

## Welcome to the June 2023 edition of our newsletter

### Wellness Event

We hosted a Wellness Event here at our Studio behind Hollyblue House, Garrabeg on Friday 26th May. Several guest speakers covered a range of topics from dealing with stress and anxiety, nutrition & healthy eating, keeping your lungs healthy & art journaling.

*Why is it important to have good health and well-being?*

Research has shown that a healthy body leads to a healthy mind. Maintaining a level of physical fitness and a balanced diet will prove to be hugely beneficial to both your physical and mental health.

Studies show that managing to incorporate even a couple of hours of decent exercise into a week helps in increasing not only our self-esteem and overall mood but also improves our mental alertness and ability to learn. A balanced diet, rich in essential nutrients, when paired with regular exercise, will ensure that you maintain a healthy, happy sense of physical and mental wellbeing, even at stressful times in our lives.

Higher levels of well-being are associated with decreased risk of disease, illness, and injury; better immune functioning; speedier recovery; and increased longevity.



Pam Watson CBT



Sofia Perez, PhD, MH



Marie Skelly



Fiona McDonagh

"Sometimes self-care is exercise and eating right.  
Sometimes it's spending times with loved ones  
or taking a nap.

And sometimes it's watching  
an entire season of television in one weekend  
while you lounge around in your pyjamas.

Whatever soothes your soul."

~ Nanea Hoffman

## Community Information Day

We were delighted to be given the opportunity to attend the Community Information Day in Loughrea Sunday 4th June as part of the Loughrea Lions Club's 40th anniversary celebrations.

We were honoured that one of our founding members and director, Sadie McInerney, was helping out at our stand for the afternoon. She was warmly welcomed by so many people from the Loughrea area due to her local connections.

With more than 40 organisations in attendance, it was a great opportunity to learn more about all that is available in Loughrea and, also, to showcase what Gort Cancer Support has to offer people in south and Galway and North Clare.

We had the opportunity to talk to many people who stopped by our stand and were very happy with the offers of support we received from many people.

We are looking forward to welcoming new volunteers and drivers from the Loughrea area to Hollyblue House.



## Counselling & Psychotherapy

We are delighted to announce that Anne Gallagher has joined the team here at Hollyblue House to meet the growing demand for counselling.

Anne is a qualified counsellor & a fully accredited member of the Irish Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (IACP).

Anne will be a familiar face to many in Gort from her time as a nurse in Gort Medical Centre.

Anne is available by appointment by contacting us on 086 1724500.

Appointments are also available with Maura Dolan, Pam Watson or Martin Dunne.

As always, this service is provided free of charge to anyone affected by a cancer diagnosis in the South Galway/North Clare area.



## Valerie's Breast Care

Valerie Murphy of Valerie's Breast Care provides a personal service for women who have had breast surgery. She offers a wide range of modern, fashionable and comfortable breast prostheses, mastectomy bras and swimwear from leading suppliers in Europe, the UK and America. Given each customer's needs are unique, it's important to get the right fit for your individual shape at the outset. With unrivalled expertise in all mastectomy products. Her aim is to ensure you feel good, look fabulous and experience a truly professional service.



Valerie sees people here in Hollyblue House on a regular basis. If you would like to make an appointment with Valerie, please contact her directly on 0851601783 and she will be happy to arrange a mutually convenient time.

## Marie Keating Mobile Unit Visit



We were delighted to welcome the Marie Keating Foundation mobile unit to Hollyblue House on Thursday 22nd June. This is one of three purpose-built mobile information units that the Foundation has which travel around Ireland to bring life-saving messages of cancer prevention and early detection to as many people as possible.

The unit was staffed by specialist nurse, Kathryn Murphy, seen here in picture with our centre manager, Cara Brady. Kathryn talked to several people in a private area on board about any concerns that

they had about cancer. The mobile information unit was also stocked with take-home information leaflets and packs on various types of cancers.

## Planning a summer gathering with family & friends

With all the good weather forecast for the next while, why not plan a summer gathering in aid of our support centre? Just pick a time & date between now & the end of August, invite family, friends or neighbours & ask them to donate to our centre in return for your hospitality. Sweet or savoury, coffee or cocktails, dress up or dress down - the choices are endless!



You can register your intention to host a party by emailing us at [info@gortcancersupport.ie](mailto:info@gortcancersupport.ie), via WhatsApp to 086 1724500 or using the form on our website.



### Arts & Craft Class

The very talented Mary Mahon facilitates our Arts & Crafts group every Thursday morning. From knitting to embroidered cards to decorating plant pots, Mary can turn her hand to many arts & crafts as well as being renowned for her brown bread & apple tarts.

Over the past number of weeks, she has facilitated workshops on decorating flower pots as well as card making. These pots and cards are available to purchase in our Hollyblue Gift Shop.



