

# PROSPER Times



## Together Again



Des and Tom - childhood mates

On 29<sup>th</sup> April 2013 two of Prosper Fingal's most valued staff, Des Tolan and Tom Byrne, retired from our Transport Team. It was a unique occasion in that these two gentlemen reminded us that it was very fitting that they retired on the same day as they both started primary school in Balbriggan together some 60 years ago.

A wonderful farewell event was organised in Ruffs in Skerries where their families and guests celebrated an evening of laughter and past stories regaled. Tom had plenty of opinions on Des, and visa versa! But all could see the mutual respect they had for each other and the importance they put into their role as the first face of Prosper Fingal for Service Users and families each day. Those families wish to thank Tom and Des for their dedication and professionalism over their years of service.

We wish them all the best in their retirement.

## Home Sweet Home

After extensive renovations, Prosper Fingal's residential house "Seal Cove" is up and running again.

Minister for Health, Dr. James Reilly, officially reopened the house on 18th June 2013 in the company of invited guests including; the residents, their families, elected reps, Board of Management, neighbours and staff.

On a beautiful balmy evening, people celebrated this very significant improvement for Prosper Fingal but more specifically for the residents concerned. They were extremely excited about the event and their new home. As Sonya Hayes said to the Minister on his arrival "I have never seen you looking so well". This welcome set the atmosphere for the evening!



Welcome to my home

For Prosper Fingal, this event represented another milestone in the organisation's development in that it presents the first community house that complies with the new HIQA National Standards for Residential Services. It was fitting that the Minister formally reopened the house as he was central in securing some funding to help carry out the refurbishments. The whole house is much brighter and spacious, the bathrooms have been totally refitted, a new extension added and the kitchen extended to allow residents help out with the cooking.

"The whole house is more homely and airy now and I am very happy to call it home." Suzanne Griffin

"I like the new garden and helping to plant and look after the new vegetable patch". Simon Duffy



The Anti-litter bugs!

## Adopt a Patch

**We all notice litter in our community but few of us do much about it. In Swords, a group of volunteers from Seatown Road have shown how, with a small bit of commitment and some hard work, you can really make a difference.**

It is said that 'actions speak louder than words' so the volunteers decided to get involved in an initiative supported by the local Council whereby you adopt a patch and commit to keeping it tidy. The Council supply rubbish bags, grabbers and high-vis vests so people recognise you. Our chosen patch was the grounds of Swords Castle.

The group from Seatown Road go to the park every Thursday morning and pick up litter that has blown into or been left in the park. Over the course of a few months, the workload has reduced significantly and the park is now a cleaner and safer place for all in the community. The volunteers have become a great team, learning to take on different roles and supporting one another. You can also see the influence in the local community as people in the park thank the group for their hard work and commitment.

Seeing other people volunteering their time to do good can often influence others to do likewise or at a minimum take some pride in their local community. Maybe this is something we should all consider. Well done to all those involved and keep up the great work!

## "Immersion Project" by Nuala Uí Dhuill (parent)



I was invited by Prosper Fingal, along with other parents/carers and staff, to attend a week-long conference in Killarney run by the National Federation of Voluntary Bodies. The aim was to learn about the new national disability policy of providing individual supports to people with disabilities. The conference was led by international experts and also showcased Irish organisations that are already providing such individualised supports.

I thought the conference was well organised and all the speakers were enthusiastic about the new policy. The following stood out for me as positive changes which could arise from individualisation:

- Improving the lives of people with disabilities by supporting them to make choices for themselves
- Getting the community involved in supporting people with disabilities as unpaid supporters
- Examining a person's interests/hobbies to see if it could lead to paid employment
- Focusing on a person's abilities/talents rather than their disability

Although I feel very positive about the new system, I still have questions and concerns. For example, one speaker talked about closing a group home and while two residents got more suitable accommodation I didn't get a satisfactory answer about what happened the other three! We were reassured that centres won't close, but I still worry that people with disabilities could end up at home with nothing to do if they are expected to use community more and more. I think there is a real need for more detailed information on how the new policy is going to be implemented and what the impact will be on disability service providers and families.

