ANNUAL BULLETIN OF THE ASSOCIATION OF PARENTS
OF CHILDREN WITH MALIGNANT DISEASES "ISKRA"

iskra

No.7 / February 15, 2022

ISSN 2831-0764

ANNUAL BULLETIN NO.7/FEBRUARY 2022.

General Assembly is the highest body of the Association and consists of all full members of the Association.
The Assembly meeting is held once a year.

Association President:
Dijana Beric, B.Sc. Economist

Management Board:
Vita Malesevic, B.A. Chair
Tatjana Stojcic, Deputy Chair
Milan Beric, B.A., Member
Rada Trivic, Member
Milos Malesevic, Board Member on behalf of MladiCe (Management Board)

Supervisory Board::
Mirko Malesevic, B.A. Chair
Vladan Pejic, Member
Mile Trivic, Member

iskra
ASSOCIATION OF PARENTS OF CHILDREN
WITH MALIGNANT DISEASES “ISKRA”

IMPRESSUM

Publisher:
Association of Parents' of Children with
Malignant Diseases "Iskra"

For the Publisher:
Dijana Beric, B.Sc. Economist, President of the Association

Editor-in-Chief:
Milan Beric, B.A. Association Board Member

Authors of Texts:
Dijana Beric, Vita Malesevic, Milan Beric, Katica Kerkez,
Andrea Pecanac, Rada Trivic, Milijana Kujaca, Dimitrije Terzic,
Milos Malesevic and Milica Jacimovic

Graphic Design:
Daniel Grujic

Proof-reader:
Sandrijela Radjenovic Kasagic, B.A.

Printing:
Europrint, Banja Luka

Circulation:
200 copies

WE ARE PROUD

Medal
OF NATIONAL MERITS

On the occasion of January 9, the Day of the Republic of Srpska, the President of the Republic of Srpska, Milorad Dodik, awarded the Association of Parents of Children Suffering from Malignant Diseases “ISKRA” with Medal of National Merits. Medal of National Merits was awarded for contributions in humanitarian and spiritual work, which contributes to the general affirmation of the Republic of Srpska.

The Association President, Diana Beric, received the medal at the award ceremony on January 9, 2018.

It is a great honour for the Association, but also a responsibility for the future.

ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT ADDRESS

Dear friends and donors, dear children and parents

Another year marked by the coronavirus pandemic has passed. There have been big changes in the way we work and behave. As always, we had to focus on children who are under treatment for malignant diseases.

Due to the unfavourable epidemiological situation, the Parents' House was closed to all visits, while some other project activities were postponed.

It was a difficult year for doctors and medical staff at the Department of Paediatric Haematooncology, UCC RS. Most of the children successfully completed their treatment even under these circumstances, but we must not forget our angels who failed to cope with a serious illness.

To our great joy, this year we have managed to visit a rehabilitation camp on Mount Tara, and the children were thrilled. The camp was organised in compliance with all safety measures of protection against coronaviruses.

We hope that the pandemic will soon be over and that we will work and act in full capacity again, in accordance with our goals and objectives.

Sincerely,

Dijana Beric, B.Sc. Economist
President of the Association

PLAQUE

GREATEST LITTLE HEROES

According to the decision of the Editorial Board of “Nezavisne novine”, children suffering from malignant diseases are the most prominent figures in 2021.

As part of their traditional manifestation, they handed over the plaque “Greatest Little Heroes” to our Association, as well as to the Association “Heart for Children” in FBiH, as a token of their continued support to our little heroes in their struggles. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts for pointing out the problems that our children and their parents face during the long-term treatment process in your December campaign and for recognizing the importance of informing the public about all aspects of this struggle.

Source: Nezavisne novine, December 13, 2021

Humane representatives of “Iskra”: To fight for life is a burden and courage

We have been operating for seven years and the very start was the most difficult period. We had to start from our own experience and present our story to the public first, break the ice.

At that moment, it seemed that we were a lone case, today it is different. A lot has been done since the first day, we have set many goals and we can proudly say that we have achieved very good results and we will continue to do so in the future. The thing is that we just have to persevere, said Dijana Beric, President, and Vita Malesevic, “Iskra” Association Management Board Chair.

Given that they went through the fight against the vicious disease together with their children, they have decided to be part of the whole story out of gratitude because their children are alive and healthy today, after having successfully completed the treatment. And, of course, there is a huge desire to help. In an interview for “Nezavisne”, they talked about the Association of Parents of Children with Malignant Diseases “Iskra”, about the importance of the Parents’ House and everything they encounter and struggle with today.”

NN: What is the mission and goal of the “Iskra” Association?

MALESEVIC: I have to start with my personal story, because it is the backbone. I am the mother of a child treated for leukaemia and that is why I am part of this story. My son was treated in Banja Luka and there was no Parents’ House at that time. It was not a problem for me, because I live in this city, but I realized how difficult it was for families who were not from Banja Luka.

Parents of the children who were treated here, and lived in the surrounding places, had to find an apartment privately, they did not know the city and it rarely happened that someone could find a suitable apartment. They were forced to take a taxi when the child’s immunity was weakened, and all that cost a lot. Colleague Dijana’s son was treated in Belgrade and following the example of the Parents’ House there, we came up with the idea to help children being treated for malignant diseases and their parents. Our goal was to create something that would help them in the most difficult time by ensuring a place where they would feel home. I know how much it meant to me to share my worries with those who could understand what I was experiencing. It is the mission. A house to provide that positive energy, a place for children when they have to leave the department, with all necessary conditions and people who can understand them. There is no white coat ...

BERIC: My situation is specific because my son was treated in Belgrade and there was an association there that provided support to children and parents. Although it was nothing much, it was very significant to me.

The support may have been short-lived, but it was striking and so strong that I still have that feeling, after so many years it still keeps me. The feeling of being helped by someone you don't know when it's hardest for you and your child can't be described in words. For this reason, I accepted to do something similar in Banja Luka without thinking. I felt it was the right thing to do.

NN: You work with the same strength and zeal, what is it that makes you go faster and do better?

BERIC: Maybe we are doing this out of gratitude because our children are alive and well today and that they have successfully completed their treatment. In addition, we want to help as much as possible. It is as if God gave indescribable strength.

MALESEVIC: We are driven by a strong desire to help others. I come here and joke with women, then I see them start laughing, and it's hard to get a smile from parents facing that situation and I guess that it takes us up. The feeling when the doctor tells you the diagnosis cannot be explained, the world around you collapses and everything turns upside down. You can't breathe, you don't know how to behave. Well, we want to help other parents and that keeps us here.

