

Company volunteers tidy up Belgrade



The **major volunteer initiative “Our Belgrade”** took place for the fourth time on **19th May 2012** under the organisation of the Business Leaders Forum Serbia. The event involved hundreds of employees from leading international and domestic companies volunteer **at 12 locations across Belgrade**. In this way participants directly contributed to the beautification of the city’s environment, environmental protection and improving the quality of life of citizens from disadvantaged social groups.

Company volunteers helped tidy and arrange external and internal spaces **of institutions of social protection**: the Dragan Kovačević primary school for the protection of sight, the Dušan Dugalić primary school, the Special School for children living with disabilities, the Jovan Jovanović Zmaj and Moša Pijade homes for children without parental care and the Bežanijska Kosa retirement home; **of organisations**: the KEC MNRO Creative-educational centre for the support of persons with developmental disabilities, the Živimo Zajedno (We live together) Stari Grad Society for the assistance of individuals with developmental disabilities, and **of nursery schools**: Lunja, Gulliver and Duga. Volunteers painted the **benches of Kalemegdan**, Belgrade’s biggest and most famous park, and contributed through environmental protection activities to **improving the environment in Banjica forest**, a protected monument of nature.

The initiative included participating volunteers from companies: Vip mobile, Atlantic Group, the Serbian State Lottery, Coca-Cola Hellenic, Societe Generale Bank, Banca Intesa, Holcim, Nestlé Adriatic, EFG Eurobank, Erste Bank, MK Group and Telekom Serbia.

US ambassador in Serbia Mary Burce Warlick joined numerous volunteers, US Embassy staff, in painting benches in the vicinity of Cvijeta Zuzoric pavilion at Kalemegdan.

"We think that volunteerism is very important as it is an expression of wish of each individual to contribute to the community and change, and I am glad that so many citizens participate today, not only in Belgrade, but throughout Serbia", Mrs. Warlick said.

Employee volunteering, as one aspect of corporate social responsibility, brings numerous benefits to local communities, companies and employees. By supporting institutions of social protection and socialising with users of those institutions, the volunteer initiative "Our Belgrade" contributes to the inclusion of vulnerable groups and initiates the creation of cross-sector partnerships, as well as allowing employees to contribute through their personal commitment to bettering living conditions in their city by developing the sensibility for the problems of local communities and the skills required, such as teamwork and leadership.

The volunteer initiative "Our Belgrade" is organised by the **Business Leaders Forum** in conjunction with **SMartKolektiv** and the **Institute for Sustainable Communities**, but also with the support of the **U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)** and the **City of Belgrade**. The Business Leaders Forum promotes socially responsible practices and innovative ways for businesses to support the local community and get involved in solving its specific problems.

Since 2011, “Our Belgrade” has been part of the international campaign “Give & Gain Day”, which is held in 14 countries around the world and which last year saw around 30,000 employees volunteer.