Though Firefly Youth Project has seen much growth, change and activity over the year from March 1999 to March 2000, it has retained and built on its core commitment to interethnic reconciliation amongst young people in Bosnia. Over this year the foundations have been laid to improving our results in achieving other goals – such as the increased communication between young people across Europe in an effort to reduce isolation. This has been characterised by the Cultural Exchange Programme organised over July and August in Croatia (see separate report). In September 1999 we received three year funding from the Diana Princess of Wales Memorial Fund which has allowed considerable growth in our activities, a growth that is documented throughout this annual report.

At the start of this year the project was co-ordinated in Brcko by Claire Goudsmit. Theatre and dance workshops were run by Joanie Magill and Miroslav Mitrovic, and the magazine project was organised by Gordana Varcakovic. It was the committed hard work of this team that secured funding from the Canadian Embassy for “Brckofest99”, the first festival of arts and culture to take place in the town since the end of the conflict (see separate report). In October, Joanie left the project to pursue her career in stage design and she has recently been touring Hong Kong and South Africa with theatrical groups. In November, Claire started work for the American Refugee Council as head of office in Jajce and retains close links with both Brcko and Firefly. With Claire’s departure Gordana has taken over the role of project co-ordinator. Emma Morgan arrived in September to teach English and Hannah Currant started teaching art and drama in October.

Firefly has continued to run workshops in drama, photography, IT, dance, art, language tuition and media studies (with the associated publication of the youth magazine “Anonimus”). The increased financial support through the Diana Princess of Wales Memorial Fund allowed more staff to work in Brcko both full and part time. Initially, Nikola Pavolvic and Aleksander Micic were employed to run courses in IT and art respectively. In November, Firefly was granted use of the former IRC centres in the outlying regions of Brodusa and Disdarusa from the United Nations High Comission for Refugees. This expansion led to the employment of Sanela Hukara and Sladjana to staff the centres and see that they were available for use by both individuals and groups from the community at large.

The political situation in Brcko has, in general, been stable. The arbitration decision was finally made in March 2000, declaring the area a Special District, neither part of the Rebublika Srpska or the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Thus Brcko now operates in the self-governing Brcko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina (for more information concerning the Final Award see www.ohr.int/docu/d990305c.htm). Ambassador Robert Farrand, the Brcko District Supervisor, has shown a reluctance to hold democratic elections in the area until the returns process is more established. At this early stage it is difficult to ascertain what the effect of the arbitration decision is on this process, though in early 2000 evictions of Serb families in houses in the centre
of town began. Evidently, the reconciliation work of Firefly Youth Project is vital in this delicate political climate.

Since the start of funding from the Diana Princess of Wales Memorial Fund, Firefly has been able to employ two members of staff in the UK: Alex Jeffrey and Ellie Maxwell. Whilst Alex has been concerned with the administration, publicity and fundraising, Ellie has been responsible for organising the cultural exchange programme.

Firefly is in the process of constructing two websites to go online in June 2000. The first, compiled by Sam Cross, will feature in the societies domain of the Edinburgh University’s website. This site will specifically feature information about the cultural exchange programme, though it will detail information about the organisation as a whole. The second site, written by Steve Fox, will be in Firefly’s own domain and will contain information about Firefly, as well as giving an opportunity to apply for positions within Firefly and donate money.

The following Annual Report has been compiled from individual reports from Gordana Varcakovic, Ellie Maxwell and Claire Goudsmit.

Alex Jeffrey April 2000

### Project Goals

1. To encourage reconciliation and communication amongst young people living in separated areas of Brcko through educational initiatives.

2. To provide opportunities for young people to develop professional and creative skills.

3. To establish a sustainable local team to continue the work of the project.

4. To develop links between youth groups throughout Bosnia and Europe, thus working towards improving understanding and tolerance between people of different backgrounds and nationalities.
A collaboration with ‘Crossing Borders’. Led by Sarah Butterworth of Crossing Borders and Matthew Holmes of Firefly, with 25 participants from Britain, Brcko and Zivinice.

Participants took part in three projects; painting a mural, making a giant sculpture to be floated on the sea (using materials from the surrounding area as an example of the possibilities of recycling), and making masks for the carnival in Brcko following the camp. Along with the rest of Europe, there were rainstorms for some of the time, but volunteers found a covered space on the island which also protected children from the sun.