NN: You have achieved a lot so far and you are not giving up, what are your further plans?

MALESEVIC: Our goal is to maintain the House, no doubt. But our long-term goal would be to expand the Paediatric Department at UCC. There are only four rooms at the department and it may happen that a child is isolated because s/he is very ill and his/her immunity is completely damaged, and then the child occupies one room so that only three rooms are left. All the other children, who may also have very bad immunity at that time have to come to those three rooms. Another issue is that we do not have a day-care hospital and parents and their children have to wait for a doctor to receive them on the windy balcony. Conditions are certainly much better than five or six years ago, so a big mitzvah and a great thing would be to expand that department and ensure the best possible conditions for children.

BERIC: Since the establishment, we have remained faithful to the basic priority that is to ensure the well-being of our users - children suffering from malignant diseases and their loved ones. Our mission is to ensure the best conditions and the best diagnosis, treatment, care and follow-up for children with malignant diseases after treatment, with greatest prospects for cure and recovery, and provide their parents with active, permanent and meaningful help and support. We provide information for children and parents, psychological and social assistance to families, outpatient accommodation for children and families in the Parents' House. We have cooperation with the Haematooncology Department and we provide financial aid to the Department of Paediatric Haematooncology whenever we can. Then we enable rehabilitation of children after the treatment, we organize camps every year and much more.

NN: The fight of the greatest little heroes will mark 2021, how much does it mean to you and how do you view media support?

BERIC: Media support is the only way to reach the public and all citizens. It is very important to make the public aware of the existence of such types of diseases, all those who find themselves in a similar situation have an address to turn to. On the other hand, any support to children who are currently struggling and who have undergone treatment is important. Although you may not see it, every time they hear a reflection of the public or that they are mentioned, you see that charm in them, they regain their self-confidence and you see that it is important to them. They are fighting for their lives, and we, the parents are witnessing their struggle and we can really witness it better than they can.

MALESEVIC: They are heroes for sure, because fighting for life when you don't know what awaits in the future and being aware of that is difficult for an adult, let alone for a child. These children sometimes don't even know what happened to them, so they roll day after day to the final goal, to healing. But the parents take on all the torment and all that burden. The thought of uncertain future, every finding, what the future brings, will the child be able to endure the treatment, whether s/he will accept the medicine or you will have to procure another one which is not available locally, is a heroic act. It is no longer a question of money, which is very much needed, but of how to get the medicine, and then the question of whether the child will accept it at all, and parents are heroes too. That's why this is a big thing.

NN: You have long-term plans, but what are you working on now?

BERIC: In the future, we want to make a slightly bigger overview of children who have completed their treatment. Make the community aware of their return to their home settings and schools. Better understanding is needed for children and parents returning from one, let's call it battlefield, because it's not easy. It lasts for a certain period, not forever. You know, a help in need is a help indeed, when everything is fine, then you don't need help.

MALESEVIC: Treatment does not end when the treatment process is over. There are fears of returning to normal life, but also of relapse of the disease. One can never know what the future brings. Naturally, there are fears because the treatment also brings some side effects. I don't remember the names of the drugs, I call them poison, but again that poison saved my child. In the end, it is important for all of us to be alive.

15 FEBRUARY

INTERNATIONAL CHILDHOOD CANCER DAY

A workshop on making gold ribbons was organized at the Parents' House to meet February 15, the International Childhood Cancer Day.

Our brave children and their mothers made ribbons to be distributed by the Youth and volunteers of the Association "Iskra" on Saturday, February 13, at Krajina Square from 10:00 to 17:00.

Come to the Square, take a ribbon in support of children who are being treated for malignant disease.

On the occasion of marking February 15, MladiCe and Iskra volunteers distributed golden-yellow ribbons, a symbol of the struggle waged by children suffering from malignant diseases. In addition to the ribbons, Iskra's promotional materials, protective masks and balloons were also distributed.

15 FEBRUARY

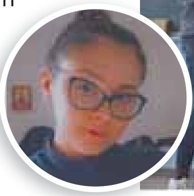
On the occasion of February 15, the International Childhood Cancer Day, we have released balloons in the Parents' House with only one wish: May all children be healthy!

We thank Blicnet Company for thinking of us again. On the occasion of February 15, the International Childhood Cancer Day, they donated sets of linen for all apartments in the Parents' House.

Our friend, Katarina Kujaca, joined the activity to mark February 15, the International Childhood Cancer Day and together with her friends from class IX-1 of the Jovan Ducic Kasindo Primary School in Istocna Ilidza, organized the making of gold ribbons, symbol of children with malignant diseases. We thank all the students, our Milijana Kujaca, and the school staff for their support.

Magdalena Usorac, a student of the Vocational Technical School, also organised the making of gold ribbons in her school, on the occasion of 15 February, the International Childhood Cancer Day. Her classmates and other students wore gold ribbons in support.

Magdalena shared her story of the fight against malignant disease with her friends. Peer support is very important, as is the support of the entire community.



This year, the Museum of the Republic of Srpska once again supported us on the occasion of February 15, the International Childhood Cancer Day of Children.

For the past six years, the Museum has organized art workshops “For Brave Little Hearts” where primary and secondary school children had the opportunity to send messages and support to children being treated for malignant diseases through drawings. This year, due to the coronavirus pandemic, children could not come to the Museum, so an exhibition of works created at traditional events was symbolically held.

15 FEBRUARY

At the National Assembly of the Republic of Srpska session held on February 11, 2021, all MPs and members of the Government wore golden-yellow ribbons, in support of children suffering from malignant diseases. A big THANK YOU!

We thank Mozzart for their donation as part of their traditional “Charity Voucher at Noon” campaign.

SIGNIFICANCE OF REHABILITATION CAMP

This year, the Association of Parents of Children with Malignant Diseases, “Iskra”, has successfully organized the seventh rehabilitation camp for chidlren treated for malignant diseases. The camp called “I can do anything” was held on Mount Tara and lasted for seven days. During their stay at the camp, the participants were accommodated in the hotel “Beli Bor”.

The treatment of malignant diseases is a very long and exhausting process that presumes long-term isolation of sick children, and thus the families get isolated from the society.