As Professor Jane Maher, chief medical officer at Macmillan Cancer Support, said: "Many patients can be left with physical health and emotional problems long after treatment has ended.



People struggle with fatigue, pain, immobility, or an array of other troublesome side-effects. The arts have been shown to diminish the physical and emotional suffering of cancer patients, as well as the side effects of treatment".

*'The medical profession has come a long way in recognizing the healing benefits of art. My hope is that someday the arts will be considered as significant in everyone's lives as breathing fresh air, eating clean foods, and performing physical exercise'. ~Renée Phillips*

The Arts & Crafts group is open to anyone with a cancer diagnosis & their family members. Join us on a Thursday morning from 10.30am & benefit from Mary's expertise.



## Community Matters on Galway Talks with Keith Finnegan

Galway Talks broadcast live from the heart of Gort in Sullivan's Hotel on Friday 2nd June. Keith Finnegan and John Morley talked to local characters, community organisations and focused on people, music, culture and life in the area.

Mary Nolan and Carol Shaughnessy were delighted to have the opportunity to talk about Gort Cancer Support, all the services we offer and the generosity of the people and businesses who support Hollyblue House, as, without this support, we would not be able to continue to help all those affected by a cancer diagnosis who call to us.

It was also great to join Annie Rosario from Gort Resource Centre who spoke about the great work they do and Bernice Carolan who spoke of the work and support of Gort Welcomes Ukraine and Gort Tidy Towns.



### CBT and Cancer.

CBT, or cognitive behavioural therapy, is a therapeutic approach designed to control the interplay between your thoughts, emotions, and behaviours. CBT is an evidence-based strategy helping you cope with cancer and navigate several vital symptoms of treatment: anxiety, pain, insomnia, exhaustion, and low mood.

Cancer frequently results in many losses, including the loss of health, changes to appearance, inability to work or engage in daily activities, loss of finances, loss of independence, changes to relationships, and a change in how you see yourself. No response to these changes is right or wrong, but adjustment takes time. How do you manage your emotions?

Everyone adjusts to a cancer diagnosis in their way, but it can be helpful to incorporate advice from mental health professionals with cancer care. There are tried-and-tested methods to help you remain afloat, honour your complex feelings, and keep intrusive thoughts at bay.

A cancer diagnosis fires your nervous system. You begin to operate in fight or flight mode; often, you can't sleep or think straight. CBT is a treatment approach that empowers you to explore your thoughts. You can't control them, but CBT equips you to manage these thoughts more carefully.

Cancer Institutes help fund research into clinical care and support the growing recognition of CBT as an evidence-based approach for various people seeking psychosocial help. For people with cancer, CBT offers a way to cope with the stressors related to having a life-threatening illness.

## CBT and Cancer continued

However, CBT is not a one-size-fits-all approach. Treatment is different for everyone, and follows individual care plans. Self-compassion, mindfulness and meditation are often vital components. CBT techniques are even used alongside medications to provide much-needed relief.

At Hollyblue House, we recommend visiting the centre to explore your feelings and immediate concerns. We offer help to develop the right support strategy for you. Our primary goal is to remove the stigma, shame and self-blame from a cancer diagnosis. Our trained professionals are here to help you feel as calm and comfortable as possible at every journey stage. Many people say their experience after a cancer diagnosis also includes hope and connection. For some, it can be a time of reflection, leading to new life experiences.

**Pamela Watson**

**MA (Hons) in CBT**



## Annual Thanksgiving Mass

Our annual Thanksgiving Mass was celebrated again this year by Very Rev. Thomas Canon Marrinan, PP, VF, known locally and fondly as Fr Tommy. The Mass took place in the courtyard of Hollyblue House. With over 60 people in attendance, for some it was their first time visiting Gort Cancer Support Centre. It was a very special occasion and touched the hearts of all those present. Thanks to Fr. Tommy for making this Mass so meaningful, to David Kelly for Reading and to Maura Costello for the wonderful reflection after Holy Communion. Thanks also to the Choir from Tierneevin who added so much to the occasion.

Refreshments were served after Mass followed by music and song, provided by Colie Moran and Friends. Fr Tommy joined the musicians playing his harmonica. There was waltzing, jiving and even a little line dancing in the outside area during the following few hours. The celebrations finished around 11pm.

One of the many lovely messages waiting for us on the following Monday morning was:

*'What a beautiful Thanksgiving Mass on Friday. So privileged to be present and to be part of the Hollyblue family. Thanks to everyone who made it happen'.*

Finally, we wish to thank everyone who supports our centre, whether by making annual or monthly donations, organising or supporting fundraisers or donating to our shop, We could not provide support and assistance to people affected by cancer without the support of people like you.

*Thank You!*