



Newsletter July 2015

Dear members of lifecircle,

this is my first newsletter since I was elected president at the general meeting in May, how time flies! It's been more than a year now that I started working as secretary for lifecircle/Eternal Spirit and I still derive a great deal of pleasure and fulfillment from my job.

Let me share with you some of my positive and edifying experiences:

the first story that I want to tell you began about one year ago on my first day at work and ended in the last few days in a - for me - very emotional and personal way. This story illustrates how I envisage the work and future of lifecircle/Eternal Spirit.

What happened?

On said day I received the file of an Italian man and started to work on it. I had no idea what an experience would ensue.

The gentleman, 57 years old, was suffering from an incurable illness and absolutely determined to put an end to it with our help. Everything went off very smoothly and in September 2014 he was given his date for Assisted Voluntary Death (AVD). Since he was very concerned that his relatives (his brother is a lawyer in Italy) would prevent his plan, he decided to travel alone, taking a train to Switzerland. The journey takes 10 hours! Unfortunately he didn't make it through the whole trip due to a medical emergency in Milano. His undertaking was cut short and his relatives brought him back home .

However, he didn't let himself be dissuaded and, wanting to improve the procedure, he got in touch with me asking if it would be possible that one of us accompanied him on this train ride. I thought it over and offered to come and fetch him during my holidays, provided that we had a sufficient planning period. He then spontaneously invited me to stay at his home on the seaside and I subsequently had the pleasure to spend 5 beautiful days with him in his native country. With me as his travelling companion, he calmly said goodbye to his relatives and took care of everything that still needed to be done. It was a great relief for him to know there was someone who respected his decision and he was infinitely grateful for my help. We had an eventful journey with many interesting conversations, and the two days he spent in Basel were very valuable for both sides. On the day of the AVD this man was so full of gratitude, which to me was a proof that my work is necessary and right .

A woman (71), also an Italian, who had been in a wheelchair since birth, could no longer stand her daily pains and her dependence on others. To that day she had still been able to live by herself in her house, which was converted to accommodate a wheelchair. Nevertheless she was more and more dependent on daily help from outside, furthermore all of her relatives had already died.

She also inquired about possible assistance during the voyage and during her stay in Basel. She was particularly frightened of staying alone in a strange town.

I took on this challenge as well. Together with a taxi driver I picked her up in Brescia (I) and then had the pleasure of spending two delightful days with her in Basel. With her 71 years this lady was able to experience something she would never have dreamt of. Despite being severely handicapped and in a wheelchair she spent a whole afternoon with me riding trams, buses and trains, thus being able to see all the sights of Basel. On the evening before the AVD we had dinner at an Italian restaurant and she was able to end her life with pleasant memories. These were beautiful days for me as well because I was able to do something kind for a fellow human being.

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I take such pleasure in fulfilling my tasks for our members that I am tempted to open a bed and breakfast place. In this way I could make the last days before AVD easier for people by just being there for them and letting them stay at my house instead of having to spend the last three days in an anonymous hotel. Maybe I could even found a communal home and offer a "time out" at my place for incurably ill persons. We are currently searching intensely and we are in the happy position to have been offered a simple but homely and large property just outside of town, in which such a dream could be realized. However, the funding is not yet secured. The association, even with the support of the foundation, cannot cover the expenditure of at least 360'000 CHF. We now would like to ask our members if there are any among you willing to offer us a long term loan. This would be safeguarded with a loan contract and be paid back by the association within the appointed time. Donations to be used exclusively for the realization of my "lifecircle dream" are of course very welcome.

In June all "Right to die" societies of Europe met for a congress in Berlin. Such a meeting with various lectures on self-determination at life's end takes place annually. We were able to share experiences and once more established that we in Switzerland are quite privileged with regard to the acceptance of assisted voluntary death, but rather at a disadvantage compared to other countries in the matter of palliative medicine. Especially in the field of palliative hospital beds and hospices, but also the promotion of assisted voluntary death at hospitals and in old people's homes there still is much need for action, and this is exactly what we want to support.

The association lifecircle donated 1000.-CHF each to the following charitable institutions:
Kinderspitex Nordwestschweiz www.spitexkinder.ch, Spitalexterne Onkologiepflege Basel-Land www.seopbl.ch, and Insieme Basel (daycare-center for mentally handicapped people) www.insieme-basel.ch.

As a further testimony of our time the book written by Dr. Erika Preisig, already published under the title "Father you are allowed to die; a physician's plea for voluntary assisted death" was translated into French. Now we are looking into an appropriate way of publishing it. Mrs. Preisig describes her experiences with assisted voluntary death and argues for her liberal attitude towards self-determination at life's end. The book in G/E and the DVD "Final Exit" G/E/F can be ordered through the website www.lifecircle.ch or by letter to our postal address (lifecircle, Postfach 29, 4105 Biel-Benken). The entire proceeds for the book are for the benefit of the association lifecircle, the one from the DVD for that of the handicapped director of the film.

Not least of all we were able, besides the advisory work, to assist some members in their voluntary deaths. As is the case with every assisted voluntary death, the joy and gratitude of the individuals who were allowed to die were impressive. We are inundated with questions and we have a large amount of work to do, so that we come very close to our limit. But the gratitude of the relatives and the persons affected gives us the strength to go on working and to be there for our members. Our work is honored by your trust.

I wish our members all the very best and lots of love and understanding.

With kind regards
Beatrice Zurbrugg

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