



NEWSLETTER – March 2014

From the Regions

Dear Volunteers - a warm and friendly greeting to you all!

Welcome to the first Befrienders Worldwide newsletter of 2014. It has been a while since our last communication – be rest assured much has been going on, as you will see by the extensive news from across the regions. Thank you very much to all of you that contributed. Don't worry if your centre hasn't been include in this issue, the newsletter will now be compiled at least twice a year so there will be plenty of opportunities to share your news! Also, why not make use of the member pages for your centre on the Befrienders Worldwide intranet - it's the perfect way to introduce yourselves to the wider network and share your experiences. Feel free to share any difficulties too – the strength of our network is in supporting each other to find solutions and further develop the emotional support services that we provide!

As well as connecting with each other, the intranet provides access to the Befrienders Worldwide training material, which so far covers 12 key areas of Listening Skills. We have found the material to be very valuable, finding that it delves into areas that hitherto we have not considered. It encourages us to look deep into ourselves and our own 'prejudices'. It helps explores our thoughts regarding 'callers with whom we have difficulties' and the issues we may face with 'the long-term caller'. Included in this issue is a note from the Befrienders Worldwide Training Taskforce. They would very much welcome feedback on any material that you may use and are especially keen to hear about any new training areas that you would like them to consider in the future.

This could certainly be an open forum subject to discuss in our next BW Newsletter! In fact that is why a newsletter is so important - it is a means of communicating, connecting and sharing our news, views and feelings!

Finally, an extra special welcome to new members in our network: Befriender Uganda, Sourire de Reda in Morocco and Livslinien in Denmark – we look forward to sharing and learning from you!

Until our next issue, keep safe!

The Editorial Team – Befrienders Worldwide Regional Coordinators

'Empathy is an extraordinary focused type of kindness. To have empathy is to feel with another person. I know that no one can feel exactly as someone else does at any given moment, especially when that other person is in pain, or acting aggressively or simply not communicating. Yet even when such obstacles are present, we can still empathize – feel with that other person. And we can be kind.'

Extract from the book 'Simple Steps' by Dr. Arthur Calandro

Let's begin with an event that was welcomed by Sri Lanka Sumithrayo volunteers:

16th Befrienders India Conference hosted by Lifeline Kolkata

29th November - 2nd December 2013

The theme of the conference was Exchange – Learn – Grow.

Sumaitri, Delhi, Roshni, Hyderabad, Pratheeksha, Kerala, Saath, Ahmedabad, Maithri, Kochi, Sneha, Chennai, Samaritans Mumbai, Thanal Kerala, Jeevan Jamshedpur and of course Lifeline Kolkata participated in the conference.

10 volunteers from Sri Lanka Sumithrayo had the pleasure of attending. Below is a brief description:

“On our arrival we were welcomed with open arms and radiant smiles! It was the start of an amazingly thought out conference where we shared, learnt and grew! Each centre presented a chosen topic and answered questions raised. Some of the topics were:

- Need for connectivity between centres, sharing ideas and best practices.
- Creating a support group for survivors of suicide – families that have had a member commit suicide. Challenges in initiating this support group.
- Is there a need for sensitizing Befrienders towards trans-genders, trans-sexual & eunuchs? Do they form a special need category?
- Training – upgrading and adopting new methods. Training Manual – Is there a need to continuously update, upgrade & keep it relevant to changing times? Think global, act local? Is there a synergy to be achieved by sharing resources?

The last topic is certainly food for thought.

We left the conference with a spring in our steps! Being inspired and motivated does that!”

“In my book the most important thing in life are health, time and relationships. But the first two would be worth very little without the third.”

Tanya Wheway

East Asia Region–Pornthip

Japan

Have four member centres and two new centres (Iwate and Aichi), which are planning to apply for membership of Befrienders Worldwide. Osaka is the oldest Befrienders Worldwide centre in Japan, but after moving of the late Mr. Akira Nishihara and Mrs. Yukiko Nishihara to Tokyo, the Tokyo centre has become the leading and largest centre of Befrienders Japan. Miyazaki, Kumano, Aichi and Iwate centres were opened, supported and all trained by Tokyo training members. Tokyo, Osaka and Miyazaki centres are running bereavement support groups.

Malaysia

Have a very strong operational networking system and good support from the government. The Kota Kinabaru branch has a very good relationship with the media. When I visited them last October, they had a good coverage in the local newspaper.

The national body provides very strong support to each centre and there is strong collaboration between centres, they help each other very well.

Befrienders Seremban

Befrienders celebrated its 8th anniversary with a Charity Dinner on 18 January 2014. President of The National Council of Befrienders Malaysia, Gangadara Sinnadurai officiated at the event, which was attended by community leaders and about 600 people. The Chairman of Befrienders Seremban, Kelvin Ong, conveyed that Seremban Befrienders plans to develop its outreach services to offer emotional support to all sectors of the community, especially groups at high risk of suicide.

Singapore

Is a very strong organization, partly supported financially by the Community Chest, which is the fundraising division of the National Council of Social Service. Besides a 24-hour hotline manned by volunteers, SOS provides an email befriending service and other professional services including counselling, a bereavement support group, an outreach programme for survivors, consultation, training and community outreach. Also they appear first, when Google is used to search suicide methods.

Hong Kong

There are 2 centres. The Samaritans is multilingual while Suicide Prevention Services is a Chinese speaking centre. One success story from The Samaritans is a Youth Suicide Peer Support Programme, which has been conducted for secondary school students. The ex-Director of The Samaritans is helping to set up Samaritans Macau.

Re-structuring

Following re-structuring of the organization, The Board of Directors held its first meeting in January.