In addition to their home, children under treatment are missing all those activities they could do unhindered before the diagnosis of a malignant disease. Childhood cancer is a disease of the whole family, because the months-long isolation of a sick child from his home, brothers and sisters, other parent and peers, leaves consequences on the child and the whole family. Unfortunately, the end of hospital treatment does not end the treatment of malignant disease. Of course, adequate medical care and therapies are the priority, but we must not forget that it is necessary to provide the child with quality recovery and rehabilitation after the intensive hospital treatment.

Our little heroes with a big heart who win the battle against the serious diseases definitely need our help when the treatment is over. Rehabilitation is extremely important for the process of strengthening and returning the family to a normal course of life after healing. The content of the camp and all activities are planned based on the needs of children treated for cancer in order to strengthen their self-confidence, their independence, physical abilities, skills and creativity.

By participating in joint activities, families spend time together and have the opportunity to get to know each other and network. Parents are surrounded by people who face the same or similar life situations and problems that have befallen them, where we can see positive impact of the group, and the exchange of experiences is very important and has a liberating and therapeutic effect. Parents’ stress and anxiety are reduced and family ties are strengthened. The seven-day stay in nature had beneficial effects on all the participants and gave them the opportunity to have a lot of fun and healthy activities that stimulate new healthy habits. All participants had regular daily activities, starting with morning gymnastics, long walks through the woods in the fresh air, nature explorations, sightseeing tours, to evening activities and socializing. Children enjoyed creative and art workshops that their mothers could join, as well as table tennis tournaments, board games and daily sports activities on football and basketball courts. Of special importance is just hanging out with peers that they missed.

In this way, a new, much needed contact with the external environment is achieved, as well as the reintegration into the social community.

We also had organized excursions within the camp. The participants had the opportunity to visit the Raca Monastery, ride the Sarganska Osmica, visit the source of the shortest river in Europe - the river Vrelo, as well as Drvengrad “Mecavnik”. One week passed by quickly, but the impressions from Iskra’s camps shall last for a long time.

Lifelong friendships are made at the camps, and the last day of the camp often ends in tears due to parting. The best evidence of how much these camps mean to our children can be witnessed by the impressions they wrote in one of the workshops at the camp and the fact that everyone is looking forward to the next gathering.

Andrea Pecanac, the Association Secretary

BRAVE STORIES

The book "Brave Stories" was created within the project of psychosocial support. The title stems from boundless courage which is a trait that adorns all our parents and children. Courage to grit their teeth and move on no matter what, despite the fear, pain and uncertain outcome.

It's not easy to cross that path, nor is it easy to go through it all over again by writing about it. In this book, 37 children and their parents describe their experience in treating malignant disease. Their stories, written from hearts and soaked in tears, describe the path of everyone who found themselves at the Department of Paediatric Haematooncology. From the initial anxiety when you read the name of the ward above the door, to the moment you are told the diagnosis. In between these two events, you persistently hope that everything is definitely a mistake and that your hitherto healthy child cannot be ill, especially not from such a dangerous disease. Then they report the diagnosis, and it is the worst moment in every family's life. It seems to you that there is nothing left, but at a certain point you realise that you have to move on.

And then, a million questions arise, and most importantly - will all this end well. I believe that all of us who took part in the creation of this book were driven by the desire to awaken hope in parents who are new in this experience and assure them that everything can end well. This experience of ours is one of the values of "Brave Stories", because every parent and child feels that only someone who has survived the same situation can understand them. Also, sharing experiences is a medicine for the soul, and as Andric says, "nothing binds people like a common and happily experienced misfortune". The support we can give each other is extremely important, while the most important thing in the treatment process is what our dear doctors and nurses do at the Department of Paediatric Haematooncology. Thanks to their expertise, knowledge and commitment, the percentage of cures of our children is at the level of the world's best clinics. What has been somewhat pushed into the background in the treatment process, both in the world and in our country, is psychosocial support, primarily professional psychological help. It can greatly facilitate the lives of parents and children during treatment and their return to everyday life. This was also pointed out by most of the participants in the "Brave Stories" project. Thank you to everyone who was able to reveal the most difficult moments in their life and provide hope and support to others in their experience. In the end, I will paraphrase the wise words of a twelve-year-old girl. In the book "Brave Stories" she wrote that we may not all fight in the same way and with the same strength, but our goal is the same - to find a way and courage to survive all this and stay more or less normal. As one mother says in her story, to rejoice lack of money, bad school grades, failures of household appliances ..., because these are not real problems. Common people do not realise that problems are something completely, completely different.

Katica Kerkez, *Parrents' House "Iskra" Manager and Coordinator of the Project "Brave Stories"*

BRAVE STORIES

With the presentation of the book "Brave Stories" at the Youth Centre, the implementation of the project of psychosocial support of our Association was completed. The project was co-financed by the City of Banja Luka - Department of Culture, Tourism and Social Policy. The activities of the project were aimed at supporting and strengthening parents and children now facing the diagnosis of malignant disease, so that they could easier accept and adapt to the new situation based on the experiences of parents and children who have undergone treatment. We thank Davorin Reljic for the photos.

MARCH 8 IN THE PARENTS' HOUSE

On the occasion of the International Women's Day, we held a workshop on making paper flowers at the Parents' House. Diligent hands created small works of art.

Paula and Marko, students of the fourth grade of the School of Economics, visited the parents' house with their professor, Mrs. Zorica Dukic. On the occasion of March 8, they gave our little ones and their mothers cotton protective masks that they sewed themselves during practical classes. Thank you for the nice gift.

We would like to thank the Ministry of Family, Youth and Sports of the Republic of Srpska for making mothers in the Parents' House happy with gifts granted on the occasion of March 8.

They also donated hygiene and disinfection products, and school supplies for our children.

REHABILITATION CAMP **“I CAN DO ANYTHING”**

Association of Parents “Iskra” successfully organized the seventh rehabilitation camp for families of children treated for malignant diseases.

The camp called “I can do anything” this year was held on Mount Tara and lasted for seven days.

On this occasion, we would like to thank UniCredit Bank for recognizing the importance of rehabilitation after long-term treatment and co-financing our project within the initiative “Childhood Support”.

Rehabilitation after the completion of treatment is extremely important for the process of strengthening and returning to normal life.

The seven-day stay in nature provided an opportunity to all participants to socialize and enjoy a large number of fun activities.

The merry company is staying in the hotel “Beli bor” and everyone is looking forward to enjoying the nature.

CAMP TARA

Already on the first day of the camp, all participants went for a joint walk and explored the nature.

A beautiful walk to the lookout point on Tara and the monastery of Serbian saints.

