

serbianama.org



2023

ANNUAL REPORT

About Us

In the late 1990s amid the Balkan conflicts, we recognized the region's need for critical medical resources. With our diverse communities of healthcare workers, scientists, and other professionals from all parts of North America and former Yugoslavia, we organized small transfers of medical supplies and medication.

Today, we are united by a profound desire to have an impact and a belief in a better future for the Balkans.



Established in Maryland in 2009, SAMA gained 501(c)(3) status in 2010. Sustained by donations and grants, we wholeheartedly support education and humanitarian programs through the dedication of volunteers, heartfelt fundraising, and valuable contributions.

To date, the association has donated over \$1,000,000 in medical equipment, education, and infrastructure to communities throughout the Balkans including Serbia, Kosovo & Metohija, Republic of Srpska, and Bosnia & Herzegovina. Our effective, grassroots approach and transparent practices make us a powerful force for positive impact, profoundly touching countless lives.

Our Vision

Built on grassroots principles, our transparent and focused model ensures people-helping-people without hierarchy or hidden agendas. We openly document every step, carefully assessing projects for maximum impact on healthcare throughout the Balkans. Together, we minimize costs, build strong relationships, and create an inclusive force for positive change.



Our Mission

1

Improve healthcare conditions in Serbia and throughout the Balkans.

2

Advocate for better access and healthcare policy in Serbia and throughout the Balkans. .

3

Foster medical education and promote collaboration between health care workers and scientists of Serbian heritage in North America and Serbia.

A Word From Our President

Dear supporters,

In 2023, thanks to the dedication of our team, especially Branko Palikuća, we achieved remarkable success. By raising record-breaking funds, we were able to enhance the work of numerous health centers, benefiting over 400,000 individuals in Serbia and Bosnia Herzegovina.

Our efforts were bolstered by the addition of four outstanding volunteers: Daniel Janković leading fundraising, Ana Krsmanović overseeing communications, and Tanya Radaković managing operations in Illinois. Furthermore, Vera Blazenčić-Mladenović joined as our Serbian activities director.

Looking forward to 2024, our goals are ambitious yet achievable. We aim to complete projects in Bosnia Herzegovina worth \$135,000, specifically in Gacko and Ljubinjje. We are in the process of completing a project with the Studentska Poliklnika in Belgrade and extend our efforts to the Topola region.

Additionally, we are actively pursuing our student project and welcome all healthcare workers and scientists to join our network.

Collaborating with SAMA has been an amazing and fulfilling journey. Not only have I been able to assist those less fortunate, but this endeavor has also granted me the privilege of

encountering remarkable individuals everywhere I go. I want to highlight and applaud the fantastic healthcare providers and people we have encountered during our travels in Serbia and Bosnia Herzegovina. Positive individuals abound, and we are eager to continue collaborating with them.

I hope our mission is one that resonates with all, as those we assist could be our parents, siblings, or friends.

With your continued support, we can make an even greater impact. Join us in our mission to improve healthcare access and make a tangible difference in the lives of those in need.

Warm regards,



Ivan Aksentijevich

President

Serbian American Medical Association



Dr. Ivan Aksentijevich is a Board-certified Medical Oncologist and Hematologist based in Alexandria, VA. A family man with five daughters, Ivan cherishes his Belgian upbringing and Serbian heritage. His love for Serbia blossomed during his medical studies in Belgrade, leaving a lasting impact on his life. In gratitude, he co-founded SAMA in 2009 with friends. For Dr. Aksentijevich's full biography, [click here](#).

Our Team

In 2023, our team has grown, embarking on an expansion journey to operate more diligently not only in the United States but also in Canada and Serbia. This strategic expansion reflects our commitment to broadening our reach and enhancing our ability to deliver critical aid where it's needed most.

What sets us apart is not only our collective expertise but also our unwavering dedication to operate beyond religious, political, or other affiliations.

We firmly believe that healthcare is a universal right, and our team reflects this conviction as we work together seamlessly to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages .

