



Gort Cancer Support

Supporting People affected by Cancer

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ISSUE 16

Welcome to the September 2024 edition of our newsletter.



Autumn has arrived again bringing with it shorter days and a chill in the air, inviting us to slow down and enjoy nature's beauty with cozy sweaters, warm drinks and rustling leaves. For those affected by cancer, it's a poignant reminder of life's cycles and resilience, mixing joy with the challenges of illness. Support from loved ones becomes crucial, offering strength and hope. Communities unite in autumn to raise awareness and support for those affected by cancer through fundraising walks, awareness campaigns and support groups. The season's themes of change and renewal inspire individuals to cherish each moment and find strength in community support.

Gort Cancer Support plays a vital role by offering a wide range of services, including emotional support, complementary therapies, peer support, yoga, meditation, arts and crafts, and transport services. We also host educational workshops and wellness programs like Nutrition Advice and Breathwork sessions to enhance overall well-being. By fostering a sense of community, we help individuals feel less isolated and more supported.

Autumn's themes of change and renewal are particularly meaningful for those impacted by cancer. We organize seasonal events like our 5K fun run in Coole Park and creative workshops, providing opportunities for shared experiences and mutual encouragement. Through these efforts, we aim to ensure that no one faces cancer alone, offering hope and strength to all who come to us.

5K Your Way 2024

We are excited to announce that registration is now open for our **5k run/walk** in the beautiful Coole Park. This event, set against the stunning backdrop of one of Ireland's most picturesque parks, promises to be a memorable day for all participants.

The 5k run is not just a race; it's a community gathering aimed at raising awareness and funds for cancer support services in our community. Whether you're a seasoned runner or just looking for a fun way to support a great cause, this event is perfect for everyone. Families, friends, and individuals of all ages are encouraged to join in and make a difference.

To register for the event, you can visit RunIreland and search for the Gort Cancer Support 5k run, or simply scan the QR code to sign up directly.

Mark your calendars and lace up your running shoes for a day of fitness, fun, and community spirit. See you at Coole Park!



5 Ways to Wellbeing Workshop

We were delighted to host the Five Ways to Wellbeing workshop in the Studio at Hollyblue House on Tuesday, 20th August. The workshop was facilitated by Claire Flynn of Mental Health Ireland. The aim of the workshop was to help participants gain an improved understanding of how they can look after their own wellbeing. Claire guided attendees through exploring simple actions that anyone can incorporate into their daily routine to feel good and function well. The session also delved into coping strategies to help manage during tough times. Participants left the workshop with practical tools and insights, feeling more empowered to take charge of their mental health. The interactive nature of the session allowed for engaging discussions and personal reflections, making it a truly enriching experience for all involved. We are grateful to Claire Flynn for her expertise and to everyone who attended for making the event a success. We look forward to hosting more such insightful sessions in the future.



Breathwork Workshop



Thanks to Carol Casey of 'Ceann agus Croí' for her interesting and informative session on August 27th, introducing us to Breathwork.

During the session, Carol explained that breathwork encompasses a variety of techniques designed to improve physical, mental, and emotional well-being. These practices involve consciously controlling your breath to achieve specific outcomes, such as reducing stress, enhancing relaxation or improving focus.

Carol demonstrated several techniques, including deep diaphragmatic breathing and rhythmic breathing patterns, making it easy for us to follow along and practice.

She emphasized that incorporating breathwork into our daily routines can be simple and highly beneficial.

By the end of the session, participants felt more relaxed and equipped with practical tools to improve their well-being. With the techniques Carol shared, we can all look forward to experiencing the positive effects of breathwork in our lives.



Carmel's Story

I was no stranger to Breast Cancer as my mother was diagnosed when I was 21 and she was 59. It was treated aggressively, radical mastectomy, chemotherapy and radiation and long-term hormone therapy. I took comfort in the fact that she made a full recovery.

So, when my bi-annual mammogram in September 2022 as part of Breast Check screening programme was recalled within two weeks I didn't worry too much. I had no symptoms and had been having screening mammograms since I was 50. I was now 59 and assumed it was routine to recall a certain percentage of mammograms.

