

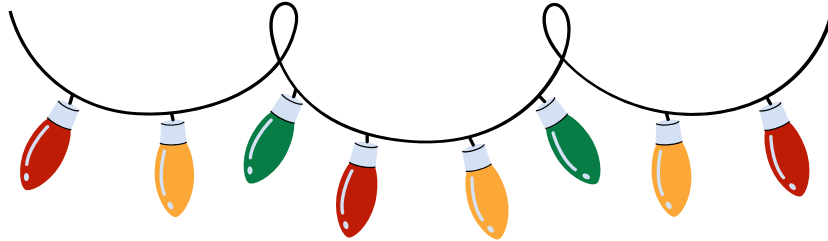


Gort Cancer Support

Supporting People affected by Cancer

DECEMBER 2023

ISSUE 13



Welcome to the December 2023 edition of our newsletter.

As we reach the end of 2023, we thank you so much for your kind hearted donations during the past year. Whether it was donating directly to our support centre, donating fabulous prizes for our annual raffle, donating goods to Hollyblue Gift Shop, organising a fundraiser, donating spot prizes to fundraisers or purchasing items from our shop, everyone in the Fundraising Team here in Hollyblue House is immensely grateful for your support.

There are no words that can describe the importance of your support. As you know, cancer has never been as prevalent as it is at the moment. We are in desperate need of more compassionate people like you.

The supports offered in Hollyblue House have life-changing effects on families all around South Galway and North Clare. With the number of new people availing of our services, your continuing support is needed now more than ever. Your kindness really does have positive effects on so many people's lives. Without your support we would not be in a position to continue the work we do.

What is Christmas?

*It is tenderness for the past,
courage for the present,
hope for the future.*

*It is a fervent wish that every cup may overflow
with blessings rich and eternal,
and that every path may lead to peace.*

~Agnes M. Pharo



Hollyblue 5K Your Way

On Sunday 1st October, Coole Park played host to Gort Cancer Support's inaugural '5K Your Way' fun run. The event was organised not only to raise much needed funds for Gort Cancer Support, but also to offer a fun family-friendly event for the local community in the beautiful surrounds of our very own Coole Park.

The weather Gods were on our side as the sun shone down on around 130 participants who registered to take part. The serious runners were easily spotted with their Garmin's ready to go, while the less serious chatted and laughed together in the beautiful October sunshine.

At 10.30am runners, walkers, toddlers and even some four-legged-friends took on the well-established parkrun route, consisting of two 2.5km loops, starting off from Coole House and finishing at the tearoom gates.



With an impressive time of 19.05, Noel Diviney was the first man home.

The female winner, young Caitlin Mulkerrins, crossed the finish line in 24.23, proving that determination knows no age.

Mary Nolan presented the winners with their trophies and all participants received a medal in recognition of their efforts.



Among the participants was Ken, all the way from Western Australia, representing the global reach of the event. Ken had been visiting family in the area and decided to take part in the event as he also works with a cancer charity back home. The diversity of participants on the day underscored the universal appeal of supporting those affected by cancer and the significance of a united effort to make a positive impact.

The event was a huge success, and it has been decided that "5K Your Way" will become an annual fixture, providing a consistent platform for the community to come together, run for a cause, and to support Gort Cancer Support.



Gort Cancer Support would like to thank Sinead Flanagan and the organising committee for their work in organising this event. We would also like to thank Coole Park & NPWS for granting permits, Gort Fire & Rescue team for providing emergency first aid cover; Anderson Painting for sponsorship of the medals & trophies; Corrib Oil Gort, Eurospar Kinvara and Centra Labane for the refreshments; Athenry Athletics Club for the use of their timing clock; and Ballyhugh Vets for sponsorship of the KM signs.



Best Wishes Pamela

Pamela Ward finished up with us on 9th November to move on to pastures new. Pamela has taken up a position with Burren Lowlands, still based in Gort, so she's not gone too far.

This means that we currently have a vacancy for an individual on the Community Employment Scheme, which we hope to have filled early in the New Year.



Community Health and Well-Being Day

On 10th November we attended the Community Health & Wellbeing day in the Lady Gregory Hotel in Gort. This event had been organised by our local Family Resource Centre. It was so heartening to see all the groups and organisations that are working in our community.

There really was something for everyone and it so inspiring to see the amazing work being done in our locality.



Debbie Smith & Cara Brady

Hollyblue Christmas Cards

This year, we had Christmas cards available for the first time ever. The artwork for these cards was completed in our weekly art classes on a Tuesday afternoon.

Each pack contained 12 cards, 2 each of 6 different designs & cost €12 per pack. Packs of cards were available to buy in our support centre as well as the Credit Union Gort, First Chapter Gort, Quinn's Pharmacy Gort & Eurospar Kinvara.

These cards were so popular, they sold out very quickly. Our Art class are currently working on artwork for next year's cards.