## "A Roof over your head"

**A number of Service Users in Prosper Fingal are currently on social housing lists.**

In the current economic climate where agencies are not being allocated any residential funding, social housing may be the only option for many.

Waiting lists are long with a single person waiting up to seven years. In the meantime, if one wishes to move out of home and live independently (alone or with friends), into private rented accommodation, it is essential that the person is on a local authority waiting list. Rent allowance towards private rented accommodation will not be payable to anyone who is not currently on the list.

Application forms can be obtained directly from Council offices or the websites. Anyone applying and looking for help or advice, please contact the Social Workers.

An additional note: A verification process of the housing lists has recently been undertaken by the local authorities. Everyone currently on these lists should have received a letter confirming their requirement to remain there. If you think you are on this list and have not received a letter recently it is very important that you contact the local authority directly and as soon as possible, if not, you will be removed for the housing list.



Gareth en Seine



A packed Aras



Official opening party



"Take a chance on me?"



Eye to eye



Claire O'Higgins - 60 and counting



## People Power



Wizard Gathering

Service Users in Rush regularly use the facilities offered by Rush Library. When they heard that Fingal Co. Co. proposed cutting the library opening hours and a meeting, chaired by Claire Daly TD, was being held to oppose the cuts, a group of them decided to attend.

At the meeting people were encouraged to try and think of ways to stop the library cuts. It was decided that a universal letter, voicing the community's concerns, would be distributed and a 'Gathering' outside Rush Library organised. This was very appropriate given that this year is recognised internationally as the Year of the Gathering. It was to be "A Novel Gathering" in homage to the libraries primary purpose.

The Service Users distributed the universal letter around the Rush service and, when they had collected lots of signatures, they took the letters to Fingal Co. Co. and personally handed them over to the Councillors.

The group then helped to organise the 'Novel Gathering' which took place in May directly outside Rush Library. Despite the unpredictable weather, there was a very good turnout. As part of the festivities of the Gathering, adults and children were encouraged to dress up as one of their favourite storybook characters, so plenty of wizards, witches and princesses could be found wandering through the crowd. Fingal Independent, RTÉ Drivetime and Rush Community News were all there to capture the event.

The efforts of the community have been rewarded with a motion being passed at the following Council meeting for the decision to have the library hours cut reversed. Well done everyone!

## Hearing the Words by Collette O'Loughlin

My daughter Ciara attends the Cairde group in Portmarnock. When Ciara was younger she loved looking at books and we spent hours reading to her. As she got older, her love for the written word continued. However, because she has Rhett's Syndrome she has limited use of her hands so cannot hold books or turn the pages herself. For years, she only had children's storyteller tapes which were inappropriate for her age and so she became bored with them.



Reading loud and clear

On a recent visit to the library in Donaghmede, the Librarian suggested that we try Audio Books. Basically, these are CDs where the story is read aloud to the person thereby eliminating the need for the actual book. She made a list of all the young adult books in Dublin libraries and gathered them for Ciara to borrow. And now, Ciara can't get enough of them! She likes romance, mystery, comedy and adventure stories and loves listening to them in the garden, in bed and in the car. I would never have thought that my daughter was able to understand and enjoy such a variety of different topics and I would never have chosen them for her. Now at night when Ciara does not sleep, we put her CD on and we can rest knowing that she is happily occupied!

We are very grateful to the Librarian for opening up this new world for Ciara, it has made such a huge difference to the quality of her life.



Jennifer - the First Lady?

## A Day in the Park

**Neil Stears and the Portmarnock Speak Up committee used their contacts and managed to wangle an invitation to Aras an Uachtarain for a private tour of the house. They must have been convincing as we received an invitation for up to 50 people to attend.**

A quick survey of the Portmarnock centre showed that almost EVERYONE wanted to go. Trains, people carriers, cars, taxis and buses were employed to ensure everyone made it to the Aras on time for the tour.

