

Supporting AAC in Novi Sad, Serbia Part 2, by Dorothy Fraser

I was invited to the Milan Petrović Primary and Secondary School in Novi Sad, Serbia, for a one-week visit. The purpose was to discuss with staff ways to further develop AAC and AT, as described by Jelena Mazurkiewicz in her report (see p. 7).

It was a very interesting experience, with opportunities for me to observe classes and therapists working with individual pupils, to have discussions with staff and also to provide PowerPoint presentations, with Jelena translating throughout the week.

Mrs. Slavika Markovic, the school's principal, was on the organizing committee of the II International Scientific Conference: Special Education and Rehabilitation - Cerebral Palsy, held in Novi Sad from 25th to 28th October 25 – 28, 2012. The theme was “Cerebral Palsy: A Multidisciplinary and Multidimensional Approach.”

When Jelena collected me from Belgrade airport she took me to meet Mrs. Markovic. I arrived during the poster session on the third day of the conference. I was invited to join the round table meeting on the following day, when the scientific committee and organizing committee had a final discussion on outcomes and future plans.

They very kindly gave me an opportunity to explain about ISAAC, my work with Communication Matters (ISAAC UK), and my role as Senior Representative to Eastern and Central Europe for the Central Coast Children's Foundation Inc.



I described some of the ways of providing support for emerging AAC nations through international collaboration and the international patient–provider communication projects. Dr. Bekic, one of the doctors on the scientific committee, invited me to give a short PowerPoint presentation at the medical school as an introduction to “patient–provider communication” for people from all medical disciplines.

The content emphasized preparing children for medical encounters, using examples and other elements from the pre-conference day in which I participated at ISAAC 2012 in Pittsburgh. This workshop was organized by:

- Harvey Pressman & Sarah Blackstone presstoe@aol.com / sarahblack@aol.com
Co-Chairs, Patient Provider Communication Forum;
www.patientprovidercommunication.org
- Sponsored by: ISAAC 2012, the 15th Biennial Conference of the International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication, and AAC-RERC on Communication Enhancement;
- United States Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (USSAAC);
- Central Coast Children’s Foundation, Inc.;
- Augmentative Communication Inc.

I also showed examples from my patient–provider communication projects in Romania, at the doctors’ request. They were interested in finding out more and took note of the addresses of these websites:

www.centralcoastchildrensfoundation.org and www.patientprovidercommunication.org

Dr. Bekic and her colleague Dr. Mikov gave me a tour of their paediatric rehabilitation hospital and afterwards we had a discussion about ways to develop future AAC /AT projects.

The plan is to have workshops for therapists and other healthcare professionals, in addition to workshops for staff working in special education, during my next visit to Novi Sad in March 2013.

In my role as facilitator I have implemented and continue to work on similar on-going projects with Poland and Romania. With support from the Central Coast Children's Foundation Inc., I am working together with Polish and Romanian professionals in both education and medical sectors, at their request, to develop and expand our projects for communication enhancement through workshops and the provision of relevant material.

Our overall topic for projects is "Growing AAC; Supporting Parallel Strategies in Education and Healthcare through International Collaboration."



*School principal Mrs. Slavica Markovic spoke about the development of AAC in Serbia
Photograph courtesy of Dorothy Fraser*