In our pursuit of transparency and efficiency, we've forged a unique approach. With no hierarchical structures or hidden agendas, our team operates with complete openness, ensuring that every effort is directed toward fostering lasting impact and positive change across borders.



Ivan
Aksentijevich



Zoran
Mladenović



Branko Palikuća



Milena
Aksentijevich



Aleksandra Savić



Konstantina
Pantelić



Vera
Blazencić
-Mladenović



Daniel Janković



Ana Krsmanović



Tanya Radaković

A Year in Review

2023 was an active year for SAMA. We were able to conduct various fundraising activities, expand our team and – most importantly – finalize several projects that significantly improved healthcare infrastructure in smaller municipalities throughout the Balkans.

As an organization, we value transparency. In fact, it is one of our three main pillars and, as such, we are 100% transparent.

From the selection of projects, to the collection of funds and implementation of projects, we document and share all of our progress with you.

In 2023, we raised \$170,454 and spent \$140,091 providing aid to crucial health facilities throughout the region. To date, we've donated

\$1,044,696

to improve healthcare in Serbia and throughout the region. For a full breakdown of our 2023 Financials, please visit the 2023 Financial Report on our website.

8 Municipalities received significant aid.



2023 Fundraisers

7th Annual SAMA Tennis Open

Our heartfelt gratitude to all attendees of the 2023 SAMA Tennis Open. A special thanks to our athletes whose sportsmanship and skills made for a beautiful day on the courts. We successfully raised more than \$10,000 for the purchase of essential equipment for health centers in Topola and Preševo.

Notably, the Director of the Preševo Health Center emphasized how significant SAMA's contribution would be as the first non-governmental "Serbian" donation to the predominantly "Albanian-populated" town in Southern Serbia. We are in contact with the Health Center in Preševo, and we hope to complete our project there before the end of the year.