Apart from the intermittently bad weather, the camp was a success, with young people from the Federation and the Serb Republic meeting and collaborating with great enthusiasm, and with young people from Britain also enjoying the opportunity to meet young people from Bosnia and to see a little of the Former Yugoslavia.

Young people from Britain and Brcko travelled to the Firefly annual arts festival in Brcko following the camp, where the masks made were used in a carnival on Children’s Day, part of the festival.

Suggestions for next time: Some of the younger children found it hard to maintain concentration on the bigger projects. The children’s art camp this year will be incorporated in the children’s activity camp, with children taking part in two days of art workshops and activities (including mask-making and painting), but also in drama, music, and ecology workshops and an all-day treasure hunt.

A collaboration with the Schools Project at the Pavarotti Music Centre, and with Edinburgh University’s Music in the Community Course, with 40 participants from the Special Needs School in East Mostar.

Participants and volunteers worked on a performance of the story of Cadmus and Europa, chosen because of its setting on the Croatian coast and its telling of the story of Europe’s beginnings as one integrated process,
rather than of separate and distinct development of the areas within Europe. The
dialogue, songs and harmonies were all devised by the children themselves, and the
final performance took place in a Greek amphitheatre near the camp site, watched by
holiday-makers from Slovenia, Bosnia and Croatia. The holiday had a spectacular
effect, not only on the children, who became noticeably more reactive and confident,
but also on the Bosnian volunteers, a group of young people from East Mostar who
had also been unable to leave the area for years.
Because supervising the children is a 24 hour activity, volunteers worked in shifts
outside workshops. 6 teachers from the special school who accompanied us carried
out most of the evening supervision and one shift during the day.
The school has asked us to make this an annual event, to which we have happily
agreed. The camp this year will take place on Brac, an island near Split.
Suggestions for next time: On the whole, there were no problems on this camp and it
has been decided to run it this year according to the same structure. We are holding it
on Brac this year in an effort to avoid sea-urchins, the main complaint!

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A collaboration with the Mladi Most (‘young bridge’) youth project in Mostar. Led by Julie
MacNamara, a qualified drama therapist, with 35 participants from both sides of the divided city of
Mostar, from the nearby Serb Republic, and from Britain.

Participants developed a short play through a series
of workshops. The play focused on the problems of
relationships with people from outside one’s own
community (a problem in Mostar where relationships
with people from the ‘other side’ or foreigners are usually violently discouraged,
given the enforced necessity of indicating your status as to which ethnic/religious
group you belong to). It also looked at other more universal problems to do with
incurring the displeasure of the community, including single parenthood.
Julie began with team-building workshops, a difficult task given that the young
people were from many different ethnic communities. She focused on their
similarities, and on differences that fall outside their ethnic differences - such as star
signs, dress sense, and other universal features.
Everyone’s ideas were included in the final performance, which gave confidence to
the less outspoken members of the group; the Sarajevo Drum Orchestra, a group of
young people from Sarajevo who hold African drumming workshops throughout the
former Yugoslavia, were particularly useful in creating and maintaining a group spirit.
Everyone made costumes which allowed the less confident members to ‘hide’ in their
created personalities, and gave an outlet to everyone's creative powers.
The presence of the British young people seemed to help convince the young people
from different Bosnian communities that they were not as different as they thought;
there were, of course, far bigger differences between the British participants and their
Bosnian counterparts, than between young Bosnians of different ethnic groups. The
results following the camp have been startling; the young people who took place from
Croat West Mostar are frequently travelling across the dividing lines to Bosniak (Muslim) East Mostar, an unusual practice in a city whose inhabitants almost never move out of their own area. Many of the Bosniak inhabitants of East Mostar were originally from West Mostar and were ‘cleansed’ and forced into the East side of the city, which was then besieged by the Croat forces. Given this fact, it is even more amazing that participants on the camp from East Mostar travelled to west Mostar for the birthday party of a Bosnian Croat friend made on the drama camp.

There was a theft from one of the British participants on the last day of the 1st drama camp; this was an unfortunate end to an otherwise very successful event.

