

Networking and Communications Director Welcome

Hello to all our Befrienders Worldwide (BW) volunteers. I feel very privileged to have been given the opportunity to be appointed the Networking and Communications Director for BW and relish the challenges ahead, especially the chance to improve our connectivity with all member branches and ensure that we follow the BW principles encapsulated in our Charter. I am a volunteer member of a UK Samaritans branch in England, a Trustee of the branch, and the appointed person responsible for Health and Safety at the branch. Prior to becoming a trained Samaritan, I worked as an officer in the Merchant Navy for 28 years, with 12 years in command before being seconded ashore to work as Fleet Quality

Assurance Manager and Designated Person Ashore (DPA) in Hong Kong and latterly Singapore. A total of 42 years in the maritime industry. Emotional wellbeing is certainly a global term which is discussed across society. Services like BW provide many millions of people with vital support. Listening to and speaking with so many members since joining BW last year has been a rewarding experience for me and has given me an appreciation of the dedication and commitment to care which is given by our volunteers day after day; it's extremely humbling to hear the lengths that our volunteer members will go to provide that support in the community - thank you.



Dave Watkins, Networking & Communications Director, Befrienders Worldwide

BW Conference

Preparations for the BW South Asia Conference, which is being organised by our member SLS and will be held Colombo Sri Lanka from 5th November to 8th November 2020, are well underway. Please see the details for the conference at the end of the newsletter. A big thanks to the Conference Organising Committee for the hard work in arranging the venue and working with the service providers to get a good deal. More details about the conference will follow soon. In future it is our plan to have an annual regional BW conference, as we recognise that this is the best way for our organisation to link together and share experiences.

BW Help App

We are excited by the new Help App and hope to have it available for all branches by the end of March 2020 for final proofing.

Annual Returns

We want to improve the process for completing and sending in the annual returns as this information is of vital importance for BW, especially in ensuring that all contact details are valid and up to date. We will send out our annual BW Member's certificates when we receive the annual returns and so keep the certificates up to date.

I will continue to provide regular

updates in our newsletters and keep all our members informed.

Thank you for being there.

*Dave Watkins
Networking & Communications
Director, Befrienders Worldwide*

Contents:

We are delighted to receive articles from our BW members from:

Cyprus Samaritans

Serbia SRCE

Befrienders Mauritius

Philippines: In Touch Community Services

To contact us:

To submit articles or information for the Newsletter, please contact David Watkins: communications@befrienders.org Contact information for the Chair of the Trustees is: Martin Taylor (chair@befrienders.org).

Cyprus Samaritans ... who are we and what we do

Cyprus Samaritans was founded in 1997 and was based on the service offered by Samaritans UK. In the early days we were given some support from the UK Samaritans, being able to use their training materials, and receiving help and advice when needed. In recent years, this help and support has been provided by Befrienders Worldwide.

In 2017 the Cypriot Government introduced new legislation to control the operations of Charities and Associations, and to ensure compliance with European Law. The law covers our constitution, the administration of our operations, presentation of audited accounts and checks to ensure the suitability of our Director and Committee. While we were already a recognised Charity, we have also met all the requirements of the new Law.

We offer a telephone listening service, e-mail response within 24 hours, and Face to Face service by appointment at our two centres.

Our Listening Service operates from our Paphos and Limassol Centres, 7 days a week, 365 days a year, from 4.00pm until midnight, the only Helpline on the Island to do so. Our service is mainly conducted in English, but as 90% of the Cypriot Population speak a second language, mainly English, this has not been restrictive. We have over the years managed to recruit many more native Greek speakers, and we hope to be able to offer more of our services in Greek in the future.

Funding comes mainly from our 3 Charity shops: two in Paphos, and one in Limassol. Cyprus Samaritans also conducts its own fund-raising and receives donations from local organisations and individuals.

We currently have 50 fully trained Listening Volunteers, initial training takes three full days and two half days, followed by six months further training ,taking live calls, with a personal mentor

for support. Two training courses are held each year, one in Spring and one in Autumn. All Listeners are required to attend at least one of two Refresher Training Days each year. We have recently upgraded our communication systems, and are now producing our own training materials, including a locally filmed and scripted video.

We have over 30 Shop Volunteers, who run our shops and not only provide our funding, but also support our community by recycling second-hand goods which includes good quality low cost clothing. The success of our shops has enabled us to offer our telephone service as a 'Freephone' operation, meaning that any calls made to our Listening Centres is, regardless of the duration of the call, completely free.

Over the years getting our message across to a population that initially had no knowledge of the service we were offering was very challenging and continues to be something that we have to commit a large amount of time and resources to solving.

