



Branch Quarterly

Malta Red Cross - First Malta Branch

ISSUE 5 – OCTOBER 2009



It was an intensive summer morning when a group of volunteers took part in a team-building activity at Ghadira Bay. Spending the morning on kayaks, they worked in teams, raced and even jousted. A big thanks to Clark and his team for the fun packed activity.

Please see more pictures of this and other social activities on page 3.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Healthy volunteers make up a healthy team which in turn will be able to provide a premium service. This is why in this issue we have focused on the volunteer, without whom the branch would stall. Social and sports activities, exchanges, as well as ongoing training ensure that the volunteer receives all-round formation. Dissemination of humanitarian principles to third parties and assistance to the general public provide the volunteer with the opportunity to 'give', which is a very important aspect in any voluntary organisation.

All the services that the Malta Red Cross – First Malta Branch provides are only possible thanks to the generous efforts of all volunteers and the trust of all those companies and individuals who use our services.

JAMES XUEREB

In This Issue...

- Volunteers at Solferino
- Notte Bianca 2009
- Demo to Salesian Brigade
- Humaid Donations
- Summer Fun Activities
- Psychological First Aid



HUMAID DONATIONS

As part of the HUMAID project, the Malta Red Cross First Malta Branch and Pharmachemic Trading Agency have teamed up and donated baby wipes, cotton wool and domestic rubber gloves to a number of Church homes where a number of young children are taken care of, and to the Hal Far Open Centre where a number of women, children and families are living. The nuns responsible for the running of the institutions expressed great appreciation as they acknowledged that the contribution will surely help in the upkeep of their children's hygiene.



The chairman of the Malta Red Cross First Malta Branch, Edward Gruppetta, was accompanied by two active volunteers, Vanessa Pisani and Sergio Zammit. Mr.Gruppetta expressed the Branch's satisfaction at being able to alleviate some of the expenses incurred by such institutions through this corporate-social partnership for an activity in pursuance of two of the Red Cross's fundamental principles – humanity and voluntary service.

The First Malta Branch hopes that in the future this collaboration with Pharmachemic can inspire other companies to make a step in the direction of aiding vulnerable groups.

If you are interested to help out by either donating items or by volunteering please contact us on mrc1administration@gmail.com. Even a little of your help can make a big difference in the lives of others and yourself.

Edward Gruppetta

FUN ACTIVITIES

The past few months have seen quite a number of fun activities organised for the volunteers and their families and friends. Below are just some of these activities in pictures.



(Left) It was all about putting the pedal to the metal during an evening session of Karting. (Right) The Bicycle Team took part in the annual pilgrimage from Rabat to Zabbar as part of Zabbar's parish feast.



(Left & Below) Annual Branch BBQ at Pembroke. Long time volunteers Lina Sultana and Stephen Sultana are given a small token of appreciation from the Branch as a sign of gratitude for all their hard work and dedication.



Kayaking at its best!



More photos of our activities, training and posts can be found on our website, Facebook and Hi5 pages.

Sergio Zammit

...with the Salesian Brigade of Sliema



A gloomy August morning soon changed into a lively mood thanks to the Salesian boys and girls who were smiling and waving as soon as they saw the ambulance approaching! The ambulance was surrounded by the members of the Don Bosco family

After a brief introduction and a tour around the well organised campsite, Mr. Camilleri, the camp leader, introduced me to the small and well disciplined congregation. He explained the reason for the request of the ambulance and a team from the First Malta Branch.

After the brief introduction, I carried out a brief explanation of the role of the Red Cross around the globe and the role of the Malta Red Cross locally. The varied work carried out was briefly explained and many of the participants were eager to know more as they asked a lot of questions.

After the introduction, the participants were divided into groups and had the opportunity to board the ambulance. They were given a detailed explanation and information about the equipment on the ambulance and what it is used for. The young ones were very curious since this was their first experience and they listened very carefully. After the ambulance tour, two accident simulations were carried out which involved the use of some of the ambulance equipment too.