Services: Our hotline and e-mails services, in Chinese and English, continue to be busy. Our “People Bereaved by Suicide” meetings are held monthly.

The first training course for potential volunteers took place January/February, with PVs starting their buddying programmes as I write. The second training programme is scheduled for the early summer, and the third later in the year. We are attempting to involve lots of our volunteers as part of our on-going training.

Outreach: Continues to be a large part of our work. During recent months we have accepted invitations from a wide range of educational, social and corporate organizations for talks and workshops.

YSPSP: The end of February saw the graduation ceremony for our sixth cohort of students. We are currently reviewing the structure and target audience of our youth programme, in-line with changing needs and developments. As part of this we are planning a press conference towards the end of March.

International Survivors of Suicide Day 2013: was organised by Samaritans on November 23, at a central location in Hong Kong. We plan to make this an annual event.

Community Awareness: In liaison with the Marine Police and PolyU Speed students, a banner has been placed on the Tsing Yi Bridge displaying the hotline numbers of the three suicide prevention organizations in Hong Kong. According to the Police, the number of potential suicides has decreased.

Donations: We are very grateful for continuing support from the people of Hong Kong: from a local music group to social clubs, from individuals to large organizations, their generosity is touching. Many donors wish to remain anonymous. As well as donations, the pro bono support we receive is undeniably invaluable.

Fortieth Anniversary: We are looking to mark this occasion, in particular by raising our profile in the community. We aim to publicize our hotline number in a number of ways.

Health and Safety: As part of our plan to update practices and procedures, our Office Manager has just completed a First Aid Course.

Social Events: Both the cocktail party in January and the Spring Dinner in February attracted a lot of volunteers and proved most enjoyable. A programme of activities of various kinds, open to all volunteers, was launched at the start of 2014.

Thailand

Bangkok recently received support from Rotary International in order to promote suicide prevention awareness among Thai society through various projects over 3 years.

Chiang Mai is running a trial period of appointed volunteers responding to calls at home. This is due to volunteers living in widespread areas.

“The three great essentials of happiness are: something to do, someone to love and something to hope for.”

Abraham Lincoln

News Flash!!

IASP (International Association for Suicide Prevention)

September 10th 2014 - World Suicide Prevention Day

The theme this year is:

SUICIDE PREVENTION: ONE WORLD CONNECTED.

For more details go to the IASP website (www.iasp.info) as information will be updated periodically

Africa Region–Merab

Befriender Uganda - Ms Jane Nampijja introduces one of the newest Befrienders Worldwide centers

As far back in 2008, I was concerned by the very many people who were taking their lives in Uganda. I discussed this widely and it was noted that most people do not have any one to share their problems with because of lack of confidentiality and trust. So many try to go through the hard times individually and those that fail, look at suicide as an escape. Curious to validate this theory, I carried out an experiment involving an anonymous call line, which resulted in evidence that people would like to talk, especially when assured of confidentiality.

A year later a pilot office was set up in my garage at home with a few volunteers. The office was meant for education purposes, especially among high school students. In 2009, Professor Brian Mishara, now one of the Befrienders Worldwide Trustees, was in Uganda training health workers on how to assess suicide risk and on how to operate a crisis helpline. I was lucky to attend this training together with some of the volunteers. It is this training that inspired Befriender Uganda to later formalize operations and seek to set up a Crisis Helpline. In October 2011, Angels for Angels made a donation towards the installation of a helpline. In January 2012, Makerere University's Department of Psychiatry, located at Old Mulago hospital, offered Befriender Uganda office space where we are currently housed. Our helpline is a toll free line that operates 5 days a week, 8 hours each day. With funds from individual donations, the helpline benefits at least 60 people per month, with most callers coming from Kampala's slum areas.

During a symposium in Quebec in 2012, I learnt about a worldwide organization for helplines. I later learnt about Befrienders Worldwide and the possibility of joining the network. We put in our application to join after meeting with the Regional Coordinator for Africa. Following support and encouragement to join Befrienders Worldwide, we are now happy and looking forward to learning and sharing with all the other centers in the network.

Befrienders South Africa (BSA)

A highlight from 2013 was Befrienders South Africa hosting an enjoyable and informative 2-day National Conference on 19th and 20th September 2013 at the Bloemfontein Centre. Delegates from all the South Africa centres: Bloemfontein, Botshabelo, Setshabelo and Uitenhage attended the sessions and the BSA Annual General Meeting was also carried out. An insightful session on *Contentment* was presented by Dr. Bettie Luttig, the National Executive Committee and Free State Regional Committee Chairperson. The volunteers received basic information on a number of relevant topics including Befriender volunteer training and a discussion on challenges that the Befriender Directors face. In addition to befriending, the South African Befriender Centres also carry out workshops and create awareness on various issues of concern and participate in relevant campaigns and activities such as the International Suicide Prevention Day and 16 Days of Activism Against Gender violence, which were marked in South Africa.

Zimbabwe Befrienders – Reflecting on 50 years of the Bulawayo Centre

The Bulawayo Centre continues to offer a befriending service, despite several challenges, including limited manpower. The other centres established in the country, in Harare, Mutare and Gweru, have succumbed to various challenges. This is because Zimbabwe has continued to experience economic trauma for a very long time. This naturally results in worry and anxiety about tomorrow and many organizations have been facing acute financial difficulty. At the Bulawayo Centre, the few active members have proved that it is not in numbers, but the level of commitment demonstrated by members who have taken on a daily duty.

