

One Little Srpkinja Needs Our Help

When I was a boy, our family made annual trips to Akron, Ohio, almost always on the long Fourth-of-July weekend. My parents loaded my brothers and me into the family car and set out for the small lakefront cottage where my dad's cousin, Walter Papich, and his wife, Lula, lived. Visiting my Ciko and Strina, as we called them, was always a hoot. There were dozens of fruit trees to climb, an old row boat to take out on a lake that probably looks much smaller today than it did then, and plenty of fishing poles to catch the perch and bluegills that hid in the deep shade of an old willow tree.

I don't think any of us ever gave a single thought to the possibility that such a trip posed the least threat to any of us. What could possibly go wrong with something so right? Plenty, as Natasha Milatovich and her two children, Katarina and Stefan Stankovic, discovered this past Christmas.

Natasha, the directress of the St. Sava Church Choir, and her two children celebrated the last American Christmas holiday, like every year, with what she calls her "special American family." She and the kids got in their Chevy Tahoe, leaving their modest home in Los Angeles for the beautiful Napa Valley of northern California. They were joined by the kids' nanny. They arrived on the Friday before Christmas and spent the next few days with friends.

On the Tuesday after Christmas, Natasha, the kids, and two other adults left Napa on the long road trip to LA. Natasha had come down with stomach flu that morning, so she climbed into the back seat with her two children. The other adults sat up front. Things went terribly wrong in central California, on an interstate highway near Fresno. It was mid-afternoon. The day was clear and the road was dry. The driver lost control of the car, causing it to plunge down a 120-foot embankment, totally destroying it. No one remembers how the accident happened. Unfortunately none of them will ever forget the aftermath.

The adults in the Chevy wore seat belts, and the two children were strapped into their car seats. The violence of the crash produced tragic result, despite the best of precautions. One adult was killed, while the other suffered multiple fractures. Natasha's left arm was broken in multiple locations. She had to have abdominal surgery to repair internal bleeding, and is currently being treated for the clots that subsequently lodged in both lungs. In time she is expected to recover fully, although her arm may require long-term rehabilitative attention. Young Stefan, who will be seven-years old in May, also experienced internal injuries and bleeding that required surgery. Even so, he is doing well, healing nicely, running around like little boys do, and back to school.

Four-year old Katarina did not fair as well. Like her mother and brother, she sustained severe internal injuries and bleeding, requiring surgery, which was successful. Unfortunately she also suffered a spinal injury. Doctors operated, installing a titanium plate, to stabilize the spine of her lower back. Katarina is paralyzed from the waist down. She is currently undergoing extremely intense physical therapy three times a week.

Since Katarina's spine was severely twisted, but not severed, it will be twelve months or more before we will know whether her paralysis is permanent or temporary. In the meantime, Katarina requires

intensive care, which is now being covered by insurance that must be reauthorized on a month-by-month basis. She needed and got a wheel chair. Her home needs to be refitted to accommodate a severely handicapped child. And Natasha will need professional assistance when she returns to work in May or June. Fortunately her job is secure.

To make a tough situation even worse, Stefan's and Katarina's father, Radan Stankovic, was between jobs at the time of the accident. For the three months following the accident, he devoted himself to caring for his children, especially while Natasha was confined to a hospital bed. He has not yet found another job.

Medical bills for this family are now over \$1 million. While the family was insured, no one is quite certain how much of this expense will be covered by the policy in effect, or how much of future cost it will defray. Natasha, Stefan, and especially Katarina need our help.

The one thing I learned to could count on as I was growing up in the Serbian Orthodox community of Detroit was the support of my family, kumovi, and Serbian friends and community. As I grew older and traveled to other Serbian colonies, I came to realize that my community was much larger than I ever imagined. I had "best friends" in such major metropolitan areas as Chicago, Cleveland, and Pittsburgh, and "little" towns as Alliquippa, Lorain, and Weirton. Those of us Serbs who live here in Los Angeles, the parishioners of St. Sava Serbian Orthodox Church, and the friends of Natasha, Stefan, and Katarina, appeal to all of you for your financial assistance. We need the help of the whole Serbian community of the United States and Canada. The need is great – but so too is the heart of the Serbian people.

Katarina is the sweetest little girl you could ever hope to meet. She is exactly like your favorite little kumica, niece, or granddaughter, full of life and hope. She deserves every opportunity to find and receive the very best treatment available anywhere in the world.

On Saturday, June 3, 2006, the St. Sava Church Choir will sponsor a fundraising event to benefit Katarina. Serbs from across Southern California will gather to help this very special little girl. They are rallying just as we knew they would: the food, beverages, and music are being donated; and all food preparation and service will be managed entirely by volunteers.

The funds generated by the fundraising event will be used to treat Katarina's injury in every way possible, to make her home as livable as it can be, and to provide finances for her future education.

You too can lend your much needed support to this lovely little girl. The choir has established a fund under the auspices of the St. Sava Serbian Orthodox Church. If you would like to make a contribution, make your check payable to the St. Sava Church Choir Katarina Fund. All donations to this fund are fully tax deductible. Send your check to:

**St. Sava Church Choir
1640 S. San Gabriel Blvd.
San Gabriel, CA 91776**

On behalf of Katarina and her family, we thank you for your generous response.