As part of the camp on Tara, we visited the Rača Monastery, rode the Shargan Osmica, visited the source of the shortest river in Europe - the Vrelo River, as well as Drvengrad “Mecavnik”.

SPORTS ACTIVITIES AT THE CAMP

Children enjoyed sports activities and various social games at the camp.

CAMP TARA

WORKSHOPS AT THE CAMP TARA

Creative workshops were held this year with our long-time collaborator Natasa Masta, who responded to our invitation and delighted all our little and big heroes and artists.

Naturally, this year Natasa presented us with a wide range of her workshops, some of which were done in nature. After the workshop, there was a presentation of works and joint photography.

CAMP TARA

A View from MY Angle (parents)

After a two-year break, it was nice to see dear people. The children were especially excited, according to my daughter - “this is the most beautiful friendship” she has had in one year. In the meantime, Katarina has started skiing, swimming, travelling, but socializing at the camp is invaluable to her. We are all just people connected by a common experience - a malignant disease.

Contrary to the hardships of life, Mount Tara welcomed us with a special charm, lit by the July sun and summer breeze. I really enjoyed what we have experienced here: beautiful lookouts, walking trails and the peace that is special on this mountain. The organization of the camp and the delicious food at the Hotel “Beli bor” inspired our great impressions of our camp.

Milijana Kujaca, B.A.

***

How many times have you heard that God puts us to the test, the weight we can bear? Are you one of those who believe that our struggle develops our strength? Every man is different, and he copes differently with the difficulties that befall them in life. Whether you are a person facing a problem or it is someone close to you, you want to find a solution to the situation. It is difficult for a man who is going through trouble to understand why bad things happen to him. Trying to find the right way to cope with the adversities that befell them, some people turn to spirituality and begin to question where they have gone wrong, thus getting to know themselves and their strength. This story is for all those who are facing a hard time. Everything in life happens for a reason. The only question is whether we can use it for our own good.

Rada Trivic, the Association Board Member

About the Camp in brief (children)

This year’s camp was held at the end of July on Tara Mount. It was my first camp and socializing with peers who went through the same or similar problems I did. I was very excited when Katica called me, and I was looking forward to meeting her. We visited Mecavnik and Sarganska osmica, but I had the best time around the hotel and the field where we played basketball, talked and stayed late at night. I was relaxed and happy. I realized that we are great heroes and we are all alike, gathered in one place with a lot of understanding.

I hope that a similar gathering will be organized this year and that we will all meet together again and have great moments.

Dimitrije Terzic, MladiCe Association

***

No matter how difficult our illnesses were and seemed impossible to overcome, they brought us all together and enabled us to have incredible friendships. On the occasion of our great victories, the Association organizes a camp every year, which leaves many pages written in my diary. This year we travelled to the Tara National Park. In those seven days we had wonderful experiences - from morning gymnastics, through daily tours of new places, to evening parties.

We crossed the most beautiful lookouts on Tara with the “Sarganska osmica”, i.e. the famous “Cira train”, and even reached Mokra Gora and “Drvengrad” of the famous director Emir Kusturica. The guide would greet us every day with new ideas and new places to visit. After visiting the Raca Monastery and the beautiful Perucac spring, we walked the trim trails and had fun with various activities. This is a beautiful experience for each of us, the time to make a lot of new friends, but also the time to find new interests that you are striving for.

Milica Jacimovic, MladiCe Association

GOLDEN SEPTEMBER

iskra

ZASVIJETLI ZLATNO

ZA DJECU OBOLJELU OD RAKA

Maligna bolest djeteta mijenja život porodice iz temelja i zapravo je bolest cijele porodice. Psihosocijalna podrška djeci oboljeloj od raka i njihovim roditeljima važan je, ali donekle zanemaren segment u tretmanu ove bolesti.

BUDITE UZ NAŠE MALE HEROJE VELIKOG SRCA I POMOZITE IM U BORBI ZA NJIHOVO SUTRA

OBOJTE SEPTEMBAR U ZLATNO

iskra

Association of Parents of Children with Malignant Diseases "Iskra" is once again celebrating Golden September, the month of support to children and adolescents suffering from and treated for malignant diseases.

In the month of support, we want to draw attention to the problems faced by families of children suffering from malignant diseases, not only during the treatment, but also after it, when they need to return to their home setting and continue their usual life.

Be with our little heroes with a big heart. Paint September in gold in support of children with cancer and help them fight for their tomorrow.

Golden September: Support of the Media Group "Oslobodjenje"

"Oslobodjenje" Media Group, in cooperation with "Iskra" and "Heart for Children" associations, will launch a campaign in September aimed at raising awareness of the importance of supporting children with cancer and their parents or guardians.

- We are implementing this project in cooperation with the entity associations that care for children with cancer, namely the Association of Parents of Children with Malignant Diseases "Iskra" (Republic of Srpska) and "Heart for Children" (Federation of BiH) so that our journalist teams will record stories on the territory of the whole of BiH. In this way, we will give an opportunity to doctors and other experts to express their views and the views of the profession on this issue - says Zlatko Kljajic, director of the "Oslobodjenje servisi" Group.

- We are grateful to "Oslobodjenje" and "O Kanal" for giving us the space to speak publicly about all aspects of the fight against cancer in children. It is often an arduous, difficult and long journey. The fact that three out of four children win the battle against cancer speaks for itself. Sick children and their parents need support of the society - said Dijana Beric, President of the Association of Parents of Children with Malignant Diseases "Iskra" Banja Luka.

GOLDEN SEPTEMBER

ZLATNI SEPTEMBAR

MJESEC PODRŠKE DJECI OBOLJELOJ OD KARCINOMA

DONIRAJ PUTEM HUMANITARNOG BROJA 17010

SRCE ZA DJECU

DONIRAJ PUTEM ŽIRO RAČUNA

ISKRA BANJA LUKA

161 0000 123 350 061

Raiffeisen bank d.d. BiH

Tonight, Banja Luka shone in golden colour in support of children suffering from malignant diseases. The City Administration Building and the Cultural Centre Banski dvor SHINE GOLD!

SEVEN YEARS OF “ISKRA” ASSOCIATION

On November 4, “Iskra” Association of Parents celebrates its 7th anniversary.