There have been many areas of co-operation with the Befrienders Worldwide central office, of which Twinning stands out. Bulawayo has directly benefited from this activity, managing an exchange program with our twin Sligo (Samaritans UK). Two of our members visited them and we hosted one member from their branch. This co-operation also saw Sligo give financial support to the centre at a point when the country was experiencing hyper-inflation. Some of the resources were used to revive Gweru branch, though unfortunately it did not take off. Over the years, our branch has also supported other new welfare organizations with accommodation, as the facility has adequate space. This good will was extended to Matabeleland Aids, Marriage Guidance, Contact Family Counseling and Child-line. The level of our networking with them has been impressive in the area of training. As we celebrate 50 years of operation, we look forward to closer networking with Befrienders Worldwide.

Samaritans Kenya

2013 was a busy year for Samaritans Kenya, with a number of activities. The major highlights were the marking of International Suicide Prevention Day 2013 together with a number of youth groups, under the umbrella of Ghetto Foundation, which seeks to rehabilitate and empower youth in the area, most of whom have been involved in crime, drugs and other socially unacceptable lifestyles. It was a colorful event held at Mathare slum in Nairobi with the theme 'Stigma: A Major Barrier to Suicide Prevention'. Samaritans Kenya marked the day with the aim of raising awareness and educating participants on suicide and related topics, including depression. It was also a chance to give hope to the youth, most of who are struggling to lead more acceptable lives and struggling for acceptance in the wider society.

During the event there was a symbolic lighting of four candles in memory of those who have lost their lives to suicide and in solidarity to those who have lost loved ones through suicide. A moment of silence was observed for the same. The Befrienders Worldwide Africa Regional Coordinator noted that the Kenya launch of the day was also the African regional launch. Mr. James Karuru, a counselling psychologist, a motivational speaker and volunteer with Samaritans Kenya, used practical illustrations to challenge the youth to realize their potential and not be limited by how other people view them. He also had a message on accepting one's self and moving towards self-development.

Befrienders Mauritius

Befrienders Mauritius celebrated its 18th year of existence in November 2013. Apart from providing emotional support through active listening, we do outreach programs including “Awareness Campaigns” on suicide prevention in educational institutions, community centres and social groups, as well as talks to youth leaders, family support officers and prison officers. We also attend to prisoners and visit elderly peoples in residential homes.

On 30 & 31 August 2013, Befrienders Mauritius participated in the “Salon des ONGs” held at Mont Lubin – Rodrigues Island. Befrienders Mauritius & Befrienders Rodrigues were on the same platform. It was a very fruitful experience. During a meeting with the Social Security Commissioner of Rodrigues and Befrienders Rodrigues, we talked about our mode of operation. The Secretary of Befrienders Rodrigues volunteered at Befrienders Mauritius during her stay in Mauritius. We also had the visit of Mrs Marie Claude Jolicoeur, President of Befrienders Rodrigues in Mauritius last year.

To celebrate “World Suicide Prevention Day” on 14 September 2013, Befrienders Mauritius organized several activities. We carried out an awareness campaign through a ‘passive walk’ from the Farmers Service Centre – Goodlands to Sharma Jugdambi State Secondary School Gymnasium, where there was an exhibition on Suicide Prevention.

In April we have our training program for new volunteers. We also work with representatives of different economic sectors and social groups, thus leaving no stone unturned.

“The miracle is not that we do this work but that we are happy to do it”

Mother Teresa

European Region –Tanja

Spain

In November 2012 Samaritans in Spain elected a new President with an inspirational vision - a vision which has led us from a point of poverty to financial security that has allowed us to expand our service and put plans in place for much greater development. On March 1 2014 we celebrate the first anniversary of opening of our multipurpose centre, which offers a charity shop, listening centre, training/meetings room and a drop-in centre. Our contact rate has trebled and we are able to help so many more people. Have a look at our website and our Annual Report 2013 to see what a remarkable year it has been. The shop has proved and is proving an asset for those who need our services as they can come in and talk to us without feeling the world is seeing them.

France

SOS Help, Paris, France, held its annual Winter Party at a member's home on Sunday afternoon 16th February. It was an opportunity for the volunteers and family to gather for an afternoon of food, drink and conviviality. Each member contributed a favorite food to share with others which provided a delicious assortment from which to choose from the buffet table. Of course, being France, there was ample wine.

SOS Help, Paris, France, conducts two book sale fundraisers twice yearly (Autumn and Spring). English paper-back books in good condition are sold for €1 each. The books are donated by individuals throughout the Paris community. In addition to the books, home-made baked goods and other food items are offered for sale. The book sale is held on a Sunday afternoon, 12-16h00, on the premises offered at no expense by a local English-speaking church or a commercial enterprise. The two book sales raise around 8,000 Euros annually toward the operating expenses for SOS Help. More information can be found at the website "Events" section:<http://www.soshelpline.org>

Serbia

During 2013 the center was involved in several projects. The most important one was the role of volunteers in learning about human rights. Volunteers of our center trained 30 teachers and 10 young volunteers aged 13 – 18, how to educate students and peers about their rights and how to take a responsible role in the development of civil society. The project was realized in several countries in the Balkan region. After great experiences from last year, we applied with the same partners again for a new project regarding the role of volunteers in the reduction of school violence. Such projects help to raise awareness about voluntary work and their role in the promotion of psychological well-being.

Poland

We will celebrate the 40th Anniversary of The OLSZTYNSKI TELEFON ZAUFANIA "ANONIMOWY PRZYJACIEL" (Telephone of Confidence of Olsztyn Anonymous Friend) 26-28 September 2014.

The first duty was on the 29th Oct 1974. We plan the conference in Sept because it is quite warm and nice by our lakes and woods.

We heartily welcome you, the volunteers of Befrienders Worldwide, to our conference.

