

Newsletter No. 4 November 2009



From the Trust Desk

- The first thing you might notice from the headings above is that we have a new Trustee. Beata Nicholson, a Lithuanian journalist based in the UK, joined us earlier in the year to represent the interests of the Lithuanian Association in the United Kingdom (LAUK). A note giving Beata's background is included below. LAUK approached TTT last year to say that, as an Association representing the interests of Lithuanians living in the UK, they would like to extend their activities which fall under the charitable umbrella in a tax efficient way. Talks between the bodies indicated a wide convergence of interests and it seemed sensible to find a formal way of working that used the knowledge and skills of both sides, as well as maximising the opportunities presented by TTT's charitable status. The result was an agreement signed by both Chairmen on 16 February 2009, Lithuanian Independence Day in the year of the Millennial Anniversary of Lithuania. Our Trustees are delighted that we have been able to expand our interests in this way. A further note below explains more of the work of LAUK.
- In our last Newsletter, we looked forward to developing our major piece of work, the Cancer Support and Palliative Care Project (CSPC). There has been great advance in the cancer support element as well as some progress with palliative care. What we did decide, was to put on hold for a while the Cancer Specific Expert Patient Programme being planned by Madeleine Mulgrew of Cancer Choices and Trustee Wendy Howe. This was to allow time for the evaluation of this Macmillan programme to be completed before introducing it to Lithuania. We still believe that it has much to offer to patients in Lithuania but we want to be clear about the results of the evaluation before proceeding. On palliative care, we introduced the work of Marie Curie Cancer Care at a Study Day held in Vilnius in March – more about the day below. Nicky Agelopoulos, National Programme Director of Marie Curie, spoke to an audience of over 200, explaining the ethos of the organisation and how palliative care is managed in the UK. Again, we felt that the time was not quite right for further initiatives in this sector, which is much more professionally based than the cancer support sector, and so we have concentrated on cancer support this year.
- The value of our contacts with Macmillan Cancer Support has been demonstrated time after time. Jeff Faulkner, who was profiled in our last Newsletter, has devoted a lot of his time to the project, in between moving house, and all in his first year of retirement. We are enormously in his debt. Readers will see from the article below the tremendous progress being made. We feel that we might be on the verge of a significant breakthrough in developing cancer support in Lithuania.
- In all of this work, we have been guided and encouraged by the Franciscan Brothers of the St Francis Cancer Support Centre at Kretinga, together with their close collaborators David Holliday and his daughter Liudovika Pakalkaite. Their plans for the new Cancer Centre at Klaipeda are moving ahead with fund-raising and awareness-raising. Their second annual Fun Run at the end of May, attended by three TTT Trustees, had thousands of participants running various distances of up to 10kms, including the Lithuanian Foreign Minister (formerly Ambassador in London) Vygaudas Usackas, who had flown back from Vietnam to take part. The Franciscans sold cardboard bricks as a symbol of contributing to the new centre and many companies sponsored concerts and other elements of a real fun day. The event got national press coverage and thus raised the profile of the project. TTT Chairman Michael Peart, and Macmillan CEO, Ciaran Devane, have both accepted invitations to become Patrons of the St Francis project.
- By the year's end, there will have been a massive transfer of know-how from the foremost practitioners of cancer support in the UK to the groups in Lithuania that have ambitions to provide something similar for the thousands of patients who currently have little in the way of information and support. The generous support of BLS Members and other donors has contributed substantially to this work.

- Another project that was led by Tom Macan made a good impact. TTT identified in 2007 “arts-in-health” as an area in which the UK had world-class expertise but was little understood in Lithuania. We identified a potential partner who was planning a conference and workshop on this subject in Vilnius in mid-2009, arranged for her to meet key UK experts in late 2008, and helped her to “make the project fly”. The conference overcame some substantial hurdles, took place, and achieved an attendance of almost 200. The workshop, held in the former SS Peter and Paul monastery in Vilnius, brought together two dozen young artists who produced some wonderful artwork which now hangs in the Children’s Hospital (we hope to arrange for BLS members to be able to see photographs sometime in 2010). Linked to the conference was a Seimas Committee session on arts-in-health at which two of the UK conference speakers gave evidence. This has led to the formation of an official committee (with NGO involvement) which has put the subject on the health-policy agenda. One can hope that conference and workshop participants will help push forward the arts-in-health concept more widely. The cost to TTT has been modest: our role has largely been in contact-making and supporting. We part-funded a young photographer, Ieva Kruopyté, to record the event and her account may be found later in this newsletter. The (unremunerated) commitment from our UK partners has been outstanding.