When we arrived at the Aras, two dashing young guards were waiting to give us a guided tour. They must have had a bit of a shock when all 47 of us turned up, excited and noisy, but we promised to keep it down for the tour.....

With all our travelling we had missed morning break, but luckily the Aras had laid on a gorgeous spread of nibbles, tea, coffee and sprite for us which we all enjoyed. Sated and rested we started our tour. We visited the State dining room, where all the important meetings take place, the reception room with its massive personalised carpet and several other rooms that were beautifully decorated with portraits and other paintings.

Everyone had lots of questions and made sure the guides more than did their days work! All in all it was a great day out so a big thank you to the Speak Up Committee for arranging it.



How can we help each other?

## Need a Volunteer?

**National Volunteering Week raises awareness of volunteering events and opportunities around the country. In Rush, Prosper Fingal took part in an Expo Night that showcased local businesses, charities and organisations like Tidy Towns, Meals on Wheels, Scouts, Millbank Theatre, etc, that were looking for volunteers to work with their groups. The night also provided organisations with the chance to meet and network. In Prosper Fingal's case, Service Users Ian Butterly and Suzanne Griffin set up their stand to provide information on how the general public can volunteer with us and to show how they too could be eager and motivated volunteers for other groups.**

Ian and Suzanne took the opportunity to tell people about the service they receive from Prosper Fingal. They welcomed individuals to their stand showed them some of the promotional information they had brought. They explained how a person could volunteer with Prosper Fingal and what kind of tasks they could do. Sometimes they also had to explain what an intellectual disability was and even that there was a day service for adults in Rush as a number of the public were unaware of this.

Suzanne spoke about her own volunteer work in the Skerries Trust shop which helped people see what a valuable resource Service Users are to other organisations and charities. Ian showed off the Prosper Times newsletter and Voices News from the Rush Day Service.

## Remembering Shay



Shay goes to the Ball

Seamus Woodhead was a Balbriggan man through and through. The people of Balbriggan knew him as "Shay Shay" and he enjoyed nothing more than strolling around the town and talking to all the locals. Shay had several loves of his life. His first was his cigarettes and he was seldom seen without one in his hand! His second was the Bookies where he loved to back the 'favourite' and on rare occasions reaped the benefits. Another love was the harbour in Balbriggan where he worked as a youngster on the fishing boats and spent much of his mature years chitchatting with the fishermen still working there.

Shay joined Prosper Fingal back in 1978 and was very popular with the service users and staff thanks to his witty sense of humour. He started in Skerries centre and moved on to work in horticulture in Piercetown and pottery in Rush before retiring to the present Piercetown service for Senior Life. In 2001 he moved into Seal Cove residential house and was the 'big brother' to fellow residents.

"Shay was a rogue who loved the horses and his cigarettes. He entered the flower show every year and once when he had no time to grow some pansies he bought some and entered them instead. Well done Shay, he won first prize! We will miss Shay in the house for his jokes and laughter and his kindness to us", Suzanne Griffin.

Shay fought his illness for eight weeks in hospital but unfortunately passed away on 29th March with his family by his side. We offer our sincere condolences to the Woodhead family.

## Birds of Prey



Hawk eye

Dublin Falconry is home to thirty owls, falcons and hawks of all shapes and sizes and is based in Courtlough near Balbriggan. Recently a group of Service Users from the Rush centre got the opportunity of visiting the falconry to see these magnificent birds first hand.

Expert falconer Trevor Roche gave the group a special tour of the birds before the very large owls were brought from their perches for each person to feed and gently stroke their feathers to feel how soft they were.

Trevor explained everything about the falcons while Anthony Conroy (the king of questions) asked how fast the birds fly and how high up they go. The owls and falcons all eat the same food... little yellow chicks (not alive) which everyone thought was disgusting but it is nature after all!