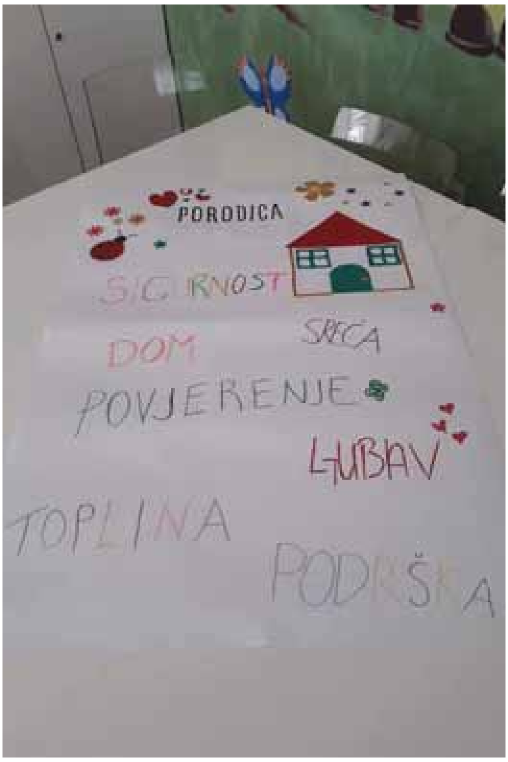
The main goal of our Association is to improve the quality of life of children suffering from malignant diseases as well as their families.

РЕПУБЛИКА СРПСКА
Предсједник Републике

ОДЛИКУЈЕ

Удружење родитеља дјеце оболеле од малигних болести „Искра“, Бања Лука

Медаљом заслуге за народ



We are especially proud of the construction and smooth functioning of the Parents’ House, which houses parents and children who are being treated for malignant diseases at the Department of Paediatric Haematooncology, UCC RS.

In 5 years of successful work of the Parents’ House, more than 130 families from the entire Republic of Srpska have found help, support and a warm family atmosphere in the house.

Under the auspices of our Association, a network of young people treated for cancer MladiCe RS has been operating since 2018.

Aware of the importance of rehabilitation after treatment, we have so far successfully organized seven summer and one winter rehabilitation camp for all family members of children with malignant diseases.

In line with our goals, we strive to provide assistance and support to the Department of Paediatric Haematooncology of the UCC RS whenever we can.

Through the provision of information, psychosocial support and numerous programs, we strive to empower parents and children, as well as to inform the public about child malignancy and how they can help and contribute.

In order to ensure firmly structured and properly organized care and nursing for sick children, with the support of their families, the support of the whole society is needed.

SEVEN YEARS OF “ISKRA” ASSOCIATION

Fifth anniversary of the Parents' House "Iskra"

8. septembar 2021.

GODIŠNJICA RADA

5 RODITELJSKE KUĆE „ISKRA"

Roditeljska kuća otvorila je svoja vrata za djecu oboljelu od raka i njihove roditelje 8. septembra 2016. godine

Od tada ona je bila dom daleko od kuće za više od 120 porodica

Saznanje da dijete boluje od raka u momentu mijenja život cijele porodice. U toj teškoj životnoj situaciji svi oni u našoj roditeljskoj kući uvijek će dobiti snagu, razumijevanje, utjehu i toplu ljudsku podršku, ali i trenutke radosti kad im je sreća najpotrebnija.

iskra

On September 8, the Association of Parents of Children with Malignant Diseases "Iskra" marked the fifth anniversary of the Parents' House.

The first children tenants with their parents moved into the house in 2016, and since then, more than 120 families from all over the Republic of Srpska have found a "home away from home".

The Parents' House was built on the initiative of "Iskra" Association, and provides free accommodation for parents and children who are being treated for malignant diseases at the Department of Haematooncology. In addition to free accommodation for sick children and their parents, the House provides support, a warm family atmosphere and a place where they can forget about hospital treatment, at least for a moment, and return part of their suddenly lost childhood through play.

In the five years of its existence, the Parents' House has implemented numerous actions, projects and various workshops with the aim of improving the quality of life of children undergoing difficult and long-term treatment. Since 2017, classes have been organized for children of primary school age, which enables them to continue regular schooling with their peers after treatment. Nine children attended the school in the Parents' House.

Knowing that a child is suffering from cancer instantly changes the life of the whole family. In this difficult life situation, all of them will always receive encouragement, understanding, comfort and warm human support in our parents' house, but also moments of joy when it is most needed.

Thank you for your support!

The pioneer team of FC Naprijed from Banja Luka wore Iskra T-shirts before the start of the championship match against their peers from FC Spartak.

Thank you to them ♡ for supporting all children being treated for malignant diseases, and on behalf of all those who have stayed in the Iskra Parents' House in the first five years of its work.

Thank you for your support!

The volleyball players of OK Borac - Stars entered the third round match of the Second League of the Republic of Srpska against the team from Prijedor in Iskra T-shirts. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts for the support to all the children being treated for malignant diseases, and on behalf of all those who have stayed in the Iskra Parents' House in the first five years of its work!

The priest of the Parish of Paprikovac, Slobodan Marin, consecrated the Parents 'House on the occasion of Saint Nectarios of Aegina, the patron saint of the Parents' House.

On that occasion, our premises and the icon of Saint Nectarios of Aegina were consecrated.

The embellishment of the wall of the Parents' House was completed by setting up the props.

Thank you from the bottom of our hearts to our dear artists who painted the wall with cheerful and playful motifs thus making the stay of children in the Parents' House more pleasant.

On the occasion of the International Childhood Cancer Day, we presented infusion pumps to the Department of Paediatric Haematooncology.

It is one of the Associaiton goals to make efforts to facilitate the department's daily struggle for the recovery of children whenever we have the opportunity.

This year, our Association attended the traditional manifestation marking Children's Week at the RS Museum again.

Children's Week is marked under the slogan "Together we can do anything", organized by the Department for Educational Work of the Museum of the Republic of Srpska.

The aim of this event is to raise awareness of children's rights.

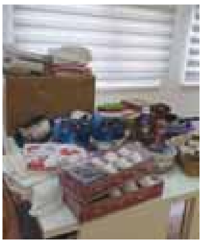
Children's Week at the RS Museum was organized in cooperation with the Republic of Srpska Ombudsman for Children, sponsored by the Republic of Srpska Ministry of Education and Culture.

We visited the media group Oslobodjenje in Sarajevo and took the opportunity to present them with a Letter of Thanks on the occasion of the Golden September campaign, which was realized in support of children with cancer and their parents.

A new kitchen has been set up at the Department of Paediatric Haematooncology, a gift from our Association to employees who lovingly make our children's days easier.

Also, on the occasion of marking Golden September, the month of raising awareness in support of children suffering from malignant diseases, we donated things the Department needed.