**Suggestions for next year:** more physical activities and workshops are needed initially to make everyone more aware of, and less self-conscious about, their bodies and the space they use. We have also decided that this year, the British and Bosnian volunteers will spend three days together with Joanie Magill and Simon Tcherniak, the leaders, before the camp. This will enable them to get to know each other and learn to work together before the arrival of the participants. It is expected that if the volunteers of different nationalities are completely integrated, then the participants will be also. British participants and volunteers have also been asked not to bring anything that might tempt someone to steal it.

For this year’s (Summer 2000) camps, volunteers were chosen in February and have been working together since then to raise some of the money needed for the project. This has enabled them to learn to work together as a group, as well as helping with the funding. There will be five camps this summer; two music camps, one for the East Mostar Special School and one for children from schools around Mostar and Brcko, two drama camps, one for 14 - 16 year olds and one for 16 - 18 year olds from Mostar, Brcko and Edinburgh, and a children’s activity camp for 10 to 12 year olds from Mostar and Brcko. 10 young Bosnian refugees who have been living in London will also take part in the camps, followed by a visit to their pre-war home in preparation for their eventual return. As with last year, the camps will be followed by drama and music exchange projects throughout the year.
With “Brckofest99” Firefly aimed to involve young people and artists from all areas of Brcko and other towns in Bosnia and Croatia in the first multi-ethnic cultural event to take place in Brcko since before the war. Actors, artists, musicians, poetry readers and fire dancers from Brcko District (town, Zone of Separation and Federation), Vukovar, Belgrade, Osijek, Banja Luka, Bijelina, Travnik and Sarajevo all performed together at the festival. Many young people from Brcko District became directly involved in the co-ordination and assistance at the event developing friendships and communication between all three ethnic groups.

Firefly overcame many problems and barriers in the initial stages of the planning due to scepticism and tensions. With the help from inspired local people and the international community of Brcko the event was able to take place and be so successful.

Only a few of the theatre and music groups were unable to participate due to their own organisational difficulties but the spaces were filled immediately by willing bands, actors and plays. Some groups stayed at the festival longer than they had intended but the accommodation was sufficient to hold everyone comfortably.

Festival programme:

THURSDAY

Gallery Opening
- “Alter Arts”, Travnik - photography and paintings exhibition
- “Firefly”, Brcko town and ZOS groups - photography exhibition
- “Citizen’s Initiative”, Banja Luka - theatre posters from the former Yugoslavia exhibition
- Irena Jakov, Violeta Cvetrovic, Ivan Trickovic - Belgrade - painting exhibitions
- “Alter Arts”, Travnik - video performance
- “Firefly”/”Crossing Borders”, UK - mask/lantern exhibition from workshops
- “Miroslav, The Rage Productions”, Brcko - poetry and balloons installation
- Zvonimir Marie - Ravne Brcko - painting exhibition
- “Album”, Banja Luka - poetry writers read their work on the opening night
- “Proni”, Rahic - fire dance to close the opening night

FRIDAY

- “Midsummer Night’s Dream”, Firefly - theatre performance
- “Senka and Friends”, Brcko - dance performance
- “House Things”, Rage Productions, Brcko - theatre performance
- “Hipoteza”, Brcko - music band
- “Urbani Defekt”, Bijelina - music band
- “Oaza”, Beli Monastir, Croatia - music band
- “Alternativa Nova”, Travnik - music band

SATURDAY

- “Brzi and Brada in Episode Izcaminator, Travnik - multi-media performance
- “House of Things 2”, Rage Productions, Brcko - theatre performance
- “Sebastian”, Brcko - dance performances
- “Snur”, Travnik - music band
- “Ship of Fools”, Rahic - music band
• “PRONI”, Brcko and Rahic - fire dance and juggling outside accompanied by SDO
• “Boom”, Samac - music band
• “Sarajevo Drum Orchestra” - African drumming concert

SUNDAY
• “Where Are These Trails Going?”, Rage Productions, Brcko - experimental theatre performance
• “Vanera”, Vukovar - dance performances
• “Cases By Harms”, Goran, Brcko - avant garde theatre performance
• “Bez Kontrole”, Bijelina - music band
• “Black George”, Vukovar - music band
• “The Amazon Heads”, Travnik - music band
• “Morrison Guys”, Brcko - music band

