



Gort Cancer Support

Supporting People affected by Cancer



December 2022 Issue 9

Welcome to the December 2022 edition of our newsletter

We are fast approaching the end of 2022 and what a year it has been. 2022 started off on a very rocky road as the Covid 19 Omicron variant took hold of the country. Thankfully we are now experiencing a more normalised way of living. Sadly, however, we are seeing more and more people reaching out for support following cancer diagnoses and often unfortunately these cases are being diagnosed later. Thankfully, due to the ongoing support of the local community, we have been able to continue to offer our supportive and holistic services to those in need in our community. We have also been able to increase our range of services available with the introduction of Activator Pole Walking, Chair Yoga and Restorative Yoga. We have also been fortunate to be able to introduce a new male counsellor with Martin Dunne joining in the summer.

Breast Health Awareness Event

To coincide with Breast Cancer Awareness Month, we held a Breast Health Information Evening in our Studio on Thursday 13th October. Rachel Fitzgerald-Feely, the Education and Outreach Coordinator of Breast Cancer Ireland, gave a presentation on the importance of self-examination and what signs to look out for. Rachel is passionate about supporting women through their breast cancer journey and this was obvious in her talk. Cara Brady, one of our volunteers here at Hollyblue House, then talked us through the process women go through when they are tested for the the BRCA gene and what options are available to them if they receive a positive result. This was followed by Valerie Murphy of Valerie's Breast Care who showed us a sample of fashionable mastectomy bras, lingerie, and swimwear. Finally, Megan Flynn Dixon talked about her experience of areola tattooing and shared details of the procedure which can empower women to feel good about themselves after reconstruction.

The feedback we received afterwards re-enforced for us the importance of these information evenings. One lady commented "I will certainly be encouraging friends and family to come along to any future such events. You might think that such a topic would be dull and boring but not at all, it was interesting and inspiring".



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I heard information about self-examination and the signs to look out for that I had never heard before. I was also inspired to hear the speakers tell their own stories and to hear of services available

Fashion Forward

Gort was the place to be for fashionistas this season, as we were treated to two fashion shows from the fabulous boutiques in our town. On October 21st Treasures held a fashion show featuring some gorgeous pieces from their current ladies' collections. A fantastic night was had by the large crowd in attendance and we were delighted to receive the proceeds from the raffle held on the night.

On November 10th it was the turn of Pat Smyths Ladies and Gents Fashion to show their style. With a number of familiar faces taking to the catwalk (our chairman David Kelly to mention one!), this was another fun filled night. Again, we were very grateful to receive the proceeds from the raffle on the night.

We would like to take the opportunity to again thank these businesses in Gort for their ongoing support.



Gort Cancer Support AGM

Our AGM was held on Tuesday 4th October at The Studio, Hollyblue House. The meeting began with a minutes silence to remember clients and loved ones who have died since our AGM meeting last year. This was followed by the Financial Report presented by Gerry O'Donnell from O'Donnell Keane & Co., the secretary's report presented by GCS secretary Maura Leonard, and the Chairpersons Report presented by David Kelly. The election of committee then took place with all current officers remaining in place, and we were delighted to welcome Olive Hughes and Tom Prior as two new committee members.

Guaire Magazine

Check out the latest issue of Guaire Magazine to read all about the The Story of Hollyblue House, the origins of Gort Cancer Support, and how far we've come over the past 15 years!



Wedding Donations

Earlier this year we introduced our wedding favour cards for couples who choose to make a donation to Gort Cancer Support in lieu of wedding favours. We would like to thank all the happy couples who supported us in this way this year.



Activator Pole Walking

We were delighted to introduce a new activity for our clients in September with the introduction of a weekly Activator Pole Walking Class. Facilitated by local physical therapist, Martin Nestor, these classes have proved hugely popular and are suitable for all ability levels. Activator poles are an adaptation of Nordic Walking poles & have been developed to help promote balance & improve mobility. They may also be of benefit to those affected by lymphoedema. Classes currently take place on Thursdays 1-2pm. If anyone who is affected by cancer is interested in joining this group please contact us on 086 1724500 for more information.



Para a comunidade Brasileira

~Joyce Borges

Como temos uma grande comunidade brasileira em Gort e redondezas, gostaríamos de dedicar esse espaço em português para os nossos amigos e colegas brasileiros. O Gort Cancer Support oferece uma variedade de atividades e apoios para pessoas afetadas por um diagnóstico de câncer, tanto diretamente quanto indiretamente. O nosso folheto (que em breve estará disponível também em português) detalha todos os nossos serviços gratuitos. Gostaríamos de enfatizar que nossos serviços são disponíveis para todos, independente de nacionalidade ou língua, e que temos voluntários brasileiros disponíveis para estar auxiliando aqueles que necessitam de nossos serviços. Basta entrar em contato conosco. Mensagens de texto podem ser enviadas em português para nosso número de contato e serão devidamente respondidas por nossos voluntários.