In accordance with our goals, the Association strives to provide assistance and support to the Department of Paediatric Haematooncology whenever possible, thus facilitating a long stay in the hospital to parents and children.



INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S DAY

Today is November 20, International Children's Day.

On this day in 1989, the Convention on the Rights of the Child was signed, which contains universal standards that states must guarantee to every child.

Children are the most important and vulnerable members of our society, especially children suffering from malignant diseases. We think of them, respect the rights of every child and show them that they are not alone. Let every day be a day to take care of children.

YOUNG MAN WHO WON THE BATTLE WITH LEUKAEMIA: **WE ALL CHANGE ON THAT PATH**

Source: Nezavisne novine, December 13, 2021

Illness changes a person by force. It also marks children who are treated when they are young, who, when they grow up, hardly remember that period, and I think that the worst is when the disease occurs in the period when we are aware. It's hard to accept, especially when there's no preparation. One day I'm well, the day after I am at the Oncology Department.

A young man from Banja Luka, Milos Malesevic, and a fourth-year student of the Faculty of Medicine in Banja Luka reveals. He was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukaemia when he was 14.

He told us that he and his family needed time to get used to the new situation, to accept it and find strength to utter the word "cancer" and to go through the difficult struggle together.

"It was in 2013. I had no specific symptoms, as if I was having a cold, nothing serious. We visited our family doctor and blood count indicated a huge number of leukocytes and they doubted that it might be a serious disease. Naturally, they sent me to the Paediatric Haematology Oncology Department of UCC RS. I spent a couple of days at the Department waiting for the diagnosis to be confirmed. Ten days later, I was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukaemia and the therapy started", says Milos.

His mother stayed with him at the hospital for some time. The staff provided a great support to him, but still, he admits, it was very difficult.

"The process itself took a long time, at a certain point it seemed that time had stopped, and then as if it was flying. Later you get used to everything, the nurses become members of your family, towards the end of the therapy the feeling of alienation disappears, the feeling that I was somewhere I did not belong. That was the period before the Parents' House, so we didn't have the option to move away from the ward. We could have gone home, but only when the results were perfect, we all spent the rest of the period in the hospital ", says Milos.

With a smile on his face, he recalls that boredom was the worst thing for him and other children staying at the ward.

- "It may sound ridiculous to say that the hardest thing was boredom, given all the stings, therapy and everything that was done, but when you are at home you always have something to do. You play computer games, study, hang out, anything, and suddenly you are in a setting where you can't do anything, you're bedridden, you move very little, you have two or three channels on the TV, there was no internet at that time and you are just bored, constantly ", says the young man from Banja Luka, who used the idle time to learn two foreign languages while in the hospital room.

-He points out that the opening of the Parents' House in Banja Luka significantly facilitated the

lives of seriously ill children and added that he is engaged in the work of the House through the "MladiCe RS",- Network of young people cured of cancer.

"Given the current situation, the Parents 'House is not functioning as before, children are still there, but we are not allowed to visit them, work with them, and implement the activities that make the Parents' House. However, it is still some middle ground between the department and home. A lot of children who stay at the Parents' House for a long time start to see it as their home, because there are no white coats, it is not hospital rooms, their families are with them and that really makes everything easier. Before the coronavirus, we organized film evenings for those children, various workshops and gatherings for them and their parents ", says Milos.

He says that his parents are members of the Association of Parents of Children with Malignant Diseases "Iskra", hence he got involved in activities aimed at helping the sick children and their parents, because he realised how important it is to be in contact with someone who managed to heal during his treatment.

"Although it may not mean much to children, I remember it didn't mean much to me to see someone who managed to heal, it was and it is a big thing for parents. It meant a lot to my parents to see someone who had been treated 10-15 years before and was then healthy, had a family, children", recalls this brave young man who decided to be back among the sick children and support them, despite the trauma he had experienced while a teenager, and perhaps to help them as a doctor in the future.

He says that the disease was not a trigger for him to study medicine. On the contrary, it was almost an obstacle to follow his childhood decision to choose the faculty of medicine.

"I am studying medicine and I had planned to enrol the faculty before I got sick, but when it happened there was a dilemma whether to study medicine or not, regardless of the wish. I wondered if I should expose myself to such stress. Stress is a critical factor for any disease, especially for malignancy. But I was persistent and followed my dream in spite of advice given to me by others. Given that I experienced cancer on my own skin, and through the work of the Parents' House, I got used to what cancer brings along and it is not a taboo for me any longer. When I enter the Parents' House, I do not think about negative aspects of treatment. I know that healing is possible, so I focus on that. I understand what the children are going through and I am doing my best not to think about their current suffering, but the outcome", says Milos.

Unfortunately, the fight against the disease does not end once the therapy has been completed.

"We all change from the beginning to the end of treatment, because it is an experience for life. And it brings many more situations after the treatment itself. We try to talk about the late consequences of cancer, because even though the therapy is over in a year or two, the fight against cancer itself and everything it brings takes much longer. In the past, there were not many young people who survived such diseases, so it was not possible to do research on the exact consequences, and only now, when we are involved in this spectrum of events at the European level, we can see that there are consequences throughout life in a way ", says Milos.

He points out that the conditions for treatment and the attitude towards the sick have significantly improved since the time he was treated.

"The entire team at the Oncology Department is doing their best to make every aspect of the treatment work to the absolute maximum. The conditions were good even then, it is a hospital, and no one expects a playroom there. Everything was good, from extreme humanity to compliance with all the therapy and complete treatment. Of course, with the opening of the Parents' House, all that became even better and the department itself has progressed a lot, from installing the Internet to additional tidying up of rooms and improving conditions for all children ", emphasizes the young man from Banja Luka.

As for the attitude of the society towards the sick, he says that the situation is much better now than when he was being treated.

"While I was being treated, I had some unpleasant situations. I remember scenes where people turned around and walked away from me when they saw me without hair or altered by therapy. I understand that it is fear and prejudice and everything, in a way the fear of hurting the person, but again it affects the person and no matter how hard our people try, there is that mentality of "pu pu, far be it". People don't even like to talk about it, because in a way, many of us believe that what we say, we attract. It is much, much better now ", says Milos.

He points out that he can see progress through the activities in the Association.