This ended with a good joke where one of the participants was showered with cold water as he failed to 'wake up'. The children enjoyed it so much that we spent nearly two hours discussing first aid and accidents instead of the thirty minutes which we had been allocated.

It was a truly memorable experience, not only for the Salesian family but also for the ambulance crew! It is very encouraging to see young people interested in such an important matter.

Edward Gruppetta

Worth a mention...

The work of the Branch would not have been possible without the assistance of our sponsors:



Special thanks to our partners, Intervisions Ltd., distributors of Segways Malta.





VOLUNTEERS ABROAD

Debbie and Gabie, volunteers with the Maltese Red Cross – First Malta Branch, were given the opportunity to attend the International Youth meeting in Solferino this year to represent their branch and the Malta Red Cross during the celebrations of the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Solferino.

On the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Solferino, and the foundation of the Red Cross/ Red Crescent Movement, along with the usual fiaccolata held every year, the 3rd International youth meeting took place. 500 youths from over 130 different countries took part in this event. On arrival, the camp was beautifully arranged by the Italian Red Cross with huge white tents sitting next to each other. Loud music and people cheering welcomed us to the opening ceremony. All the youths assembled in the welcome tent. Strong and inspiring messages were delivered by the youth leaders and they briefed us on the aims and goals of this international meeting.



The youth meeting consisted of workshops and emergency response simulations. Each participant was given the opportunity to attend three workshops over 3 days. The workshop addressed various humanitarian issues such as climate change, HIV and AIDS and discrimination. Small groups of 40 participants took part in each workshop, where discussions were held and experiences from different societies were shared as well.



Discussions were sometimes controversial but there was one common goal which was to find ways to improve within society. During each workshop we had to come up with the key issues of the topic of the day and the way forward through our national societies. This was done for every workshop and a consensus was drafted on the final day. This became the youth declaration which was to be presented at the Geneva Convention later on in the week and served as a call to the world leaders and to the world. It was quite amazing to feel a part of such an important event.

The fiaccolata was a remarkable experience to conclude this youth meeting. The true spirit of Red Cross was brought out in the hearts of each and every person present there. It was amazing to see that people from all parts of the world travelled to Solferino to take part in this event. This year a record 15,000 people took part in this 8km procession around the village of Solferino making it three times bigger than any other year. The atmosphere was thrilling, people singing and dancing along the way and everyone wanting to take a picture with the Maltese group! By night the view was spectacular; the torch-lit procession looked never-ending along the winding roads of Solferino. The night was concluded with a display of fireworks while we enjoyed a much deserved rest after such a long walk.



The whole experience was amazing. I got to know people from all over the world by listening to them speak about their different cultures. I learnt a great deal as well. One important lesson I have learnt was that in order to make a difference in the world we must first change ourselves. Even little actions can go a long way; doing one good thing can serve as example for others. We, as youth may act as role models with our actions. The importance of youth as agents of behavioural change was strongly emphasized throughout this event. The Red Cross Red Crescent movement may serve as an opportunity to make a change on a greater scale, despite the cultural and religious differences. Being present at this meeting gave a sense of unity, as we were all there to present principles of humanity common to all.

Gabie Azzopardi

Note: Becoming a volunteer with the First Malta Branch also means benefiting from various opportunities to take part in workshops and meetings both locally and internationally. The best way for our volunteers to increase their knowledge and experiences is for them to meet other volunteers from different countries and backgrounds. We would also like to broaden our EU funded opportunities and if you have experience in this field, we would like to hear from you. For more information please contact us on mrc1administration@gmail.com or call 79000112.



Ambulance Posts

NOTTE BIANCA - LEJL IMDAWWAL 2009

On Saturday 3rd October, the Malta Red Cross – First Malta Branch was called in to assist the Civil Protection Department and the health authorities in giving First Aid coverage in the annual cultural event of Notte Bianca.

Our capital city, Valletta, built during the rule of the Knights of St John of Jerusalem and which stands up proud with its bastions, looked at its very best on this special night, a night in which some estimated 50,000 people experienced the city in its majestic form.