Galway People of the Year Awards

The Galway People of the year Awards were inaugurated in 1995 to give public recognition to people who, through their personal leadership, participation, courage or achievements, have made an outstanding contribution to their community at home or abroad.

These awards are now recognised as one of the highest accolades a person can receive in the county. Every recipient was chosen by the people of Galway through a nomination process and finalised by an independent adjudication process.



*Front (L to R) Pat Uniacke, Saoirse Ruane, Patricia King Callaghan, Deputy Mayor Donal Lyons, Cathoirleach Liam Carroll, Sr Agnes Curley, Mary Nolan, Ray McHugh
Back (L to R) Ollie Robinson Organiser, Joe Canning, PJ Fahy, Padraig Divilly, Veronica Carroll, Basil Holian Watchman Holdings, Carmel Dempsey, Shane Coen, Michael Hurley, Tex Callaghan*



Basil Holian of Watchman Holdings presenting Mary Nolan with her award

We were delighted to learn that Mary Nolan, one of our directors, was one of this year's recipients of this prestigious award. She was being recognised for her many years of volunteering with Gort Cancer Support and her contribution to its growth and to the local community

Mary has been involved with Gort Cancer Support since the outset and her involvement and support has endured over the last 16 years.

She has been heavily involved in organising fundraising events, promoting the charity and, until recently, managing the centre full time.

We were very happy to attend the Galway People of the Year Awards in the Galway Bay Hotel on Friday 10th November.

It was a fantastic evening, with a beautiful meal followed by the presentation of the awards to all recipients, who included Shane Coen, Ballindeereen, singer Carmel Dempsey, Craughwell, Galway hurler Joe Canning and inspirational young cancer sufferer Saoirse Ruane. This year, Keith Finnegan of Galway Bay FM was, once again, the compere for the night and the evening concluded with dancing to The Conquerors. They kept the dance floor heaving until the small hours.



Mary pictured with Cara Brady, General Manager & Committee Members, Carol O'Shaughnessy & Angela Finn



Mary pictured with her family, Gordon & Mairedad Nolan, Con Coffey, Anne Coggins & Teresa Egan

Galway Greats with Keith Finnegan

While Mary has been blown away with all the congratulations, good wishes, flowers, cards, messages from so many people, the accolade continued as she featured on the Galway Greats with Keith Finnegan on Galway Bay FM on Monday 11th December.

All this fame hasn't gone to Mary's head, you will still find her volunteering in the centre five days a week, meeting with clients and helping ensure the continued growth of Hollyblue House.



*“Alone we can do so little;
together we can do so much.”*

~ Helen Keller

Extract from We Act - Good News Gazette



Iryna is from Berdyans'k in Ukraine. She and her daughter came to Gort, County Galway in April 2022 to flee the war in their home country. She now works at Gort Cancer Support, a community-based support service for South Galway and North Clare. This is her #WeAct story...

After coming to the Gort Cancer Support Centre a few times, I told them I wanted to be useful, that I was looking for a job. I started working here on a Tús Scheme on 4th of September as an Administrative Officer.

When you don't have work, you have a lot of time to think about family back home, or to read the news. But when you work, it distracts you a little bit.

"I'm happy that I can be useful here in Ireland. People here are amazing, and it's really important to me, when we've received so much help and support, that we give something back.

When my daughter and I arrived in Gort, we had just two backpacks and the clothes we were wearing. That's it. And the local people welcomed us so warmly. Cosy rooms, food, clothing. The first thing we heard was, "This is your home."

I have a PhD in Philological Science. I was a teacher of Ukrainian language and literature, and I was also an English teacher. So I started helping other Ukrainians, I went to schools, and other organisations, and translated for them. Then I was asked to come to Gort Cancer Support to help a lady from Mariupol who had no English. I said of course, it was the least I could do to help.

I might work on the computer, I meet and greet, I help prepare the studios for activities. It's a lovely place. People get a huge amount of support when they come here.

This place is like an oasis in the desert for cancer patients and their families, we have everything they need to feel better in themselves, counselling, reflexology, art therapy, gardening workshops, it's really amazing.

I want to show the Irish people how grateful I am for all the help we got.

When you arrive into a foreign country, you don't know what to expect, but I was just captured by the warmth of people in Gort. I'm so happy to be here.

We don't know how long we will be here, we can't plan for the future, so we have to live in the here and now. And I know the best thing I can do while I'm here is to try to help and to give back."



Chrissie Gormally, Tracy Wickham with Iryna busy decorating our Christmas Tree

Volunteering for Gort Cancer Support



Breda Ryan

I started volunteering for Gort Cancer support in March 2019. I had finished working so I had plenty of spare time. I wanted to do something rewarding for myself and hopefully for everyone who comes to the centre.

I am a meet and greet volunteer, which involves answering the door and welcoming people when they arrive for their therapies and activities. If they are a little early I invite them to the kitchen for tea, coffee, biscuits if they wish and maybe a chat if they are up for it. Some might talk a little about their cancer while others just like general chit chat.

