

PROSPER Times



Christmas Greetings

The Prosper Times Committee would like to wish all our readers a Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year.



Merry Christmas

This is our 23rd Newsletter – almost 6 years on the go – and we would like to take this opportunity to thank all the Service Users and staff who have contributed articles and shared personal stories with us over the years. And please, please keep your news items coming in – there would be no Newsletter without your news!

Parents and families, if you have any items of interest you wish to share with others, we would be only too delighted to hear from you.

“New Directions” to Balbriggan

The Review of HSE Funded Adult Day Services, launched in 2012, aimed to reconfigure and modernise services to embrace the principles of person-centeredness, access, accountability and quality. The terms of reference for the review state that the new approach should deliver better outcomes for Service Users, provide good value for money and be in line with relevant legislation, national standards and best practice. It is designed for people with all levels of intellectual disability.

It is within this context that a new type of Day service opened its doors in Balbriggan in September 2012, very intent on following these “New Directions” in as pioneering a manner as possible.

Nine individuals, all residing in the locality, transferred from the Skerries and Rush Day Care services where they had received a high level of support. They came home to Balbriggan to access a truly local service which aims to promote more integration in their own local community through advocacy, citizenship schemes, education and networking across the various interests in the town.

Being person-centred is at the core of this new service. Weekly meetings take place with the individuals deciding what THEY want to do and learn. Then, THEY inform the staff of their choices. To date, some of the options explored have been; joining the library and being an active member, a gardening course in Sonairte, computer course in the BEAT centre, swimming and travel training on rail and bus services.

Already links have been formed with local businesses around volunteering opportunities for the individuals, as well as links with schools, clubs and churches in the area to foster a more inclusive approach for these new directions.



Balbriggan beware - we're getting involved!



Goodbye and Good Luck

It was with fond sadness that we said goodbye to one of our long standing and most respected members of staff. Mairead Foyle, former Manager of the Rush Service, has been on leave of absence for the past three years due to family commitments. Recently she decided that she would not be able to return to Prosper because of those commitments.

Mairead joined the Fingal Workshop for the Handicapped back in 1993 as a horticulturist and she worked in Piercetown teaching Service Users how to grow flowers in poly tunnels. When the company purchased and developed the Doctor's Lane site she moved to Rush as Centre Manager in 1997. She spent 12 happy years in Rush where she was extremely popular with her fellow colleagues but especially with the Service Users.

"I found Mairead to be charming and kind hearted. It was nice how she always made sure we got the services that we needed and I appreciated that. We all wish you good luck in the future and whatever you decide to do next."

Geoffrey O'Connor

"Mairead was very supportive and helped me get home help when I needed it. She was very understanding of different people's situations. She will be missed in the Rush Centre."

Helen Cooney

FETAC Awards

The Training Service had much to celebrate on Wednesday 28th November 2012 when 48 excited recipients gathered at the Carnegie Court Hotel in Swords along with their families and friends to be presented with a FETAC Level 2 Certificate in General Learning.

Conor Sparks (Chairman), Pat Reen (Director of Services), Gillian Cox (Training Manager) and guest speaker from the HSE, Martin Quilty, commended the commitment, motivation, hard work and success of each individual graduate of the FETAC Certified Programme; "Developing Basic Social Roles". Graduates received awards for their achievements over a two year period in Writing, Reading, Listening and, Non-verbal communications, Data Handling, Food & Nutrition, Personal Care, Using Technology and Computer Skills



A dead Cert for success

The Training Service developed this programme to meet the needs of each individual so they could develop the skills, knowledge and attitude that will support them to progress further in their many social roles, e.g. as a friend, family member, consumer, employee, volunteer and neighbour and thereby become active and contributing citizens in their local and wider communities.

The FETAC Awards ceremony was a great success, family members and staff were beaming with the sense of pride that comes from witnessing such well-earned achievements.

'X' Marked the Spot...



Marina Smyth, who is attached to the North Street Service, spent many years in school but never learned to write her name. She always hoped that some day she would be able to sign her own important documents rather than put an 'X' at the end of a page.

Now in her 50's, Marina spoke to her key worker about this very personal goal of learning how to write her own name. She was supported by Grainne Tinney, Speech and Language Therapist, who worked each week with

Marina in her own home. The work was hard as Marina had to learn how to make the letters of her name and then where the letters went. Grainne found ways of helping her think of and remember a symbol that would represent a letter. First Marina learned to write her initials and then she continued, slowly, to learn the other letters. Because she has a good memory she could remember the symbols, spell the letters aloud and then write them down without copying from something else. She was very determined and worked really hard to achieve this very important goal for herself.

Now when documents have to be signed, instead of an 'X' she can sign her full name. Marina is a great believer that it is never too late to learn new skills. As she says herself "I'm getting there". She was delighted to be able to sign her name at the end of a Thank You card to Grainne.

In this issue...



Siobhan Loscher



Cheers from the Howth crew



My weather girls!



Certs of 2012



A day at the Áras



Áine O'Connor



"It's all yours Paula."