Paul Papich

Prošlog meseca u našu redakciju stigla su dva pisma sa apelom za pomoć, koja objavljujemo u nadi da će se ljudi nežnog srca i dobre volje uključiti u humanu akciju

MOLBA ZA POMOĆ

Poštovana gospodo, obraćamo vam se sa molbom da nam pomognete u lečenju našeg sina Nikole.

Nikola je rođen 4.1.2001. godine. Normalno se razvijao i živeo do avgusta 2003. godine, kada smo slučajnim odlaskom kod lekara ustanovili da boluje od opake bolesti - DISTROFIJE MIŠIĆA. Inače, to je bolest koja izaziva atrofiiju mišića nogu, a onda i ostatka tela, deformaciju tela, zbog koje dete već u 10. godini pada u kolica i živi najduže do svoje osamnaeste godine. To je za nas bio veliki šok. To su bili najgori dani naših života. Doktori su nam odmah rekli da za ovu bolest nema leka. Međutim, uz pomoć prijatelja uspešli smo da pronađemo lek. Lečenje radi EMCELL klinika u Kijevu u Ukraini, www.emcell.com. Kontaktirali smo ih i oni su nam odgovorili da leče ovu bolest i da u najgorem slučaju zaustavljaju dalje razvijanje bolesti. Ali su nam poslali i cenovnik. Prva terapija košta 15 hiljada evra, druga 10 hiljada evra, treća i svaka sledeća 8 hiljada evra. Velikim mukama smo uspešli da obezbedimo novac za prvu terapiju. Kada je supruga sa Nikolom otišla prvi put, bili smo skeptični i nismo se toliko nadali boljitku. Međutim, nismo bili u pravu. EMCELL klinika stvarno leči od ove opake bolesti. Tamo dolaze deca iz celog sveta. U zavisnosti od toga dokle je bolest stigla određuje se broj tretmana. Na tretmane se ide na pet ili šest meseci. Ima i dece koja su završila

sa lečenjem i sada se normalno razvijaju i rastu, uz ogromnu sreću svojih roditelja. Nikola je imao sreću da je bolest rano otkrivena i neće imati većih posledica. Mi smo do sada bili na pet tretmana. To nas je do sada koštalo 49 hiljada evra, bez troškova puta koji su oko hiljadu evra. Mi naravno nismo bili u mogućnosti da sami obezbedimo toliki novac. Pomogli su nam Paola i Leo iz Italije, koje smo slučajno upoznali, kada su donosili pomoć za decu iz Kragujevca. Zahvalni smo im do groba. Oni su do sada dali dve trećine novca za Nikolino lečenje. Novac su direktno uplaćivali na račun klinike. Međutim, više nisu u mogućnosti da nam pomažu. Doktor SMIKODUB, koji lično radi Nikoline terapije, kaže da će Nikola morati da ide na još dve ili tri terapije, a mi nismo u mogućnosti da obezbedimo 24 hiljade evra, koliko će ukupno biti potrebno za ostale terapije, pa vas zato od srca MOLIMO da nam pomognete da lečenje našeg sina Nikole privedemo kraju i pomognemo mu da živi kao sva druga deca.

**SA PUNO ZAHVALNOSTI I
POŠTOVANJA PORODICA
AGATONVIĆ.**

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Ivana Mažuranića br. 5
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Otvorene prostorije humanitarne organizacije "Lifeline" u Čikagu

DECI S' LJUBAVLJU

U centru Čikaga, na 200 Mičigen aveniji, nedavno su otvorene prostorije humanitarne organizacije "Lifeline", koja radi pod patronatom princeze Katarine Karadjordjević. Direktorica čikaške kancelarije, Ketí Fenslou, upoznala je goste sa misijom "Lifeline", načinom na koji i oni svojim prilogom kogu pomoći i najavila mnogobrojne akcije.

"Radili smo ozbiljno na adaptaciji ovog prostora, ali meni to nije strano, jer godinama se bavim humanitarnim aktivnostima. I nikada mi to ne pada teško, jer na kraju dana ipak shvatim da sam nekome pomogla, na najbolji mogući način. Ja u početku nisam mnogo znala o organizaciji, ali kada me je princeza prvi put kontaktirala i pozvala da dodjem u Beograd, shvatila sam da je ona vrlo uporna žena, i vrlo efikasno radi sve čega se prihvati. Ja sam u septembru sa Kendi Rozen bila u petodnevnoj poseti Beogradu, obišli smo mnoga mesta, bolnice, prihvatilišta, izbegličke kampove. I meni je tada bilo jasno da smo sa "Lifeline" morali i u Čikagu početi juče."

Ketí Fenslou je ustvari Katarina Vujanović, rođena u Beogradu, sa 12 godina sa majkom stigla u Čikago.

"To je ta moja neraskidiva veza sa Srbijom, našim narodom, našom decom. Za sada smo u kancelariji moja kćerka Viki i ja, u našoj Upravi je nekoliko aktivnih članova, koji imaju odlične veze, poznaju problematiku i imaju način da savetima i praktično pomognu."

Uskoro će biti mnogo naših aktivnosti, pravimo planove za nabavku lekova, medicinske opreme. U oktobru ćemo imati veliko donatorsko veče, kome će prisustvovati i princeza Katarina Karadjordjević."

Za kontakt informacije o "Lifeline" u Čikagu otvoren je telefon 312-781-9300 ili e-mail: lifeline@zpkfond.org.