On occasion I may have to tidy the kitchen, dust, fill and unload the dishwasher etc. All volunteers give a hand setting up the pop up shops held a few times during the year which are fundraisers for the centre.

Christmas Floral Demonstration

Thanks to Mary Cannon of Florabunda Florist, Loughrea for the fantastic Christmas Floral Demonstration on Monday evening, 4th December. It was a tremendous success and the wonderful arrangements created by Mary were all raffled off at the end of the evening.

Well done to our four lucky raffle winners, who are pictured here with Mary Cannon, (l-r) Anne Gillespie, Caroline Slevin, Mary, Antoinette Conole & Breda Caulfield.



"I attended a Floral Demonstration on Monday Evening in the studio at the rear of Hollyblue House. On arrival, I was warmly welcomed by both Mary Nolan and Maura Leonard. I had a wonderful evening watching the very talented Mary Cannon of Florabunda Florist put on a beautiful demonstration for christmas arrangements. Mary was very informative and willing to take questions all evening from the packed room. We were treated to refreshments while the raffle took place. While I was not lucky enough to win one of the fabulous arrangements, all in all a really lovely evening" - anonymous



"Flowers always make people better, happier, and more helpful; they are sunshine, food, and medicine for the soul."

~ Luther Burbank

Christmas Pop-Up Shop

Following the continued success of our Hollyblue Gift Shop, our annual Christmas event proved to be equally as popular. It was held in the Studio at Hollyblue House over the 1st weekend in December.

All items in our shop were generously donated by our supporters far and wide, with several craft items handmade on our Thursday morning Arts & Crafts class.



With something for everyone, from handmade decorations to toiletries, scarves, games, candles and much more, it was a great success.

With our Hollyblue gift shop being our only regular source of income, we hope people will continue to think of us in 2024 and donate any unwanted and unopened gifts they may receive as our stock is running low.

Tea, coffee & mince pies Morning



On Friday December 15th, Gort Cancer Support hosted their annual tea, coffee & mince pies morning at Hollyblue House.

This was an 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 so many new and old faces and an enjoyable morning was had by all.

"Nothing seems to bring people together like Christmas."

~Steven Dodrill

Annual Christmas Raffle

Our Annual Christmas raffle took place on Thursday December 15th.

Thanks to everyone who donated prizes, bought tickets & supported the draw. It's one of our main fundraisers of the year.

Congratulations! Well done to all our Christmas Raffle winners:

- Callanan Hotel Group Gift Vouchers (€1,000) ~ Sarah Egan
- Two night activity Break to Landmark Hotel ~ Grace Kelly
- Temple Gate Hotel Gift Voucher (€600) ~ Aine Prior
- Wineport Lodge – 1 night Dinner B & B ~ Nella Ignac
- Center Parcs Gift Card (€500) ~ Ronan, Niall & Hannah Murray
- Treasures Voucher (€200) ~Sean Walsh
- Basilico Voucher (€200) ~ Niall Finnegan
- Craughwell Furniture Wood Rocking Chair ~ Patrick Cashman
- Lady Gregory B & B for 2 ~ Carol Casey
- A tour of Leinster House & lunch for 4 ~ Maura Dolan
- Mervue Natural Skincare Hamper ~ Elaine Giblin
- Mahons Garage Service Voucher (€150) ~ Caroline Hehir
- Gin Hamper ~ Mairead Nolan
- The Ellison 1 night B & B ~ Joseph Baldwin
- Doolin Ferry Gift voucher & B & B in Aran Islands Hotel ~ Tommy Ruane
- Quinns Hardware Cordless grass Trimmer ~ Amanda Browne
- Brown Thomas Gift Card (€100.00) ~ Edel Gallagher
- Bunratty Manor Voucher (€100.00) ~ Gerry Flaherty
- 2 Tickets for Nathan Carter INEC ~ Fiona & Patrick Burke



And finally ...

It is important to acknowledge that this has again been a demanding year for many of us. Some of us have grappled with the shock and disbelief of getting a cancer diagnosis, dealing with the illness, while others have been dealing with grief. Hopefully, this has been made more bearable by the knowledge that you are not alone, you are part of a community.

We are looking forward to supporting anybody who needs our help in 2024. We plan to continue offering all the services which are currently available as well as introducing a few more. All these services are available to view on our website www.gortcancersupport.ie

While we are also on the look out for and welcome new volunteers, we are currently seeking highly motivated, experienced fundraisers who could volunteer a few hours every month to help out in Hollyblue House.

If you have time to spare, please contact Mary or Cara on 086 1724500 who will answer any of your queries.



*We hope this Christmas
brings you
Peace, Health & Happiness
in the company of
family and friends.*

*from all the team
in
Hollyblue House*

"Help the life of one person and you can help the community."

~ Steven Sawalich