We are still very energetic and full of new ideas:

We plan with local authorities (The President of Olsztyn supports us) to put in the City of Olsztyn, a bench of the "Anonymous Friend". There will be two seats for two strangers to encourage them to talk, including: listening, empathy and befriending. Beside it will be information about OLSZTYNSKI TELEFON ZAUFANIA "ANONIMOWY PRZYJACIEL", the telephone numbers (19288 and +89/527-00-00) and our offer to help lonely, in despair with no hope, suicidal people.

There is still an advertisement on the roof of one of the buildings next to the town hall. We say that this says, everyday: 'Good morning Mr President-greetings from The Telephone of Confidence of Olsztyn'.

To improve our activities we have established: The University of Listening Therapy, which provides our 120 volunteers with professional lectures and seminars. We hand certificates to our volunteers to confirm that they are prepared for their duties in the best way.

We will present at the 40th Anniversary Conference, a film about our history, including that in March 1996, two of our volunteers: Andrzej Draminski and Andrzej Kuriowski were introduced as Polish Samaritans to The Queen ElizabethII during her official visit to Warsaw.

We cooperate with the Emergency Help Centre 112 - many calls are connected to us, especially people with special needs or with suicidal thoughts.

We work together with a kindergarten situated in Olsztyn, where we implement a programme called "Zippy's Friends", which talks to 5-7 year old children about their emotions. This is following the Befrienders International conference organised by Olsztynski TelefonZaufania "AnonimowyPrzyjaciel" in Stare Jablonki, near Olsztyn, in 1998.

We are currently supporting our dear friends in the City of Lviv in Ukraine during these difficult days. We send them many emails with our empathy. We want to send them money or some goods if they would need it. They replied that they are supporting people in Euromajdab, in the heart of their capital city, Kiev, through a hotline. All those brave people are waiting for the support of kind-hearted volunteers.

Cyprus

Cyprus Samaritans has been established since 1997. We have grown tremendously in the last 6 years in that we have trebled the numbers of volunteers to 46 active listeners and continue to grow with regular training. At present our listening hours are from 4.00pm to midnight with an email and face to face service.

Training takes place twice a year in the Paphos Centre and the Limassol Centre. Initial training is for 27 hours followed by a 6 month probationary period with a mentor. We follow the Befrienders Worldwide programme and usually have at least 10 new volunteers on each course.

Refresher Training takes place twice a year. This is a 6 hour day and includes internal issues for training and one outside speaker associated with the work we do.

We have an organizational structure headed by the Director and Deputy Director. There is a 10 person management committee with further groups for Outreach, I.T., Fundraising and Volunteer Care. There is a Samaritan coordinator for each group. The Leaders meet regularly to discuss caller care and our service. The mentors meet regularly with the new volunteers to assess progress before they receive their certificates.

Our Outreach team is responsible for promoting Cyprus Samaritans within Cyprus. For example, Samaritans visit the park to talk to migrant workers. A Samaritan leads the schools information within Paphos and Limassol, we have some contact with the central prison in Nicosia and hope to extend this further. Advertising is a main part of our outreach work. In the last year we have used billboards, local radio and TV as well as literature to promote the Samaritans in Cyprus.

We have three Charity shops staffed by volunteers, which fund our service.

We give talks to other groups, such as women's groups, Paphos Third Age, church groups and liaise regularly with other support groups in Cyprus.

We have an active IT group with an outside voluntary consultant. We have a computerized call logging and rota systems. We introduced a free phone number for our callers last year.

We opened our new listening centre and charity shop in Limassol at the end of 2013 and our aim is to open further centres across Cyprus. We plan to increase our hours for callers and to introduce a drop in centre.

'Joy has the power to open our hearts, remove fear, instil hope and foster healing'

Charlotte Davis Kasl

Australia-New Zealand-Oceania Region – Kevin

Subiaco, Launceston & Wellington (& branches) were established 40-50 years ago, operating independently, delivering the Samaritans method of empathetic listening to those in crisis from loneliness, depression and bullying, possibly leading to thoughts of, or attempts of, suicide.

The 2013 BW annual returns show regional active volunteer numbers approaching 350, distributed evenly across Australia and New Zealand, there being no Samaritan branches in Oceania.

Stretching 5,000 kms both east to west, and north to south, the region straddles time zones of up to 5 hrs difference. Subiaco, Launceston & Wellington are discussing how best to cooperate in delivering a reliable, regional, 24/7 service, leveraging off these time zone differences.

The Australian national number 135 24 7 may be matched with a similar number in New Zealand, with the 3Rings roster system assisting the region's volunteers to aspire to deliver a reliable, regional, 24/7 Samaritans service.

The feasibility of using the "Cloud" for the region's phone service is being assessed, aimed at streamlining our communications infrastructure.

Of more importance, regional co-operation in volunteer recruitment, training, retention and mental health understanding, is being developed.

A regional meeting is planned for late May in Subiaco, with representatives from Wellington and Launceston bringing their experience and foresight to the above tasks, and to rebranding and sustainable funding initiatives.

"You cannot discover new oceans unless you have the courage to lose sight of the shore."

South America – Luiza

CVV has a new coordinator. His name is Gustavo. He is from Nova Hamburgo in the South of Brazil. He is a great person and we get along very well.

At the present moment CVV is composed by 67 centers. Three centers were disconnected from CVV Program for not attending the annual mandatory meeting last September.

The 3rd International Symposium – Florianópolis – Santa Catarina – was very well appreciated by the volunteers. The importance of the event was recognized due to the large amount of information exchanged. The volunteers loved Gary Beckman's presentation.

Suicide is being reported in the media much more. Media professionals are facing the issue more seriously and are recognizing the importance of suicide prevention in Brazil. Last year two well-known people committed suicide. Since then, journalists are looking to CVV for clarification and information on the subject.