At the Breast Check clinic, I was told it was the right breast that showed areas of calcification and I would need to have an ultrasound and biopsies.



Two Core Needle Biopsies were done under local anaesthetic by the Consultant Radiologist. This procedure took about 2 hours to complete. Markers were placed within the breast at the biopsy sites, I found this particularly upsetting as the full reality of a cancer diagnosis was now looming. I was given a diagnosis of Ductal Carcinoma in Situ which reassuringly is very treatable with surgery and follow on hormone therapy. My options were outlined Radical Mastectomy with lymph node clearance. It was a lot to take in.

My overriding thoughts now were how do I tell my children who had already been through the trauma of losing their Dad (Matthew RIP 2014) to sudden Cardiac Arrest following a year of intensive Chemotherapy for colon cancer.

Three weeks later I was in St Vincents Hospital undergoing surgery and spent five nights in hospital where I had a mastectomy with full reconstruction using an implant. I made a good albeit slow recovery from surgery and couldn't lift my arm above my shoulder for weeks. Soreness and swelling eased within a couple of months with the help of physiotherapy and lymph drainage massage.

Oestrogen blocking hormone therapy followed.

This has been challenging as it induced a second menopause. Managing all the symptoms has been an ongoing process and this is where Gort Cancer Support have been invaluable in managing my recovery long term.

Finding a support centre like Gort Cancer Support and being able to connect with a community who just get it has been like a beacon of hope and light in the midst of a long decade of illness, grief and bereavement.

Taking part in Art Therapy Workshops, Tai Chi, Reflexology and Peer Support Groups at Gort Cancer Support has given me the space to process my emotions, form new bonds with like minded people and as my way of giving back I now volunteer one day week at the centre.

Gort Cancer Support are dedicated, professional and most of all kind. I can't thank them enough.

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The NCCP Alliance Networking event

The NCCP Alliance Networking event on the 27th of June was a significant occasion for Mary and Cara, who had the pleasure of attending it at the picturesque Farmleigh House & Estate in Phoenix Park, Dublin. This event brought together representatives from various community cancer support centres across the country, providing a wonderful opportunity for networking and collaboration. During the event, Mary and Cara had the honour of meeting Colm Burke TD, the Minister of State at the Department of Health with special responsibility for Public Health, Wellbeing and the National Drugs Strategy. Minister Burke took the time to commend all the centres for their unwavering “compassion & determination” in supporting cancer patients and their families. His words were a heartfelt acknowledgment of the vital work being done across the country.



The highlight of the day was when Mary and Cara were presented with a plaque, officially recognizing their Associate Membership of the Alliance of Community Cancer Support Centres & Services. This acknowledgment is a testament to Gort Cancer Support Group’s dedication and hard work in the field of cancer support, marking a significant milestone for our centre. The event was not only a formal occasion but also a delightful day filled with meaningful interactions. Mary and Cara enjoyed meeting staff and volunteers from other centres, sharing experiences and learning from each other. The beautiful surroundings of Farmleigh House added to the charm of the day, making it a memorable experience for all attendees. The serene environment provided a perfect backdrop for fostering connections and celebrating the collective efforts in cancer support.

Your ongoing generosity is deeply appreciated

To each and every one who recently completed a Standing Order to make a weekly/monthly donation to Gort Cancer Support, visited our Hollyblue Gift Shop, made a donation or fundraised for us, thank you for being such a wonderful ally of those affected by cancer and for making such a profound difference in their lives. Your ongoing generosity is deeply appreciated. Your support not only provides essential resources and services to those in need but also brings hope and comfort to countless individuals and families facing challenging times. Every contribution, no matter how small, plays a crucial role in our mission to offer care and support to those affected by cancer. We are incredibly grateful for your commitment and compassion. Together, we are building a stronger, more supportive community where no one has to face cancer alone. Thank you for standing with us and making a real, tangible impact in the lives of so many. Your kindness and dedication inspire us every day.

Thank you