"Eight years have passed since my treatment, and I spent five years in the Iskra Association. Through my work in the Association, I see that this picture has changed, when we are on the square and distribute our leaflets, promotional material, there is no more repulsion. In the first year, people bypassed us in a wide circle, especially when they saw childhood malignancy. Usually, the first question was: 'How much money should I give', while we do not ask for money in such actions because we know that many are not able to donate. I can't say that it is an ideal situation now, but the progress is really visible ", states Milos.

Unfortunately, he learned from his own experience how people experience cancer before and after they get sick.

"It would be nice to tell the sick children - stay positive, everything will be fine- but these are vain pieces of advice. It is difficult to say anything about that first period. When we find out what is happening, we are all in the phase of denial and we need to let that period pass. You don't have to force yourself to do anything. No matter how much we want to wake up the following day and not be here, it's impossible. It should be accepted as part of life, because it is a disease. Some people begin to question whether they have done something wrong, especially more religious people, but that should not be done. We should not look for a reason, but accept and try to go through it together with the family ", concludes this brave young man.

VOLUNTEER CORNER

On the occasion of Golden September, the month of raising awareness about cancer in children, volunteers of our Association distributed promotional material on Krajina Square and invited fellow citizens to come to the Cultural Center Banski dvor and the Banja Luka City Assembly at 8 pm, the buildings will be lit in gold in support of all children struggling with malignant diseases.

MladiCe and Iskra volunteers volunteered at the First Banja Luka Marathon.

We gladly accepted the invitation of the organizers of the first Banja Luka marathon, Mr Vladimir Selec, to have our Youth and volunteers of the Association volunteer for the marathon.

BLMARATON

SUPPORT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SRPSKA INSTITUTIONS

President of the Republic of Srpska, Zeljka Cvijanovic, the Prime Minister, Radovan Viskovic, and the Minister of Health and Social Welfare, Alen Seranic, met with the representatives of the Association of Parents of Children Suffering from Malignant Diseases "Iskra".

The support to children treated at the Clinic for Children's Diseases, Department of Haemato-Oncology, the Republic of Srpska University Clinical Centre, their parents, program activities of the association, rehabilitation projects and the functioning of the Parents' House were discussed, the Public Relations Bureau of the Republic of Srpska Government reported. The commitment of the institutions of the Republic of Srpska to support the activities of the Iskra Association through current grants to humanitarian organizations and associations, but also through project activities that include rehabilitation was jointly confirmed.

Project "My Family, my Strength"

The project "My family, my strength" was implemented in the Parents' House from May to July. We received funds for the implementation of project activities from the Ministry of Family, Youth and Sports of the Republic of Srpska. We organized art and creative workshops for children staying in the Parents' House, and their mothers, where we socialized, drew and created our own small works of art. Teachers Jovana and Vanja organized online workshops on the topic of family, so they joined us in the story of the importance of family. The project ended with a one-day trip to Hajducke vode.

DONATIONS TO ASSOCIATION

The Petkovic family from Banja Luka made the children in the Parents' House happy with their donation. They brought us a Play Station 4 game console and a few games. We are grateful for the donations that will shorten long days of treatment before going home.

We thank the Charity Association of Women "Duga" for granting us funds from the sale exhibition of works made by participants of the "Small School of Zmijanje Embroidery". Diligent children exhibited their works in the "Petar Kocic" Park, and donated the proceeds to their friends at the Parents' House.

Within the charity project International Orthodox Christian Charities of IOCC, which is implemented in cooperation with the Charity Organization of the Diocese of Zvornik-Tuzla “Trojerucica”, to help families, and to mitigate economic consequences of the pandemic, our Association received hygiene packages for families, members of our Association.

We thank the donors for their help and support to the families of children suffering from malignant diseases.

As part of the action of distributing hygiene packages to families, members of our Association, we owe great gratitude to the company “EuroExpress Express Mail”, which responded to our request and provided us with selfless support.

“EuroExpress Express Mail” delivered packages free of charge to families throughout the Republic of Srpska, to their home addresses. For families from Banja Luka, the packages were delivered to the Parents’ House.

Since this is not the first time they have come out to meet us, we thank them for their invaluable support.

We thank UNIQA Insurance for the valuable donation they gave us as part of their campaign to help homes and associations throughout BiH.

This is not the first time they have thought of us and we thank them for that.

DONATIONS TO ASSOCIATION

Representatives of “Bosnalijek”, the largest pharmaceutical manufacturer in Bosnia and Herzegovina, presented a donation to our Association as part of the 70th anniversary of the Company. In addition to financial resources, disinfectants and packages with food supplements and vitamins were donated too. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts for the donation and support to the Parents’ House.

Our Association was visited by the Mayor of Prnjavor, Mr Darko Tomas, and we would like to thank him for financial donation and support in the work of the Parents’ House. The Municipality of Prnjavor, headed by the Mayor, has shown great understanding for children suffering from malignant diseases. We wholeheartedly thank you for that.

The Parents' house was visited by dear guests from the Sarajevo Association "Heart for Children". Although we hung out outside because of the pandemic, respecting distancing, it was nice to see dear and familiar faces. We also agreed on the details of making a natural hair wig for our Bojana.

Representatives of the Prime Minister's Office, Mr Radovan Viskovic, visited "Iskra" Parents' House and delighted the children with Easter eggs, fruits and gifts on the occasion of the upcoming Easter holidays.

Thank you for your always kind support.

On the occasion of the International Children's Day, representatives of the Association "All the Children of the World" visited the Parents' House of the Association of Parents of Children with Malignant Diseases "Iskra". On this occasion, they presented gifts to children who are being treated at the UCC of the Republic of Srpska, and are staying at the Parents' House. Thank you for your kindness.

Thank you to our fellow citizen for making the residents of the Parents' House happy with her gifts.

THEY VISITED US

On the occasion of Pentecost, the baptismal feast of Trznica, the representatives of this company visited the Parents 'House and handed us gifts for the Parents' House and the Department of Paediatric Haematooncology.

Thank you for your kind support.

On Wednesday, our dear friends Bogdan Stevanovic (Blogdan) and Tamara Klaric from Nurdor made us happy with their visit.

We look forward to our future cooperation.

Employees of the Drenik Ltd. Company from Sarajevo, Doboj Branch, made us happy with their visit and the cleaning and disinfection stuff and other consumables they gave to the tenants in the Parents' House. Many thanks to the "Drenik" Company and to one dad who initiated this visit.

Irina Jefic and Tibor Puskar are young people who received funding from the US Embassy as part of the Youth Leadership project to organize a kNOWledge workshop. Part of the grant funds received to finance the project were intended for our Association, for didactic and educational material, games for Play Station 4, scooters and bicycles for our children.