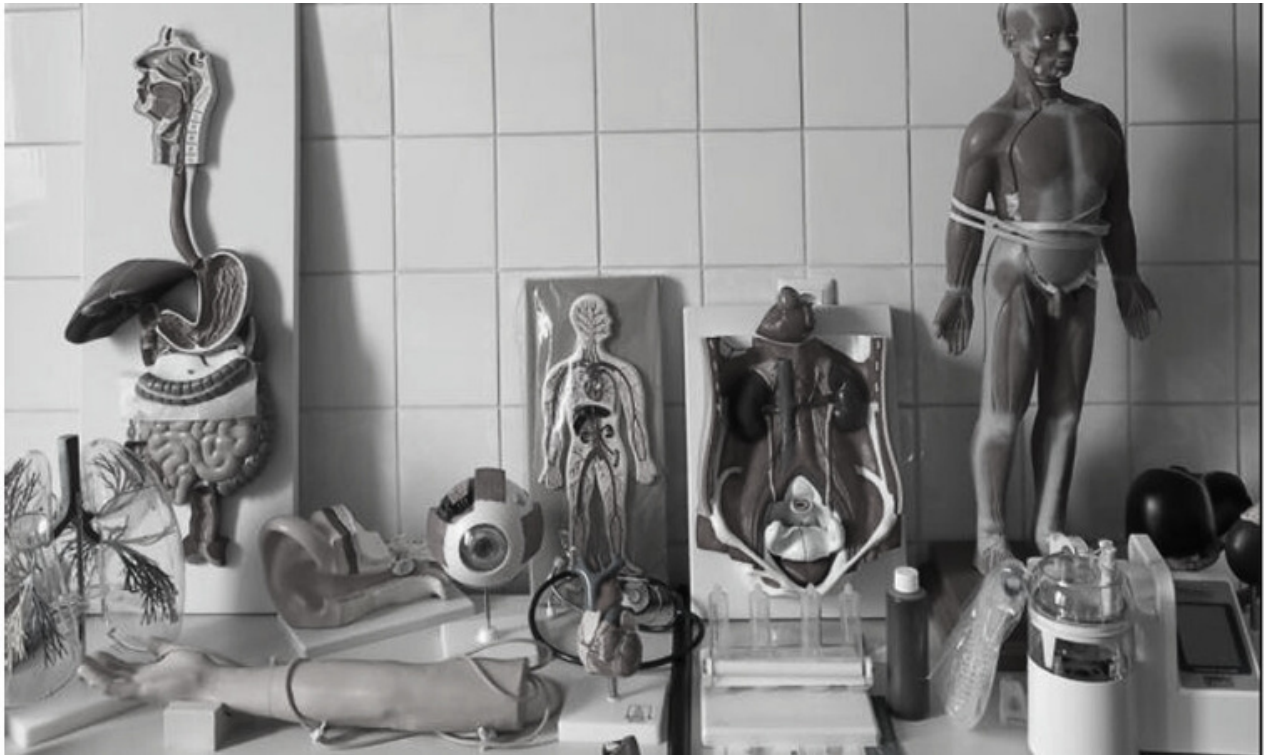
6th Annual Chicago Fundraiser

The event raised a remarkable \$105,000.

The funds were utilized to procure much-needed chemical analyzers for the health centers in Gacko and Kozarska Dubica—contributions that will change the lives of thousands in these communities.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all who attended and generously donated.





Notable Projects

In the spotlight of this year's report are our impactful projects, each dedicated to serving underprivileged communities in the region. Focused on providing crucial healthcare access, these initiatives embody our unwavering commitment to making a tangible difference in the lives of those who need it most.



From finalizing projects that began in 2022 to funding new initiatives, these projects exemplify our mission to bring about positive change where it matters most.



Guča

The Guča hospital facility, which is almost a century old, had deteriorated significantly, facing a range of issues, including crumbling walls, collapsing ceilings, a damaged roof, and dilapidated carpentry. Additionally, the beds and mattresses were in deplorable conditions. Consequently, patients from Guča had to travel 40km to Čačak General Hospital for treatment.

With local funding, the building underwent a comprehensive reconstruction. However, the budgeting did not account for furniture, rendering the reconstructed hospital non-functional. During our visit, we discovered that the facility was entirely devoid of a single hospital bed and hospital furniture.

SAMA donated 20 modern beds, mattresses, hospital furniture, and infusion stands, promptly rendering the facility operational.

SUMMARY

Population	10,000
Donation Value	\$4,380
Donation	Hospital beds Infusion stands Hospital furniture
Media Coverage	Media Portal Lokal Info Vesti Kurir

Štrpce

SUMMARY

Population	10,000
Donation Value	\$4,380
Donation	Medical school supplies
Media Coverage	Kosovo Online

Štrpce is the largest Serbian enclave south of the Ibar River in Kosovo. This municipality includes about 10,000 inhabitants, mostly ethnic Serbs. The only nursing school in this part of Kosovo & Metohija is of vital importance for the Serbian community as it prepares pupils for a career in health care.

Due to safety concerns and travel restrictions, students from Štrpce nursing school are unable to attend any hospital in other parts of Kosovo for practical training, so local teachers attempt to teach practical clinical skills using anatomy models.

Despite all these difficulties, Štrpce’s nursing students are very motivated and often compete equally with peers from universities in Serbia. To the joy of the students and teachers, SAMA delivered an entire set of various anatomical models for educational purposes.

Novi Bečej

We were able to donate a valuable, new, and top-of-the-line defibrillator to the health clinic in Novi Bečej. A defibrillator is a device that applies an electric charge or current to the heart to restore a normal heartbeat.

If the heart rhythm stops due to cardiac arrest, also known as sudden cardiac arrest (SCA), a defibrillator may help it start beating again.

SUMMARY

Population	20,000
Donation Value	\$7,405
Donation	Defibrillator
Media Coverage	TV Novi Becej



Topola

With support from the local municipality, the health center channeled all available funds into facility renovations, leaving them in a precarious situation, where they lacked essential medical equipment. SAMA recognized the critical importance of this Healthcare Center to the community and committed to addressing their pressing needs.