CVV is trying to be closer to the community. It has created as a support service for suicide survivors and their family members. Nova Hamburgo Center in Rio Grande do Sul and Cuiaba Center in Mato Grosso do Sul are developing this project.

CVV is developing a new project: A virtual center with the participation of volunteers from several states in Brazil. It has been an amazing experience. I myself am involved in this project. At present we are using Skype. In the future we are going to use a virtual telephone service. Many volunteers are working hard for this.

It is interesting to say that it is not a chat group. The callers contact us through CVV's web site. Although we are at our homes, the callers do not know where we are, only that they are talking to a CVV's volunteer.

Here are some advantages and characteristics of our job:

- No expenses (we use our own computers, tablets and smart phones)
- We work in our homes (violence is a serious problem here. Besides, we don't have to rent a room, buy furniture and telephone expenses too.)
- We can work at night and dawn with no problem.
- We don't have to waste time in traffic jams.
- The same rules and regulations of CVV centers are valid to the virtual branch.
- We use our voice and never our image. The program does not permit it.

The Virtual Center has been running in an experimental phase for approximately 11 months. Five experienced volunteers have taken part and there have been 365 support dialogues.

At the moment we are recycling ex-volunteers (the ones that previously left their shifts owing to lack of time, etc.) Our next step is to conduct a course for new volunteers. As the center is a virtual

one, we are planning the course in a virtual way too. The Educational Ministry has given us a virtual room for web conferences and we are already using it for training courses. This room has been a wonderful tool and is also available for Befrienders Worldwide meetings. If you would like to use it, please let me know in advance and I will send you the relevant procedures.

Currently I am working in training material. I am adapting Befrienders Worldwide material to a virtual course for new volunteers.

The Befrienders Worldwide training material has been very useful. I myself had the opportunity to use it when recycling volunteers from our Regional Centers (Rio-Vitoria Regional). I have also recommended the material to the National Training Group. Our main problem is that most of our trainers do not read English. I am translating it little by little. Soon we are going to have all the material translated to Portuguese.

Rio Grande do Sul Centers – in the south of Brazil – have a toll free number. The Health Ministry provided it, motivated by the tragedy that happened in Santa Maria at the Kiss nightclub. This is just the beginning. We do hope that soon all Brazil Centers are going to have a toll free number too. Robert Paris and other volunteers are working hard for this.

Unfortunately I have temporarily lost contact with Mar del Plata and the Caribbean Centers. I hope to reconnect with them soon.

'We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give.'

South Asia Region –Mela

Greetings from Lifeline Kolkata!

The 16th National Befrienders Conference hosted by us, left us enriched and motivated to further our cause. We are sure that all the volunteers who attended the conference left with a little bit of the Kolkata spirit: “we can, we will”!!!

As part of our Outreach initiative, our volunteers, Tapan, Sumana, Anuradha, Dipshika, Kamal, Indrani and Tanu attended a sex workers meeting from 29th January – 1st February 2014 at Triangular Park. It included different types of activities including debates, discussions, sports and cultural functions. Lifeline Foundation found it apt and decided to participate in it. As per the program, some volunteers went there on the first day, distributed pamphlets and talked about our role to the different people present there. Our cards and leaflets were also given to the central counter for further distribution. The organizers then were requested to allot some time to Lifeline Foundation so that we could talk about our work and explain how we could prove to be helpful. Lifeline Foundation was given a time slot on the last day and was asked to participate in a discussion on “Depression and How to Go About It” – a psychiatrist, a psychologist and a volunteer from our organization shared the dais. The first two speakers spoke about the way they deal with depression. They talked about self-help, medicine and counselling. Volunteers from Lifeline spoke about our way of providing support. Our stand on these issues was explained in detail and there was a short question and answer session. Unfortunately, the time allotted was very short and all queries could not be addressed appropriately. Later, a volunteer from Lifeline personally approached the person who asked the questions and explained our position. It was a grand success – Lifeline reached a large audience and played a very important and meaningful role.

Sumaitri Delhi

I have been volunteering at Sumaitri since 1993. When I was asked to write something for this newsletter, I looked through all my memories and one of the stories I had read a long time ago, stood out clearly. I reproduce it here:

“A young mother was taking her 6 year old daughter shopping for a doll for her birthday. The child wanted to choose her own and her mother was concerned as her funds were very limited. So when Mum arrived at the toy-shop her heart sank. Most of the dolls were way beyond her budget!

Nevertheless she wandered through the shop with her daughter who was so excited at all the dolls and that she was grown up enough now to choose her very own special doll. She picked up beautiful dolls that could talk, walk, cry.....and her mum kept steering her on through the shop knowing she could afford none of these. Finally they came across a very plain doll tucked at the back of the shelf. The price tag reflected this and was within budget.

“Now this is a very special doll” whispered Mum to the little girl beside her. The child picked the doll up and looked up enquiringly at her mother. “She listens” said Mum. The little girl hugged the doll to her chest with great delight.”

You too will become special, if you start listening!

Thanks Sumaitri for giving me the skills to become and remain special.

Befrienders India – Samaritans Mumbai

During the last quarter of 2013, we held two awareness programmes – one for members of the All India Women's conference and the other for college students of Sophia College and students of a higher secondary in a school, both in Mumbai.

In 2014 Samaritans Mumbai started the campaign by participating in the Annual Festival of the Ruia College of Arts and Science. Over the two days(7th –8th Jan), we had a stall to acquaint students with our services. Our 12 volunteers attended the stall by rotation. More than 150 students expressed interest in joining us as volunteers.

On 1st February, Samaritans Mumbai's volunteers visited a center in a red light area, where children of the sex workers were being helped to get educated and rehabilitated. The children, after hearing us, were enthusiastic to spread information about our services.

We will continue to update you on our activities from time to time.