As it was quite a windy day, the hawks could not be flown outside. Instead some of the smaller owls and harris hawks were brought into the office one at a time so they could fly around the room over everyone's head. This made the flying birds even more awesome and we did have to remember to duck at times!

Each Service User excitedly put on the large leather glove and took turns getting the birds to fly to them and land on their arms. Breda Mulvaney was a natural and would call the birds to her and send them flying away again without any instructions.

The group had a fantastic tour and really enjoyed the close contact with such beautiful birds.



Enjoying the 'Goodman' life

## My New Service

by Gary Goodman

In April, I moved from Seatown Road to the Daycare service in Skerries and my friend JP moved to Rush at the same time. At first I was feeling very nervous but everyone was really nice. Now I am happy because I am getting to know new people. I am also doing new things like joining the local gym and library. I recently went on a friendship trip to Rush to visit JP. My new friend in Skerries, Fiona Loughman, came with me and we had a lovely lunch together in the Harbour Bar. I am very happy in my new service in Skerries.

## Congratulations

We send our congratulations to Service Users Edel Woods (North St.) and her partner Brian on the birth of daughter Éabha and Wesley Hanratty (North St.) and his partner Fiona who welcomed a son, Jason.

Staff members Cillian Sparks (Seatown Rd.) and his wife Sarah have a new daughter – Nina, Niamh Carroll (Rush) and husband Trevor have a daughter – Lucy Mae, Aidan Doyle (Skerries, Piercetown and Respite) and his wife Pauline have a daughter – Sophie Rose and Lisa Flanagan (Clinical) and husband Paul welcomed a son – Leo.

Claire O'Higgins celebrated her 60th Birthday with a party for family and friends in the Carnegie Court Hotel on 29th April. Congratulations Claire.

Contact Clare Murray  
086-3867592 or email  
claremurray@eircom.net



Chloe - art critic

was so high that it needed to be shared with the wider discerning public. So they organised an exhibition in the Bracken Court Hotel on 22nd May and asked their fellow classmates from the town to join with them.

Posters advertising the exhibition were put up around the town and plenty of cupcakes were baked while they waited with baited breath to see who would come. And to their relief the crowd arrived. Everyone had a wonderful evening and the cupcakes were nearly as nice as the paintings! Who knows...next stop the Louvre!

## Oh Mamma Mia!

Following months of preparation and rehearsal, the Skerries and Piercetown Drama groups took to the stage with their production of Mamma Mia on 6th June. There was not a spare seat in the Little Theatre as parents and friends came to enjoy the much talked about and eagerly awaited show.



I do I do I do

There was great excitement in the air on the day of the show. All the girls had their hair done and Mary, a professional makeup artist, came in to ensure everyone looked very glamorous for their big theatre debut. The proud families thoroughly enjoyed the performance, clapping and singing along to all the popular songs.

"I never thought I would see the day when my daughter performed in a real theatre." (Maria Coleman, mother of Gillian)



Budding Master Chefs

training with Prosper Fingal. They enjoy nothing more than helping to plan and prepare meals with their families. They would love to pay a visit to Nevin's famous restaurant in Blacklion one day. Subsequently in June, Niamh attended the Bloom Festival in the Phoenix Park where she was delighted to meet Nevin in person and thank him for his generous gift.

## Balbriggan Art Exhibition

Service Users and staff from the Balbriggan service recently took part in two mainstream art classes – one in the local library with Derek Zeus as the teacher and the other run by the VEC Adult Education in Sarsfield House. They decided that the standard

## The Two Nevins

Two enthusiastic foodies from the Portmarnock Centre were overwhelmed recently to receive personally signed copies of the renowned Nevin Maguire Cookbook from the great chef himself. Both are firm fans of Nevin and love to watch his programmes on TV.

Niamh Keenan and Eoin Hall have both loved cooking since they completed their IST FÁS