SUMMARY

Population	20,000
Donation Value	\$30,196
Donation	Ultrasound, including probes Autoclave Electrocardiograph Medical furniture Colposcopes Sterilization drums Minor surgical material

Požega

The health clinic attempted to raise funds locally, unfortunately, their effort was unsuccessful due to administrative constraints. This donation will significantly increase their capabilities and reduce patients' need to travel to Užice.

SUMMARY

Population	20,000
Donation Value	\$26,790
Donation	80 L Autoclave Tympanogram CTG Linear transducer Physical Therapy devices (2)
Media Coverage	TV Pozega



Ada

SUMMARY

Population	10,000
Donation Value	\$7,561
Donation	Defibrillator
Media Coverage	<u>Pannon RTV</u>



Ada, a municipality of ethnic Hungarians, like other health centers in Serbia, suffers from underfunding.

Ms. Snežana Strahinjić, the health center head nurse originally contacted SAMA regarding the need for a defibrillator at this center. Specifically, the few defibrillators in operation were either in need of repair or were constantly being utilized away from the health center when taken on urgent calls, in the ambulance, etc. Consequently, physicians would often find themselves unable to help patients presenting with life-threatening acute chest symptoms.

Our donation of a defibrillator was timely and valuable. The donated unit is a top-of-the-line system offering a monitor, which is extremely valuable for accurate diagnostic and monitoring treatment.

Šabac

SUMMARY

Population	300,000
Donation Value	\$593
Donation	Uninterruptible Power Supply

The Public Health Institute of Serbia, in Belgrade, oversees 24 regional branches, including one in Šabac.

Its multifaceted role encompasses disease surveillance and prevention. Director Mr. Branko Vujković notified us of operational challenges, especially in the central biochemical laboratory facing disruptions from local electric grid instability.

In November 2023, SAMA stepped in, donating a UPS system. This swift action significantly enhanced the availability and reliability of biochemical analysis, mitigating data loss and testing issues.

Gacko & Kozarska Dubica

SUMMARY

Population	10,000(2)
Donation Value	\$21,000(2)
Donation	Biochemical analyzer
Media Coverage	<u>RTV KD</u> <u>Trebinje Live</u>

Summary

and note from our Vice President

In 2023, SAMA continued to focus on primary healthcare in Serbia because we see this as the most crucial segment of healthcare. Unfortunately, in Serbia, much like in the rest of the Balkans, primary care has been severely neglected since the 80s.

Wherever you go, you can see the consequences of such policy: leaking roofs, toilets in horrible shape, original doors and windows that are more than 40 years old.

Often, these health centers have trouble funding the purchase of basic materials needed for operations, not to mention replacing minor equipment such as ECGs or defibrillators. They are pushed toward digitalization (e.g., electronic record usage), but in the majority of centers we visited, computers haven't been upgraded in 10 years or more.

On the bright side, when we visit these health centers, we often find enthusiastic people willing to work hard and provide the best possible care for patients. They know what needs to be done and simply need support. Even small donations make a big difference for these health centers.

Thank you all for your support of SAMA. Together, we are making a difference.

Zoran Mladenovic



Vice President / Treasurer
Serbian American Medical Association

Zoran Mladenovic is a retired engineering professional. He spent most of his professional life working for hi-tech companies in various capacities, and retired from Texas Instruments as General Manager and CTO for software in 2019. Zoran has been actively engaged with SAMA since 2013. He is driven by the desire to help his home country, and the understanding that improving health care conditions throughout Serbia can significantly increase people's quality of life.



Join Us!

As we reflect on the past year, we are profoundly grateful for the unwavering support and commitment that has fueled our mission. Your generosity and dedication have been the driving force behind every achievement, allowing us to make a meaningful impact on the communities we serve. From the bottom of our hearts, we extend our sincerest thanks to each and every one of you.

As we embark on another year of service, we invite you to continue standing beside us. Your ongoing support is vital to the success of our endeavors. Whether through donations, volunteering your time, joining our newsletter, or simply spreading the word about our cause to friends and family, every action you take contributes to the positive change we strive to create.

Together, let's build on the momentum of compassion and solidarity, ensuring that the impact of SAMA reaches even greater heights.

Thank you for being a crucial part of our journey.

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