Thanal Suicide Prevention Centre – Calicut, India

Thanalhas extended the working hours of the centre from 8 to 12 hours from October 2013. Our centre is now open from 9am to 9pm on all days.

We inducted some volunteers in December 2013 for manning the additional shifts. We are indebted to Shankar and Anju from Sneha who helped us in training the new volunteers.

Thanal volunteers and family members went on a one day picnic to a picturesque island in the hilly Wayanad district. A refreshing and rewarding experience for all, after which the volunteers rededicated themselves to the noble cause of suicide prevention

Pratheeksha BI Centre

Pratheeksha is part of Befrienders India, established in North Paravur, by Brigadier (Dr) M A George, a retired Army Doctor at Kerala, near the port of Kochi (Cochin), in the latter part of 2002. Though started in a hired accommodation, we now have a building of our own and conduct two sessions of 4 hours each, every day. In the last 4 months, we have added 6 volunteers to bring the total to 32, all unpaid. The founder, though 87 years old, is still actively associated with the center, in addition to being our founding Trustee.

In November 2013, 12 delegates attended the Annual National Conference Hosted by the Lifeline Foundation Befrienders India center, Kolkata. In the past only 6 delegates were able to attend.

On January 2004, our 4th Volunteer Director took office for his three year tenure, to an emotional and tumultuous welcome, he being a postgraduate in law. We hold our monthly meeting on the first

Sunday of each month, the active discussions being led by the Founder. We have also issued two newsletters – these have been published every two months over the last three years. We have completed the planning to start a new sub-center as our first outreach program, which will function once a week. Our befriending life is prosaic but many times we get the whiff of the aroma of the splendour of befriending.

Sri Lanka Sumithrayo – Mawanella branch

The volunteers of Sri Lanka Sumithrayo, Mawanella are a group of individuals who have come together with a common goal, that of befriending someone who comes to them seeking and hoping for relief from a hopeless and despairing situation.

We volunteers are people with families. Families who need our love and support in many activities, yet, we are prepared to forgo some of our time to help others. To be available for anyone who may come searching for comfort in a time of sorrow.

Volunteers come and go. There is a saying among Befrienders that trying to retain volunteers is similar to attempting to fill a bathtub with the plug removed.

Of recent times however, Sri Lanka Sumithrayo Mawanella, appear to have found a way of keeping us volunteers close to each other. We at Sumithrayo have been enjoying ourselves from time to time building friendships among ourselves. This is by finding an opportunity to meet outside our 'working hours'.

Over the past months, Mawanella Sumithrayo has organized excursions to various parts of the country. This month, on 12th February 2014, 22 of us travelled to Embilipitiya to see the 'Maduwanwala Walawwa'. It is an historical site maintained by the Archaeological Department. We set off very early in the morning, travelling through the suburbs and the through forests which were once infested with elephants, deer and wild boar. At the site, officers of the Archaeological Department related to the visitors the historical aspects of the place. It goes back to the year 1700 when King Wimaladharmasuriya II ruled in Kandy. On our way to and from the site we stopped at many other places of interest.

Our excursion was successful in two ways. One, we visited an ancient site of interest and two, we accomplished our expectations of having an enjoyable trip. The camaraderie among us Sumithrayo was really great. While we travelled, we entertained each other. Many sang songs and others joined in with joyous and happy voices. There were also witty contributions from others which brought laughter to all.

All this closeness could not have taken place if we were at the Center. Perhaps, therefore, a closer affinity or relationship among the volunteers can be achieved when we meet away from the Center and are given a chance to let our hair down.

Whatever the answer is, we volunteers are always there to befriend whoever comes to us, seeking our help.

Sri Lanka Sumithrayo – Kandy Branch

The SLS Kandy Branch opened in 1978, in a very small place. Now we are in our own premises, which is a two storey building. It has a well-equipped conference hall on the upper level that can easily accommodate 60 people, and a lower level which has space for four separate caller rooms, two lounge rooms, library, office space and a pantry.

We are proud of providing anonymous service over the last 36 years. Our strength is the team of dedicated volunteers who now stand at 47 in number. We are able to offer a regular service to our callers from 9.00 am to 5.00 pm everyday, irrespective of public holidays and Sundays. Similar to other SLS Branches, the Kandy Branch also shares the common objective to minimize the number of suicides within our country. However, our volunteers are also very keen to lend a listening ear to those who seek our services. Not only suicide callers, but people who face all sorts of difficult situations, problems, and who have disturbed feelings, visit our centre to get some mental relief.

The volunteers of the Kandy Branch can be contacted by telephone (+94-81-2234806), email (sumithrayo.kandy@gmail.com), or postal mail (693/4, Peradeniya Road, Mulgampola, Kandy).

In addition we extend our services by visiting hospitals, schools, prisons, etc. We also conduct awareness programmes to other service-oriented organizations, such as children's homes, residential homes for the elderly, etc.

We are all trained volunteers and have a few probationary volunteers. Training programmes are conducted annually for the new volunteers and also refresher programmes to keep the trained volunteers updated.

The highlight of this year was the visit of Liz Try, Training Consultant for Befrienders Worldwide. We were fortunate to have her here on the 18th of January for the second time. As usual this was a very successful event. We all appreciated Liz for accepting our invitation to travel to Kandy soon after arriving in Sri Lanka from the United Kingdom, to conduct a training workshop. We found the workshop to be very informative and inspiring. Volunteers from other SLS Branches also participated in this special event.

The following are the few activities Sumithrayo Kandy Branch undertook recently:

Outreach Programmes

'Jayawickrama Children's Home' has been one of our programmes for some time, with around 10 volunteers participating regularly. Evelyn's Nurseries children's Home is another place we began to visit this year. Two female volunteers go there once a month on a fixed date. In both of these locations, the girls are very happy to meet Sumithrayo volunteers and they share their innermost feelings.