It was during this night when this magnificent world heritage site was not allowed to sleep, when buildings dating from the 16th century such as churches, palaces, museums, theatres and gardens came to life. The whole city was packed with people moving from one of the eighty spots to another and trying to make the most of the over 170 events organised. The usually quiet streets were covered in feast decorations and filled with the melodic sounds of latin, jazz, soul and pop music, with the most popular event being visits to Castille, St John's Co-Cathedral and the President's Palace, where people queued for over half an hour. It was clear that people took the opportunity to visit these places, which they would otherwise never get to view.



The Malta Red Cross – First Malta Branch was represented by a crew of twenty-three trained volunteers, five vehicles and six bicycles. The bicycle team had the specific task of patrolling the less busy streets in the outskirts of the city. The rest of our volunteers professionally manned two out of five clinics which were spread around Valletta. Our branch provided two fully equipped ambulances, a mini-van to back-up volunteers, a pick-up rescue van which had the main purpose of carrying equipment and bicycles before and after use and a quad-bike which was the link to the

Valletta Waterfront which was also alive with activity.

Thanks to the effort and dedication of all those involved, this year's Notte Bianca has once again turned out to be a great success.

A BIG THANKS goes to all volunteers who enthusiastically spent most of the night working hand in hand with members of the Health department and other entities. It is indeed through their hard work and dedication that we can be of service to the Maltese community during such big events.

For more information on Ambulance Posts and First Aid Services kindly contact Robert Brinciau on 79000112.

Paulette Fenech

PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID TIPS

When people are first faced with disaster and you first meet them, intense emotions are often present and appropriate. They are a result of intense fear, uncertainty, and apprehension. The following are a few tips derived from internet sources that give us an idea how important the first aiders' approach is when dealing with both the victims of an accident or disaster and their relatives and friends.

Remain Calm

- Sit or stand close to the casualty.
- Adopt an open posture.
- Make eye contact at all times.
- Relax; remember that the first aiders' feelings are usually communicated through body language, the way they speak and the decisions they make.
- Use a soft but clear voice.
- Smile (not laugh).
- Use open and welcoming gestures.
- Allow the person you are dealing with to feel comfortable with your intervention.

Be Polite and Clear

- Explain who you are and ask the person what they would like to be called.
- Explain why you are asking questions.
- Speak with respect.
- Be positive
- Ask the person what they would like to be called.
- Use Mr. and Ms. Unless the person asks you to use a first name.

If the patient:

Challenges authority or refuses to follow directions:

- Answer calmly and repeat your statement calmly.
- Do not assert control. Let the person gain control of self.
- Remain professional at all times.
- Rephrase your request.
- Give the person time to think about your request or the implications of his/her refusal.

Become Threatening:

- If the person becomes threatening or intimidating and does not respond to your attempts to calm them, seek immediate assistance.

Loses control and becomes agitated:

- Reply calmly.
- State that you may need assistance to help them.

Adapted from "Psychological First Aid," the Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress at www.centerforthestudyoftraumaticstress.org and "Nebraska Disaster Behavioural Health Psychological First Aid Curriculum" at www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/dtac/EducationTraining.asp.

James Xuereb

Malta Red Cross

First Malta Branch

The Team

Edward Gruppetta (Chairperson)
James Xuereb (Courses Co-ordinator)
Charmaine Micallef (Treasurer)
Marie Anne DeBattista (Branch Secretary)
Robert Brincau (DRT Coordinator)
Owen Micallef (Marketing and PR Officer)
Michael Falzon (DRT Consultant)
Sergio Zammit (Activities and B.D.C. Officer)
Vanessa Pisani (Equipment Officer)
Paulette Fenech (Ambulance Services Officer)
Lina Sultana (First Aid Technical Advisor)
Kevin Carbonaro (Webmaster)

For more information about the Branch, including our Ambulance Service and First Aid Courses, and if you wish to become a volunteer with the world's most prominent Humanitarian organization, contact us on:

(+356) 79000112

mrcladministration@gmail.com

www.mrc1.org.mt