy providing for all spiritual needs. We always try to be a peaceful presence at the bedside.

Quite often family members and visitors feel able to share their concerns with us while relaxing with a cup of tea or a coffee in the day room. Frequently people tell us what a relief it is to have the wonderful care provided by all the staff here at the hospice which is such a calm and tranquil environment.

The multifaith room offers a quiet space for patients and their families and each week we hold an ecumenical service at which everyone is welcome. This is attended by Day Hospice patients as well as those on the ward and it is particularly popular because sometimes people are unable to attend their own churches and we find the communal prayer and music provide a highlight in the week. We also have a book in which people can ask for prayers or write a tribute in memory of a loved one who has died.

The spiritual care volunteers received marvelous support and encouragement from the many different teams of professionals in the hospice, as well as enjoying the friendship of fellow volunteers. My role is such a rewarding one in every way. It is personally most enriching, and I hope, is of value to our local community, as well as society at large.
The Colourful Life of Volunteering in Europe
BROCHURE 0.2
We would like to thank everyone who has been involved with this project in any way.

Firstly, we would like to thank each and every volunteer who took the time to write their story, to share their experiences so openly and to give their permission for these to be published here. The name of each volunteer is given at the beginning of their story and so these are not listed again here.

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