Recently, 10 volunteers have started visiting the elderly residential home, of The Friends in Need Society. Over a hundred paying and non-paying residents live in this home.

At the moment the prison outreach programme has been temporarily stopped while the prisoners are moved to a new facility.

Fellowship trip

The annual fellowship trip took place on 12th January. The well planned and executed trip to NuwaraEliya was enjoyed by all who participated (about 30 volunteers).

Sri Lanka Sumithrayo – Bandarawela Branch

A Precise Experience

A very backward school, in a very remote village, called Kadeerawa was selected for an awareness program, last December. The students of this school, had no proper school-uniforms to be clad in, but had the warmth of pleasant smiles, to flock around and to greet us. In the mean time they became curious to know who we were, although the principal had told them about our pending visit, and also about the Sri Lanka Sumithrayo movement.

The children, along with their parents, besieged us to narrate their circumstances of hardships and difficulties of life. Few of their mothers had even gone abroad, in search of new fortunes, but had to come back with woeful experiences. Some of them had managed to put up slim abodes, but life really seems to be a struggle. In the light of addiction to liquor by some, the urge to feed their children with good meals still remains an unaccomplished desire. Strangely enough, they have neither seen nor even heard about a cup of yoghurt even as yet!

It took a long time to befriend them. However they became satisfied thereafter, and inundated us with repeated requests to visit them whenever possible. Some children and even adults too, gave us scribbled notes indicating their difficulties. We felt our programme was beneficial.

Sri Lanka Sumithrayo – Kohuwala Center

Anniversary celebrations

Sri Lanka Sumithrayo Kohuwala Center, formerly known as SLS Colombo South celebrated its 15th anniversary on 26th January 2014 at the SLS Head Office. The celebration commenced with lighting of the oil lamp by the Chief Guest, Liz Try, Training Consultant for Befrienders Worldwide, the Chairperson of SLS and other senior volunteers from the Kohuwala Center.

The highlight of the event was a training programme conducted by Liz on 'The Wall', effectively enacted by a few volunteers, and a group discussion on 'Prejudices'. She also presented a Training Manual to the Chairperson of Sri Lanka Sumithrayo to be used in the future training of volunteers.

Celebrations took the form of a Regional Training programme in the Basnahira Region, at which volunteers of Sri Lanka Sumithrayo Kohuwala, Panadura, Negombo and Kurunegala participated. It was the first time "The Wall" was introduced to many of the volunteers. Though at the beginning

many found it a bit confusing, patient explanations by Liz helped the volunteers to grasp the meaning. Every volunteer agreed that it was a very effective way to really understand the responsibility involved in being a Sumithrayo volunteer. A group discussion on "Prejudices" was also quite enlightening. All of us present were able to confront our own prejudices and examine how and why we have included them in our lives. The discussion thereafter helped to better understand the role our own prejudices play in our daily lives as well as in befriending and how best to guard against them.

The programme was followed by a time of fellowship and lunch. The culmination of the event was the cutting of the 'anniversary cake' and congratulating Lakshmi and Sunethra. Lakshmi is the Patron of Sri Lanka Sumithrayo Kohuwala Branch and is a stalwart supporter of the branch from its inception, having given over 35 years of service. She is also the Director of 'SLS Rural Programme'. Sunethra, Chairperson of our branch, was congratulated for her valuable work in raising much needed funds to keep the Kohuwala Branch financially solvent. It was a memorable day of learning, camaraderie, and of course, good food and laughter. It worked well to help strengthen bonds between volunteers of different branches.

Sri Lanka Sumithrayo - Panduwasnuwera branch

We are a small branch with only 6 volunteers, but our hearts are big and we work together to make our centre a peaceful haven for our callers. Our little garden is tended carefully by our volunteers and there are many flowers and bushes that attract a lot of birds. After we close our centre at 5pm, we visit the hospital every evening. We have a very good relationship with the doctors and the rest of the staff. We conducted an awareness programme for the hospital staff so that they have better understanding of people who have attempted suicide. We also conduct awareness programmes for the general public, schools and for government institutions. We share an excellent relationship with the local police and when they receive complaints about domestic violence and marital concerns, they direct the couples to our centre or if the situation is grave, they bring them directly to our centre.

Sri Lanka Sumithrayo - Panadura branch

SLS Panadura Centre is situated in a sleepy but lovely town in the south of Sri Lanka. 90% of our callers we meet face to face, telephone callers are quite rare.

Then - suddenly something happens which opens our eyes to the work we do. Thankfully, we are trained to meet any situations! *We are special people with special capabilities.* A recent telephone caller has proved this point, without a doubt and made us all sit up! True we are unshockable - but!!!!

He said he was a male prostitute working at a beach hotel. Our volunteer listened and empathized, even though at times she felt a tad uncomfortable as such a situation was new to her, but the others rallied round and gave her the necessary support. The caller was most concerned that he could have been infected with the AIDS virus and how he could get out of the situation. After gaining more

confidence, our volunteer was able to discuss his feelings. His anxiety about contracting AIDS, the guilt he felt and the frustration of doing something he was not sure was correct. The possibility of finding alternate employment was discussed and how he felt about it made the caller feel someone really tried to understand his confused feelings. Our volunteer assured the caller that getting tested for HIV could be done anonymously, which was a huge relief for the caller. The address of a clinic, opening times, etc., was given at the end of befriending. After listening to the assuring words of acceptance that he could telephone the centre whenever he felt he needed to speak to a Sumithrayo volunteer, the caller softly thanked her and said good bye.

This is a most unusual situation - and we thought we should share it with Befrienders Worldwide.