Our support for people contemplating suicide or with suicidal thoughts, was not really understood by the Cypriot Community in general, as the whole subject of suicide was treated as a 'sin' and something that caused shame and guilt. It is not possible to say if, suicides were recorded accurately, or if there are other factors, that has given Cyprus the lowest rates of suicide in Europe and one of the lowest in the World. There is however a growing awareness of the impact of mental health, and

we like to think that we are supporting this issue, by offering the services that we do.

The law in Cyprus does not allow us to offer our services to anyone identifying as a minor, under the age of 18. We are obliged to report any incidence of abuse or expressions of extreme depression to the Authorities, which of course would compromise our commitment to guarantee confidentiality, to anyone who contacts us. This is a matter of much regret as we are unable to support what is identified as a particularly vulnerable group.

Two years ago, we introduced our In-Touch Befriending service, to support people who feel lonely and isolated, or who just want someone to talk to on a regular basis. This has proved popular and continues to grow.

Currently our contact rates, show that 83% come from the Cypriot Community and the rest are made up of the other nationalities that comprise the Cyprus population. Our challenge for the future is to ensure that what we offer, is available to the whole population of the Island ,and that we continue to find more ways of making our services match the needs of the people that may want our type of emotional support.

John Bingham, Secretary Cyprus Samaritans, January 2020



Serbia:

Activities of SRCE in 2019

Additional Assistance in Email Support

As the number of calls by email started to grow significantly during the last quarter of 2018, we decided to train new group of volunteers who would offer just this kind of support and help other volunteers on duty. The idea was shared with students of psychology who are already involved in program which offers psychological support to other fellow students. The training was carried out by experienced volunteers of "Srce" and, in the end we got 12 new volunteers. Although the University kindly offered premises within the University for this kind of support, new volunteers decided they'd rather come to the Center and do the duties from there in order to get help and mentoring from the team. Meanwhile some of them decided to go through full training and became "regular" volunteers on duty.

Rotary club DUNAV organized cooking for charity and volunteers of Srce are promoting our charity to the members and their families

of mental health issues and mark October 10th, World Mental Health Day. "Life crises – a risk and a chance" was the slogan of this year's Mental Health Festival. This **Mental Health Festival** Center "Srce" joined the Institute of Public Health in efforts to raise the awareness campaign raises awareness of the importance of life crises and promotes the importance of individual, interpersonal and social factors overcoming them. We also wanted to point out that crises are not only a risk to mental health but also an opportunity for growth and development.

In order to reach this goal, we organized over 50 different activities in period October 10th till October 20th. They included workshops, lectures, panel discussions, movie screenings, exhibitions, theater performances, literary evenings, concerts, walks, activities in the streets and quiz about mental health issues.

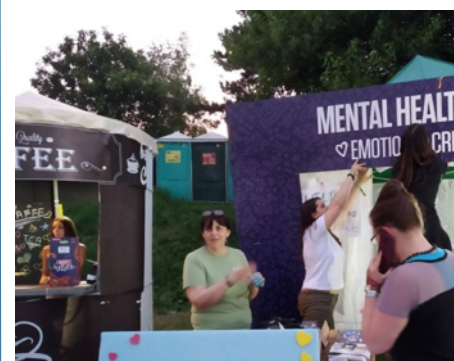


Panel discussion within Mental Health Festival about role, characteristics and availability of mental health professionals, volunteers and life coaches in mental health protection

Fundraising Auction of Paintings

We invited local artists and art galleries to donate their art works (mostly paintings, graphics and photographs) to "Srce's" auction and help us to raise funds for our work in 2020. The response was great and we managed to get more than 30 pieces which were sold at auction organized by volunteers of the Center.

We also used the occasion to present our work to the public and to invite all donors who supported us in 2019, to thank them personally.



Volunteers of Srce as part of welfare service during Exit festival are offering assistance, emotional support, lost&found service and many other services

Social Events Throughout The Year

In April we were present during “Fruska Gora marathon” spreading information and promotional material about mental health among the participants. We did more similar actions in Belgrade, too, within the Mental Health Festival. We got a great support from influential people who were dealing with a suicidal loss, and therefore wanted to help us reaching young people in night clubs.

We also organised several events (music koncert, Rotary club cooking, free tatos for charity, round tables...) distributing leaflets with message YOU'RE NOT ALONE, TALK MATTERS. Through this action we also collected a significant amount of money and reached a lot of primarily young people. We tend to continue these activities in 2020.



“Srce” organized concert of several choirs and raised funds for new technical equipment but also distributed leaflets about suicide prevention and other mental health issues

Exit Festival

This year we finally made a great impact at the Europe’s best music festival, having a branded place where people were coming to talk to us, or asking us what is that we do and for the first time in years, we showed up at the campsite, where we managed to talk with 17 different nationalities about the mental health issues. We were having various workshops (leaving messages to the loved ones, drawing love signs at the joint paper, talking about the things they go through, lost and found activities...) As always, we did have a great help from Andrew and Bob from Winchester.