As part of the "Children's Sunday" event, children from a "Kindergarten" in Gacko made the children staying at the "Iskra" Parents' House happy with gifts.

We are grateful to the staff of the kindergarten, the children and their parents for preparing the gifts.

Our brave Mateja, who also went through the process of treatment and hair loss, has recently had a haircut and decided to donate her hair to friends who are currently undergoing treatment.

In this way, she sent them a message of support, love and hope.

We would like to thank "EuroBlic", for making mothers and children at the Parents' House happy with books granted on the occasion of their 22nd birthday.

We thank the family from Banja Luka who brought fruit and food products for the users of the Parents' House.

THEY VISITED US

We thank the enterprise Tomato Commerce Ltd. from Banja Luka for their visit and healthy snacks they brought for the users of the Parents' House.

We thank the Company Master BC, which delighted the children at the Department of Paediatric Haematology Oncology of the UCC of the Republic of Srpska again with New Year's packages

Representatives of charity organization "Budimo ljudi" visited us this year again and brought packages for children who are currently staying in the Parents' House. Thank you for your kindness.

We were visited by wonderful people from the Company "Huawei Technologies", who delighted our children with tablets. We wholeheartedly thank them for making the upcoming holidays happy.

We thank the kindergarten "Mali Princ" teachers, children and their parents who brought school supplies and hygiene products for our children. They also prepared drawings and messages in support of their friends who are currently being treated for malignant diseases. Our dear friends, thank you from the bottom of our hearts and the biggest hug to you.

THEY VISITED US

Many thanks to the members of BiH Border Police, who visited us yesterday as part of their holiday donation campaign. In addition to children in the Parents' House, they also donated to children who are treated at the Department of Paediatric Haematooncology of the Republic of Srpska UCC. With this noble action, you brought smiles to the faces of our little heroes and brightened their day.

Thank you from the bottom of our hearts to the staff of Bawariamed who prepared packages for all children up to 10 years of age whose parents are members of our Association, while packages meant for the children who are not from Banja Luka were delivered by mail.

Moto-club "Voodoo Free Riders" organized an action of collecting packages. The little ones were delighted to see them on motorcycles, dressed as Santa Clauses, which was a special experience for the children.

We thank the Company "Elta-Kabel" for the packages for our children in the Parents' House and the Department of Paediatric Haematooncology, UCC, the Republic of Srpska.

THEY VISITED US

We thank Maja Gojic for organising collection of New Year's packages on her profile @ mirisi_iz_majine kuhinje for visiting us and making the children at the Parents' House happy.

Charity activity "One candy, one child" was carried out at the Medical School in Banja Luka. On that occasion, the students and teachers visited us and made our children happy with gifts. Thank you for your kindness.

Thank you to the University for Business Studies for the packages and social games for children who are staying at the Department of Paediatric Haematology and the Parents' House and our dear Marija Babic who delivered the packages.

We would like to thank the mothers from Modrica who made the children at the Department of Paediatric Haematooncology of the Republic of Srpska UCC and at the Parents' House happy with packages. Special thanks to our little Njegos who stayed at the Parents' House and handed packages to his friends together with his mother.

Thank you to “TROPIC MALOPRODAJA” Ltd. Banja Luka for making the children at the Parents’ House and the Paediatric Department Haematooncology, Republic of Srpska UCC, happy with fruits and teas this year again.

Thank you to the Sports club “Pole Sport Studio” Banja Luka for the packages for children in the Parents’ House and the Department of Paediatric Haematooncology UCC Republic of Srpska.

We thank the Ministry of Family, Youth and Sports for gifts i.e. educational materials and school kits.

We thank Jelena Petrovic, aunt of the little brave Sofija, who made us happy again before the New Year and together with her friends and good people prepared packages, gifts and fruits for children staying at the Parents’ House and the Department of Paediatric Haematooncology of the UCC of the Republic of Srpska. We also received hygiene products and other necessities. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts, Jelena, and thank you to everyone who participated in this action.

Charity dance evening “Heart for Iskra”.

We would like to take this opportunity to once again thank the Dance Club ‘Ladies ‘, the friends who performed and all those who took the time to support us this evening.

Atmosphere from the New Year's volleyball festival in Laktasi. Together with OK Laktasi, we successfully organized another New Year's volleyball festival. We hope that after the end of this pandemic, we will organize a Volleyball Festival with more participants and in the presence of the audience. Many thanks to OK Laktasi for their support.

Image

One image can tell us more than a thousand words. This is nothing new, but familiar to all of us from the time immemorial. And only one, the only image.

If we talk about our lives, we can say with certainty that they consist of many images. And those images are clear or vague, near or far, big or small, significant or less significant, black and white or in colour, happy or sad, joyful or painful, deeply etched in memory or those that are just fading.

There are images that we always want to have in front of our eyes, but also those that we want to erase from our memory forever. There are images that we are always aware of - those images that we simply live with, as well as images that are stored in our subconscious.

An image of a man in a white coat, a bit hunched over, who is inviting you -Come here. Take a seat. And the image of his small office of three and a half square meters, with a desk, a couch and an armchair. A well-minded but stern expression, the smell of tobacco from the cigarette he had just smoked, and the space seemed to be cramped, small and airless when the diagnosis was reported. As if I saw the whole universe in those few cubic meters of his office. Only a few minutes of our story and getting to know each other, as if another image was standing in the same place. As if some rays of light were breaking through from somewhere. Rays of hope. That new image is now the image of faith. The image of faith in something new, in something better. It's an image you want to keep to yourself, and beautify it – you hope.

The image that your child being treated will see should not be any of your images. You must be an image to your child, an image that unconditionally instils desire, hope and will. According to that image of yours, the child will also create a positive image for himself and will see it through such eyes. You carry your image and live with it, which is your problem. A child should never know about that image of yours. It is yours, and only yours.

After all the hardships, when only images remain, they will still be there. And each of us will continue carrying our own images...

Editor-in-Chief:
Milan Beric, B.A.

iskra

ASSOCIATION OF PARENTS OF CHILDREN
WITH MALIGNANT DISEASES "ISKRA"

HOW TO DONATE

The Association is funded exclusively through donations granted by organizations, companies and individuals. If you want to help us, please do one of following:

– Make payment to our gyro account

– Volunteer with us

– Donate things and non-cash contributions

Support our work by contributing to our account:

1610000123350061

It is our full responsibility to spend donor money responsibly, transparently and strictly for the purpose.