'Peace Man'



“And now...The Weather”

It was a dream come true for weather buff Cecil Moore from the Rush service when he visited the RTE Studios to get a behind-the-scenes look at how the weather forecast is made and presented on television. Cecil has always had a huge interest in our weather. He can look up at the sky and tell you what to expect weather-wise for the next few days. And he is usually very accurate with his forecasts! With support from his key worker, Cecil contacted RTE and subsequently received an invitation from weather presenter Evelyn Cusack. Evelyn and fellow presenter Nuala Carey were delighted to give Cecil some V.I.P. treatment when they brought him on a tour of the weather office. Then it was on to the weather studio itself where the TV weather reports are broadcast and recorded. He even had the opportunity to stand in front of the blue screen and present his own ‘ideal forecast’ for Rush - 22 degrees and sunny - perhaps a little bit optimistic for this time of year Cecil!

So with all this inside information what can we expect over the next few weeks, and most importantly Christmas Day? Well, according to our weather correspondent Cecil Moore, it will start off very cold but will become milder...so no white Christmas!

A huge “thank you” to Evelyn and Nuala for giving their time and so much attention to Cecil. It was an experience he will treasure forever.



Cecil - a ray of sunshine

High Level Achieved



Finally - it's formal

My name is Shannon Moss and I attend the North Street Service. I left St. Ita's School, Drogheda at 17 without any qualifications. As I grew older, I wanted to have more formal qualifications to help me to get a job. I researched courses in my area and found one in Balbriggan Adult Education Centre on basic computers and succeeded in getting a place. I passed this course so decided to complete the FETAC Level 2 course in computing. I then progressed to complete Level 3. The course ran from 10.30 to 12.30 each Monday morning in the Adult Education Centre. The tutor was always really helpful but the assignments were very tough. I remember staying up until after midnight one night to get one finished in time.

None of this has been easy as I had to take a year off from my studying because of illness. It killed me to do this because I loved going to my course. I wanted to finish what I had started and it has been worth it in the end. I learnt many new skills including how to use Microsoft Word programmes which have helped me to make posters, develop a CV and write letters.

These courses took me 3 years to finish but the sense of achievement I felt made it all worthwhile. I learnt loads and got to meet lots of new people. However, I am not done yet. Now I want to do the FETAC Level 4 course...I will keep you posted!



How may we help you?

Open Day

The Howth Service held its long awaited Open Day on Thursday 6th December in its base in Howth. A number of local businesses, community groups and family members were invited to drop in and find out a bit more about what we are up to. The individuals we support took the opportunity to visit local businesses and personally deliver the invitations. It was hoped that the open day would promote the activities we are involved in and open up opportunities for new activities in the local community.

The base in Howth filled up very quickly as our mentors, supporters, well-wishers and family members turned up one after the other. Current local employers and work experience providers including Nicky's Plaice and McDermott's Pharmacy dropped by to show their valued support. Community groups including Howth Yacht Club, Sutton Tidy Towns, the local Howth C.E. Scheme, Howth/Sutton Community Council, Howth/Sutton Credit Union and the Howth/Sutton /Baldoye Chamber of Commerce also attended. Other visitors included staff from the local health care centre, 'Be Independent' home care provider, and the local parish priest. Our volunteers Naomi Cassidy and Louise O'Connor were also there to lend a hand.

The individuals we support took the lead role and 'worked the room' giving the visitors a tour of the premises and chatting about the current activities they are participating in. There was a great buzz in the air and the warm welcome that Prosper Fingal has received by the local communities of Howth, Sutton and Baldoye could be felt on the day. We would like to sincerely thank the individuals we support and their families for their enthusiasm and commitment.



Tree Cheers for the President

Meet the President

In the last edition of the Prosper Times we told of eight Service Users who acted in the national DVD and international web video 'Scenes from our Lives'. The group has since invited to Áras an Uachtaráin to allow President Michael D. Higgins congratulate them in person.

Everyone dressed to impress and were very excited about the trip. They took the same route followed by Queen Elizabeth and Barack Obama through the house to a beautiful reception room to wait for the President to make his entrance. When he arrived he shook hands and chatted to all the Service Users then gave a speech about the importance of people with disabilities representing themselves and how research helps guide the direction of future services.

President Higgins was presented with the 'Scenes from our Lives' DVD, and the results from the IDS-TILDA research. Darren Ward brought a set of Christmas tree stars which he gave to the President who said that they would definitely be going on to the Áras an Uachtaráin Christmas tree this year!

With all the formalities finished, it was time to relax and have a cup of tea. Paula Thornton spoke to the President about how she is related to past President Cearbhall Ó Dálaigh.

When the President left, the group was given a tour of the house and the opportunity to sit where Queen Elizabeth and Barack Obama sat and see their signatures in the visitor's book. The Presidents' guards posed with the group for photos and everyone got a napkin with an Áras and Uachtaráin stamp on it as a souvenir.