Gordana Varcakovic, employed as festival co-ordinator in March, is now working full-time at Firefly. As of November Gordana is going to take over the administration and local co-ordination of the Firefly project. Her work on the festival was outstanding; she chose the groups to participate and made the programme, it would have been very difficult to arrange everything without her guidance. A creative and skilled young woman from Belgrade is also employed by Firefly, as a direct result of her assistance in the organisation of the festival. They are both co-ordinating their own projects and have full involvement with the development of Firefly as a whole. Girls from Firefly took on the roles of stewards, welcoming participants to the town and making them feel at home.

The festival involved many young women of all ages from co-ordinating roles to performing on stage. The theatre groups were predominately female whereas the music bands male and the audiences were very mixed. The festival involved young people from all ages and the event was enjoyed by many of the international community also.

The festival achieved all of the expected results. Our festival has paved the way for similar events to take place in the future with the knowledge that a multi-ethnic gathering can be without problems or tension. The support and enthusiasm shared between all the participants was both inspiring and encouraging. A “Rock Marathon” has already taken place in Brcko since the success of ‘Brckofest99’, which involved rock bands from all over the Former Yugoslavia.

Many friendships and contacts were made through the festival and participants now visit Brcko and want to take part in future events we might organise. Brckofest99 was a confidence building project for many groups bringing young people into the town of Brcko who did not feel it was safe for them to do so. The festival has motivated young people and residents of Brcko District to make joint efforts and take active roles in promoting the cultural life of their town.
Drama Project

- Over the past year the drama group has been led by Miroslav Mitrovic and Joanie Magill.
- The group’s performance of Shakespeare’s “A Midsummers Night’s Dream” at the Firefly summer festival was seen as a creative highpoint of the event.
- Since this performance, productions have been shown in Banja Luka, Belgrade and at the Firefly Winter Festival in January.
- After Joanie’s departure the Firefly group has been concentrating on producing Miroslav’s own work, theatrical pieces that challenge notions of identity and interpersonal conflicts and communications.
- In the future the theatre group is looking to co-operate with other art and drama groups, not only in the former Yugoslavia, but across Europe.

Media Project

- Edited by Gordana Varcakovic, the local Project Co-ordinator, Anonimus is written entirely by young people at Firefly Youth Project.
- At present 1000 copies of the magazine are currently printed every month and distributed free amongst the young people in Brcko.
- In the future Firefly Youth Project hope to sell each copy for a small amount of money, as well as sell advertising space, to cover the cost printing, thus making the magazine self-sufficient.
- There has already been interest by some local Brcko businesses in sponsorship and advertising in the magazine.
- In February, the magazine began a section written in English, thus allowing contributors from the UK (and elsewhere in Europe) to see their work in print.
- Firefly continues to contribute on a regular basis to “Nepitani”, a nation-wide Bosnian youth magazine written and designed by young people from all areas of the region.
• Sasa Micic runs the Firefly Youth Project photography course, which trains young people in photographic and darkroom techniques.
• Over this year the photography group have had the chance to display their work in Brcko Gallery, the OHR Media Centre, at a human rights festival in the UK and in the Edinburgh Premier of Jasmin Disdar’s “Beautiful People”.

• Nikola Pavlovic takes courses in information technology (Word, Excel and Photoshop), courses that are now gaining students a certificate in computer skills.
• The Firefly IT and Media courses benefited from an image scanner donated by Care Austria in October.
• Over this year the computer courses have attracted interest from young and old in Brcko District, as improving computer skills is seen as beneficial in the job market.
• Nikola has also been closely involved in the layout of the “Anonimus” youth magazine.

• English and Spanish language tuition continue to be popular Firefly activities.
• Emma Morgan, an experienced TEFL teacher from the UK, ran classes in English Language tuition from October to March, with Kristina Varcakovic taking Spanish lessons.
• Firefly was able, through the organisation, Nesto Vise, to take young people camping in Spain. This gave the participants a chance to make contact with pen-friends in Spain, learn about different cultures and practice Spanish language skills.
• These classes proved valuable for increasing job prospects and communicating with international organisations.