Não poderíamos deixar de agradecer a todos que de alguma forma tem nos apoiado, seja participando dos nossos eventos, contribuindo em nossas arrecadação de fundos, compartilhando nossos anúncios nas redes sociais, e muito mais.

Também não poderíamos deixar de desejar um Feliz Natal e um Próspero Ano Novo.

Social Morning

On Friday November 11th, Gort Cancer Support hosted a Social Morning at Hollyblue House. This was a opportunity for the local community to come and see the support centre and find out more about the services on offer. It was lovely to see some new and old faces and an enjoyable morning was had by all.

Row-vember

Another local business supporting Gort Cancer Support recently was The Powerhouse Gym. The team organised a sponsored 24 hour rowing challenge. 121 members and friends rowed around the clock from 4pm Friday until 4pm Saturday covering a staggering total of 2,587,8km! Huge thanks to Ronan, Bryan and Ronan for organising the event.

Christmas Pop-Up Shop

With Christmas fast approaching we held our Christmas Pop-Up shop in The Studio at Hollyblue House on Thursday 1st December. Tierneevin Choir provided us with some lovely Christmas Carols to get us all in the festive mood. With something for everyone, from handmade decorations to toiletries, scarves, games, candles and much more, it was a great success.



Annual Christmas Raffle

Our Annual Christmas raffle took place on Thursday December 15th. Our lucky winners were:

1. Orla Spensor
2. John Kennedy
3. John Flanagan
4. Cathy Coughlan
5. Michael Morgan
6. Martina Kelly
7. Josephine Mahoney
8. Aileen Lynskey
9. Terry Ryan
10. Tom Quinn
11. Olive Mulcair
12. Gerry Donaldson
13. Valerie Brady
14. Sheila Hill
15. Sinead Rafferty

Thank you to everybody who entered. The raffle is one of our main fundraisers for the year and all money raised goes towards ensuring that we can continue to support those in need in our community.

RIP Vicky



"A strong woman stands up for herself. A stronger woman stands up for everybody else."

Rest in Peace Vicky

Volunteer Driving – What's it all about?

- Bernice Forde Carolan

Did I really want to do this? Did I really want to do anything that even had a vague whiff of “caring” about it? It was an odd and kind of selfish attitude for someone who had just spent 40 plus years working in healthcare, I think. I genuinely felt I needed to do something to support the amazing local service at Gort Cancer Support Centre, I just didn't know what. That is, until I met Mary and quickly discovered that Mary never sees problems, only solutions. After that there was no escape, so I became a volunteer driver. To be honest, deciding to so has been one of the best decisions and experiences of my life.

Some friends of mine physically paled when I told them I was doing this as being in my car has been likened to being in a mobile disco on occasions with flashing lights, horn blaring and heavy on the gas!! Getting from A to Z in the shortest time possible has been a lifelong priority, so seriously, driving vulnerable people to and from hospital appointments or treatments really didn't seem like a match made in heaven. However, with a small bit of attitude adjustment, less foot-to-the-floor and a more sedate, considered approach on my part, all would be fine. Yes, I can do this!



*Bernice Forde Carolan,
Volunteer Driver*

I completed the required paperwork, produced my clean driving license (3 points in over 40 years wasn't too bad of a record), confirmed the change-of-use with my insurance company (no cost!) and underwent my Garda vetting. I read the useful handbook provided, collected my Care Bag, (blanket, wipes, hand gel, bags etc.) and tucked it safely behind my seat in case it might ever be needed. The biggest task of all involved cleaning out my car to ensure it was comfortable for anyone assigned to my care. Thankfully, Mary felt it passed muster. I was now ready for road and my first drive.



*Gort Cancer Support participated in the
Gort St. Patrick's Day parade this year
showcasing our Driving Service*

The team in Holyblue House are amazing – they call and ask if you are free to undertake a drive on a specific day. There's usually plenty of notice although sometimes an emergency drive might be required. But there is absolutely no pressure on a driver to say yes to any request.

Once agreed, I'm briefed on the requirements, name, and address of the individual going for treatment. I'm nosy and always need to know a little more before I go so, I usually ask for a brief on the person's age range, their mobility, is someone travelling with them, etc? Aware of GDPR and confidentiality, Holyblue staff never disclose anything beyond what is absolutely essential, but these extra details really do help.

Despite years of experience in healthcare, I was more than a little apprehensive about doing this. Collecting a stranger in my car and taking them to a hospital appointment or a treatment at such a stressful time in their lives was initially quite daunting. How would they feel? Would they be scared, upset? What if something goes wrong? What if they get more bad news? How will I support them? Will I cope? A myriad of crazy thoughts went through my mind and naturally every possible worst-case scenario too! I had a very serious conversation with myself, pulled myself together, got on the road, and, like Murphy's ass, I haven't been off it since!