***Sri Lanka Sumithrayo will commemorate 40 years of service in suicide prevention in June 2014
by holding a
South Asia Regional Training Workshop, 9th - 12th October 2014.***

*'Use what talents you possess: the woods would be very silent
If no birds sang there except those that sang best.'*

Shirley Williams

News from the Befrienders Worldwide Central Office, London

A new look training team - David Brodtman

In October last year, Training Task Force Lead Liz Try felt that the time had come to concentrate on other activities, and I was asked if I would be prepared to take over. Having been involved in BW training for several years, at the York Conference International events and the BW conference in Thailand in 2008, as well as helping with various international centres over the years, I was absolutely delighted and very flattered to be asked. She is an extremely hard act to follow, so I am so pleased that she is continuing to be involved, and will be working with me and the rest of the team to help prepare the materials that are needed.

We need your help!

And this is where you come in. I would love to hear from you about what material you think would be helpful over the coming months and years. We are currently developing a programme to help train the trainers, and will then be looking at other support material – for example concentrating on supporting volunteers through mentoring, giving feedback etc. But if you have any ideas - or material - that you think is worth sharing, please do get in touch! My e-mail is david.brodtman@gmail.com and I would love to hear from you. Equally, if there are any other issues around training that you would like support with, or feel we may be able to help – please drop me a line!

A fond farewell to....

Vija Shunmoogum - Director of Befrienders Worldwide, who is leaving us in March.

I must say many thanks for your contributions to BW. Since the first day when we organized the Thailand Befrienders Conference in Pattaya in year 2008, you have shown your befriender spirit though you don't volunteer as listener and professionalism. Your cheerfulness created a joyful work atmosphere. Good luck for your new career path. I won't say good bye to you, but I'd rather say until we meet again.

Pornthip

We are going to miss you Vija! And the tireless, endless duties you performed with that great big smile!

Mela

I know it will more than difficult to continue without your crazy energy and wonderful smile. I just hope you are leaving knowing that you had a positive impact on everything you were involved with. I wish you all the best in next chapter of your life...the friendship from this chapter remains!

Tanja

Vija – it has been lovely working with you. You have always supported our work and for this we do thank you and wish you well in all your undertakings!

Merab

and...

A very warm welcome to Kathy and Oscar!

Kathy Silenga – I have been working in the charity sector for more than 10 years, much of the time spent overseas in Zambia and Ghana. I've come to work with Befrienders Worldwide as a Programme Development Officer, which includes both project planning and fundraising – hoping I can help strengthen the network and support the very important work that's being done all over the world. There's a great foundation to build on, exciting to see how we can grow over the coming years!

Oscar Monteiro – I am helping out Befrienders Worldwide as a volunteer in London. I am an IT specialist and my task is to make the Befrienders Website more robust and bug-free. Currently I am trying to make the 'Member Pages' and the 'Forum' work properly. Once this is fit for purpose, a User Guide will be sent out to all members so that they can use these functions effectively.

If you see any web content which is wrong, you should contact me on 'BFWWcoordinator@outlook.com'.

My interests are writing and gardening.

Obituary Notices

Dear all,

I have to inform you of the sad news that a founder of Suicide Prevention Centre in Japan (BW Japan), Yukiko Nishihara, passed away unexpectedly on 7th February, 2014, in her 80 year. She started the first Befrienders' centre in Osaka, Japan with her late husband Mr. Akira Nishihara in 1978 and moved to Tokyo in 1998. She engaged in opening of new centres in Japan, namely Miyazaki, Kumano, Iwate and Aichi. She played a great role in suicide prevention awareness activities through lectures, symposiums and workshops. She held bereavement support groups to ones who lost their beloved ones as well.

There is to be a memorial service as below.

on: 15th February, 2014 (Saturday), 12:00am: Siloam Church 3-10-1 Okubo, Shinjyuku-ku, 169-0072 Tokyo, Japan

host: Satoru Nishihara (Yukiko Nishihara's son)

Kindly send condolence messages or any queries in English to condolence@befrienders-jpn.org

May her soul rest in peace forever.

Sincerely,

Akiko Mura, Director of BW Tokyo Japan

Dear Friends,

Dr T.Thurairatnam, a founder member of the Befrienders movement in Malaysia, passed away peacefully on 5 January 2014. Dr Thurai, together with 12 other founder members established Befrienders KL in 1970. He had contributed immensely to the development of the 8 Befrienders centres in Malaysia, particularly in the training of volunteers. Dr Thurai worked closely with Dr Chad Varah and played a significant role in the formation of Befrienders International. Dr Thurai continued to serve actively and enthusiastically as Hon. Consultant to Befrienders till his last days.

Dr Thurai's passing away is a great loss to Befrienders, but he leaves behind a great legacy in the Befrienders. We convey our heartfelt condolences to the family of Dr Thurai.

Please view report in The Star, 6 January 2014: <http://fw.to/Szf3asM>

Best regards,

Ganga

GangadaraVadivelSinnadurai

President

National Council of Befrienders Malaysia

Befriending

*I waited silently
Looking at him
All I could see
Was desperation
Written all over
His pain-filled eyes*

*I looked at him
He at me
His eyes glazed
Avoiding mine
Unruly hair
Stale shirt stank*

*Of sleepless nights
Wandering streets
He tried to speak
No words, no sound
I touched his hand
He cried.'*

For this is what we do best, no matter which part of the world we belong to

P.S. We are truly amazed by all the dedicated work each centre in the various regions are doing to help their people. The Befrienders Worldwide Newsletter has opened our eyes to a whole vast concept of what each centre can do. We send a big 'Thank You' to each volunteer who sent in articles to make the newsletter a reality!

-The Editorial Team-