Tattoo studio offered one weekend tattooing free of charge for all those who are ready to give financial support to “Srce”

Befrienders: Mauritius

Befrienders has been established in Mauritius in 1995 and ever since, has contributed to keep the rising number of suicides under control. Over the years, our Association has evolved and has tried to adapt and keep pace with the rapidly changing conditions in our country which has been developing very fast over the last decades, in all sectors. Rapid development entails better standard of living but has also brought about many problems, mainly in the psychological, emotional and relational aspects.

Our mode of living has changed but the abovenamed problematics have not been properly tackled. Befrienders has therefore seen its role becoming more and more important in the accompaniment of the persons having little resilience to cope with their problems.

The core activity of our Association remains Active Listening and counselling through our Hotline. We have improved our means of communication by introducing a WhatsApp service on mobile phone, a Facebook page and our Website is being actually put up to date.

Our second service which is more and more sought for, is welcoming persons

in emotional distress in our offices for counselling. Those who seek our help come on rendez-vous and we may have several sessions with one person until we are satisfied that he/she will be able to manage on his/her own. We have introduced the principle of follow-up, even with those who contact us on our phone numbers. Of course, this is done only if the person wants us to. Our basic rules of confidentiality, non-judgement and no direct advice always apply to every case.

The other activity to which we attach more and more importance is our Awareness Campaigns across the island. Communication is very important to make people know that we exist and that they can appeal to us when they are in distress. The second objective of these campaigns is to talk about the signs and symptoms given by a suicidal person and how anyone can help. We talk also about Active Listening and try to eliminate the taboo always associated to suicide issues and in general to mental problems. We are more and more solicited by colleges, Associations, companies or governmental institutions to talk about these issues and to help their members in distress.

We also visit Homes for elderly persons as well as Prisons Institutions to do Active Listening and counselling.

Last but not least, we must also cater for our own members to empower them and give them tools to help others. We organize regular Refresher Courses given by our own Trainers and by professionals in different fields related to our action. We have to become more and more professional in order to be credible.

We hope that this general overview of our activities will give a good picture of the Mauritian Branch of Befrienders to the other branches across the world. We would like you to share with us your mode of operation so that we can still improve and have new ideas.

We have shared with you the serious problems of waste water evacuation which we were having in our offices, preventing us from doing our activities since the beginning of 2020. Fortunately, the situation is improving and things are slowly getting back to normal. We sincerely hope that the rest of the year will be better for us.

José Emilien



Philippines: In Touch Community Services

In Touch Community Services Inc. (AKA "In Touch Philippines" and "In Touch"), was started in 1980 by counselors aiming to provide services and assistance to the community. In 1984, it started operating a crisis line to help reach more people in need of talk therapy. Over the years, In Touch has grown its operations with the help of its team of mental health advocates, counselors, and volunteers.

In Touch's vision that all people will value mental and emotional wellbeing and be able to access high quality services is supported by a three-fold mission:

- Firstly, providing direct care via face to face counseling with the

help of its professional counselors and via its Crisis Line, a 24/7 free and anonymous hotline manned by trained staff and volunteer responders.

- Secondly, building the capacity of individuals to care for the wellbeing of others by offering training to various groups and internship opportunities to students.
- Lastly, to advocate for wellbeing by educating the community and helping eliminate stigma surrounding mental and emotional wellness.

In 2020, In Touch celebrates its 40th year as a mental health advocate and provider. This year's anniversary will

be supported by targeted advocacy to: the youth by working with schools and student-leaders, men who are naturally less likely to reach out for help, the expat community in the Philippines constantly needing support for transition issues, and communities affected by disasters by working with victims and first responders in ensuring their emotional wellbeing are also being safeguarded. Supported by an ever-growing team of professionals and volunteers devoting their time and expertise, In Touch's vision continues to inspire us to provide help and a safe-space for wellbeing matters.

*By Jake Flores,
Feb 2020*



Befrienders Worldwide

volunteer action to prevent suicide

Befrienders Worldwide South Asia Conference 2020

Crisis Support - Challenges For The Twenties
A place for Exchanging Ideas, Exploring and Educating

5th to 8th November, 2020
At Mount Lavinia Hotel, Mount Lavinia,
Sri Lanka.

Please block out these dates and register your place for the conference, an opportunity to meet fellow BW volunteers from around the world in the beautiful setting of Mount Lavinia.

We would like to hear from you

**Further details about the Conference will be communicated
to keep all our members fully informed of the arrangements.**

Registration fee for the conference - USD 150

(includes all costs of the conference including lunch / 2 tea breaks / dinner
/ cocktails / entertainment / cultural shows, etc.)

Accommodation Cost - Mount Lavinia Hotel - USD 120
Anarva Hotel - USD 85

(for 3 nights on bed & breakfast on double sharing, per participant)

For booking information please contact

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