As a driver, I've seen parts of the countryside I never knew existed, been down boreens on what I call roads-to-nowhere, to collect and drive people of every age to their appointments. I've met some wonderful people in this role. Some are chatty and tell you everything that's been happening while others are more reserved and thoughtful. Respecting people's mood is important. If they want to talk, I'll chat away but sometimes there's so much occupying their minds that some peace and quiet to process things is the order of the day. And yes, on the odd occasion, I have been known to be silent!

After my first drive, I now always carry a book in the car and make sure my passengers have my phone number before they head into their appointments. I never wear perfume or have any strong-smelling scents in the car either. I'm conscious that some people may not be feeling the best and do they need to deal with my overpowering "eau de whatever" on top of everything else? Good old-fashioned soap and water is the order of drive day!

My passengers usually have a good idea of how long their sessions will take. It's good to be prepared as there is always some waiting around. I've learnt to allow at least a half day for these trips. Sometimes, we can be finished in under 3 hours but more often than not, about 5 to 6 hours is the norm from start to finish.

People never cease to amaze me. The resilience and strength of character and positivity shown by those living with cancer is phenomenal. I've felt privileged to share in the laughter and the tears on these journeys. For me, it's been a very humbling experience and really makes me appreciate life. I feel honoured to play a tiny part in their journeys. Getting someone to their appointments on time and in comfort, and safely home again, is the least I can do to make their cancer journey that little bit less stressful.

So, if you are thinking of becoming a volunteer driver, stop prevaricating and just get on and do it - You'll really be glad you did!



Gifts of Impact



The Gift Of Play Therapy

This gift provides
TWO sessions of Play
Therapy for a child...

 BUY THE
GIFT



The Gift Of Reflexology

This gift will provide
one session of
Reflexology for a...

 BUY THE
GIFT



The Gift Of A Drive

This gift will provide a
drive to and from the
hospital for a patient...

 BUY THE
GIFT

Those on social media may have seen our recent posts on a new way of Giving this festive season. It is now possible for you to 'Give a Gift of Impact' on behalf of Gort Cancer Support. There are a number of gifts to choose from such as a Reflexology session, Play therapy or a Drive to an oncology appointment. The Gifts are all available to purchase on our [website](#) and once you do so you will receive a Donation Certificate email. So don't be stuck for any last minute gifts this year - choose a Gift of Impact and know that you are directly supporting your local community.

Thank You

Belonging to a vibrant and supportive community can be very satisfying and rewarding. But great communities and thriving towns don't just happen. Fortunately, in every town and village there are people of vision and inspiration, caring for those around them – and working hard to make things better for everyone. This had never been more evident in Gort then when John Sullivan and his merry team organised the Shear our Sully fundraiser in June 2021. John has worked tirelessly on our behalf since then and thanks to the support of everybody who contributed to his 'Shear our Sully' fundraiser, together with the local business owners, we were thrilled to be able to announce in early 2022 that Hollyblue House is now debt free.

This monumental achievement allowed us to concentrate on running our support centre and providing the vital supportive services to people affected by cancer.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank everybody who has played a part in making this happen. Everybody in the community who supports Gort Cancer Support in any way is directly contributing to making life that little bit easier for those in the community who are affected by cancer.

So on behalf of everyone at Gort Cancer Support, Hollyblue House, and all the families who have been supported this year, Thank You. We wish you and yours a truly wonderful, healthy and hopeful Christmas, and prosperous New Year.



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CONTACT US

Gort Cancer Support
Hollyblue House
Garrabeg
Gort
Co Galway H91 WFP8
Telephone: 091 648606
Mobile: 086 1724500
info@gortcancersupport.ie
www.gortcancersupport.ie



Follow us on Social Media
@gortcancersupport



SERVICES

- **Adult & Adolescent**
Counselling & Psychotherapy
- **Cognitive Behavioural Therapy**
- **Children's Counselling/Play Therapy**
- **Confidential Support**
- **Lymph Drainage Therapy**
- **Post Mastectomy Service**
- **Complementary Therapies**
- **Transport Service**
- **Peer Support**

ACTIVITIES

- **Tai Chi**
- **Art**
- **Arts & Crafts**
- **Healthy Eating Workshops**
- **Art Therapy Workshop**
- **Gardening Workshops**
- **Activator Pole Walking**
- **Restorative Yoga**
- **MenopCan**



OPENING HOURS

Monday to Friday
9.30am - 4.00pm



*"There Are No Strangers Here; Only Friends
You Haven't Yet Met"*