The Student Life

by Yvonne Corcoran

In November this year our son John graduated from a 2 year course 'Certificate in Contemporary Living'. The course, which is offered by the National Institute for Intellectual Disability (NIID), part of Trinity College Dublin, is aimed at facilitating lifelong learning for people with an intellectual disability.

The course consisted of 10 modules aimed at promoting academic learning, increased independence, autonomy and self esteem. John had the opportunity to study contemporary Irish poetry and writing, computer technology, art and also to learn about his rights and responsibilities as an adult and a citizen. He took part in an International Social Studies module where he learned about the history, art and culture of Barcelona. As part of this module he travelled independently with NIID to visit that city and see the sights he had learned about and to sample the local cuisine.



Don John

Throughout his two years John very much enjoyed the life of the third level student i.e. the independence of travelling in and out to college and having coffee or lunch with friends in the Buttery or the surrounding restaurants. The course was definitely very challenging at times for John as it was for us in trying to support him. However, we feel that it definitely contributed to his personal growth and development.

Completing the course has been a huge achievement for John and he is rightly very proud of himself. It was certainly one of the proudest days for us too. We are all now waiting impatiently for his official graduation photo to arrive so that we can hang it beside that of his brother.

Director's Cut

My name is Michael Leahy and I am part of the North Street Service. I have recently completed my goal which was to make a DVD documentary on the history of the Hill Of Howth Trams. From start to finish it has taken almost six months to plan, write, film and direct this documentary. I searched the internet for information and talked to Liam Kelly, the curator of National Transport Museum in Howth, to help me plan my script.



Michael - on track for Hollywood

I took on the role of Director and fellow Service User, Stuart Lynagh, was my camera man. I also had great support from my key worker, Laurence Corcoran.

I had to choose the filming locations and also write the script for use in the DVD. We started filming at Sutton, followed by the National Transport Museum. It went very well and the weather was kind to us. Stuart was a very professional cameraman and helped me greatly. I had to interview Liam in the National Transport Museum which was daunting as it was the first time I had ever done anything like that.

I feel a great sense of pride at having achieved my goal. I worked as part of a team and learned new skills like organising the interview. I would like to thank everyone who helped out on the making of this DVD and hope all who see it find it interesting and enjoyable.



Sweet smile of success

Another Degree!

Congratulations to Sinead Smith, very popular staff member in our Rush Service, who has received her Honours Degree in Applied Social Care (Disability). Sinead was conferred in November in the RDS Concert Hall.

For Your Information

Inclusion Ireland has launched the Inclusion Ireland YouTube Channel, featuring a series of short films that provide people with an intellectual disability and their families with practical information in an accessible format.

The series of films focus on how to fill out social welfare forms. They provide a step-by-step guide and cover six allowances and the appeals process. The films cover:

- Carers' Allowance
- Half-rate Carers' Allowance
- Domiciliary Care Allowance
- Respite Care Grant
- Disability Allowance
- Medical Card
- Social Welfare Appeals

Inclusion Ireland expressed its appreciation to the actors in the films; Lorraine Dempsey, Jane Fitzpatrick and Keith Doyle for giving their time to this project.

This project was co-funded by the European Union's Progress Programme (2007 – 2013). To view the short films go to <http://www.youtube.com/InclusionIreland> or www.inclusionireland.ie

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Flower Power

Yvonne Dardis, Portmarnock Service, recently commenced a new venture - a course in flower arranging. With help from staff, Yvonne looked up what courses in the area appealed to her and was thrilled to find the one on flower arranging. She goes every Thursday between 10.30am and 12pm to Target in Donaghmede where she meets up with fellow floral enthusiasts. She brings her own flowers along and is always delighted with her creations.

Yvonne said that this course has given her confidence a great boost. She has made new friends who are all lovely ladies and look out for her. There is a great atmosphere in the class and she enjoys the chat during tea break also!



Yvonne's centre piece



The Golden Girls

wonderful evening with lovely food and plenty of singing and dancing. Jean stopped the party for a few minutes to give a lovely speech. She and her family would like to thank all who attended the event of the year for such a special person.

Jean's Big Day

Jean Stapleton, a resident in Knock Cross House, was 50 years young on 22nd September and she celebrated in style with family and friends in the local golf club in Balbriggan. The build-up was very exciting and Jean had a homemade calendar on which she counted down the days to her big birthday. She was very involved with family and staff in the preparations for the party.

All the guests who came along to celebrate with Jean enjoyed a

John Lends a Helping Hand

John Smith from the Rush Service volunteers two mornings a week in St. Joseph's Convent which is run as a retirement home for nuns. The Convent is only a stone's throw away from the Rush Centre and so John is really helping out his neighbours! Along with staff Patricia, Bridie and Maria, John prepares and cooks all the meals for the residents. He is a dab hand at peeling potatoes, carrots, parsnips and apples. He also helps with washing the pots and making tea, cleaning the tables and hoovering the floors.



John - Rush's Ramsey!

John told us: "The staff are very good to me and we get on well with each other. I like chatting to the nuns especially Sister Cora who has a dog called Phoebe who likes to eat cake!"