

SLIGO COUNTY COMMUNITY FORUM NEWSLETTER



SLIGO COUNTY
COMMUNITY FORUM

SPRING/SUMMER 2009

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRPERSON OF SLIGO FORUM

I am very pleased to present the Spring/Summer edition of the Sligo County Community Forum newsletter. The aim of the newsletter is to present the news and views of community and voluntary groups throughout Sligo.

Over the last few months there has been unprecedented change in our county and country. From boom to bust, communities are struggling to deal with the rapid pace of economic decline. Through our networks in the forum, we have heard stories of many people losing jobs in Sligo and community and voluntary organisations suffering cuts or losing funding. However, we have also heard how community and voluntary groups are managing to adapt and be creative to work successfully within the changing environment.

The downside of the 'Celtic tiger' was the decline in 'community' and the rise in 'consumerism'. While we acknowledge that many people who have lost their jobs, particularly those with high mortgages, have been left in a dreadful situation - the recession may also present an opportunity for communities to once again 'flourish'. As community and voluntary organisations, it will be a chance for us to connect with people in our areas and provide a different kind of outlet that can respond to their needs. Heads coming together, support and encouragement is something we will all need to see us through the downturn. The community and voluntary sector will play a vital role in enabling people to respond to the crisis and be inventive in making solutions for all sectors in society.

It has been my privilege to be Chairperson of Sligo County Community



Forum since May 2008. During this time I have been working to build the connection between the County Community Forum and groups working in the community and voluntary sector on the ground in Sligo. In January 2009 we launched our monthly e-bulletin, which has been very well received. We send out details of funding, training and events coming up in the county. We are also launching a series of training events over the next few months to support community activity.

This month our new website: www.sligocommunityforum.ie will be going live! Check it out if you want to learn more about us and the events coming up.

If the County Community Forum can respond to the needs of your group please let us know. The aim of the Community Forum "is to identify, analyse and act on the needs, issues and concerns of community and voluntary groups in County Sligo with particular emphasis on the issues that affect those who are most vulnerable and excluded in our communities". I hope that you will find something of interest in our newsletter.

Regards, Margaret Conlon

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PRESIDENTS VISIT HONOURS SLIGO VOLUNTEERS

In November 2008, volunteers at Sligo Social Services Council Ltd were delighted and honoured, at a special function held in the Sligo Park Hotel, where they were addressed by President Mc Aleese. The President praised the work of volunteers (over 200 people were present) for the 40 years of service to the community. She spoke of the volunteers who *“have touched so many lives, working through a spirit of love and voluntary commitment”*. The President spoke of the many lives healed and put back on track by the work of Sligo Social Services volunteers over the decades.

Christina Mc Taggart, Director of service at Sligo Social Services and Bishop Christy Jones also paid tribute to the



dedicated work of volunteers of the organisations.

Over 270 volunteers currently support the agency in many ways. They are involved in the delivery of meals on wheels to over 100 elderly and infirm in the community, daily. They assist in the preparation of meals. They transport

“Volunteers have touched so many lives, working through a spirit of love and voluntary commitment”

elderly to clinics. They offer overnight supervision along with befriending homeless men in a night hostel. In addition, volunteers run our thrift shop, while others are involved in fundraising.

Volunteers also serve on the board of Directors of Sligo Social Services.



E-BULLETIN LINKING COMMUNITIES IN SLIGO

The Sligo County Community Forum launched its monthly e-bulletin in January 2009.

Its aim is to link communities in Sligo by sharing news and information about activities coming up. It includes details about upcoming funding opportunities, community events and training opportunities.

If your group would like to receive this bulletin or place information in it about

an upcoming community event **contact Catherine at: cbrennan@sligococo.ie**

If you are not on email and you would like a paper copy of the e-bulletin sent to you each month, contact **Catherine at 071-9111814** and she will take down your details.

Communities in Sligo can share news on upcoming events through the Community Forum E-Bulletin

WHAT IS THE COUNTY COMMUNITY FORUM?

We are a committee set up to represent the views of community and voluntary groups across county Sligo.

Who can become members?

Any group working in the community and voluntary sector is entitled to become a member.

What's in it for members?

As a member you will be entitled to put yourself forward for elections to the board of the Sligo Forum. As a member of the board you can gain access to a range of other boards and committees - these include the County Development Board, the strategic Policy Committees within the County Council, Sligo Sports Partnership, Sligo Joint Policing Committee, Sligo County Childcare Committee and many others. It enables groups to have a voice in policy making at a county level.

All members also receive our monthly e-bulletin, which details funding and events happening in Sligo. In addition they get our newsletters and access to events and training that we run. Through membership of the Sligo County Community Forum, groups can also gain access to our 'group insurance scheme cover' which can offer groups a significant reduction in insurance costs.

How can I get onto the board of the Sligo Forum?

There are 17 places on the board of the Sligo County Community Forum. Delegates are elected from the five electoral areas in County Sligo - Sligo/Drumcliffe, Sligo/Strandhill, Enniscrone area, Tubbercurry area and Ballymote area. In addition five seats are reserved for representative groups from the following areas: Disability sector, Youth sector, Older people, Traveller Community and New Communities.

When are the next elections?

The next elections to the County Community Forum will take place in October 2009. Election nights will be held in each of the electoral areas and these will be advertised through our e-bulletin and in the local papers.



Forum members attending a recent planning event. From left to right: Frank Flanagan, Thomas Mc Gettrick, Brendan Queenan, Joe Walshe and Maeve Whittington

All groups will receive nomination papers in advance to put forward a delegate.

Where can I find out more information?

Our new website, www.sligocommunityforum.ie will be launched by the end of this month. There you will be able to find information on events we are running, background information to the forum and forum minutes. Details of all the groups and organisations we participate in, is also presented on the website. Otherwise feel free to contact:

Claire Galligan or Catherine Brennan at:
cbrennan@sligococo.ie or
phone **071-9111814**.

"We are a committee set up to represent the views of community and voluntary groups across Sligo"



SPRING EVENTS AT CEOLÁRAS COLEMAN

The spring festival - Ceiliúradh an Earraigh takes place the first weekend in May. It features two concerts, a fiddle workshop and a traditional night. The first concert on Friday May 1st at 9pm features a unique duet, Tommy Peoples on fiddle and Dermot Byrne on accordion.

On Sat. May 2nd Tony deMarco from the U.S.A. plays in concert and will launch his new CD. A fiddle player who learned from the Sligo masters in America, he gives an excellent and

faithful rendition of the style. Tony will also give a fiddle workshop on Saturday at 2pm. On Sunday, May 3rd there will be a Boxy Night - traditional music session with home baking.

The long awaited exhibition area on the history of traditional music and featuring music from the five counties, Sligo, Mayo, Roscommon, Leitrim & Fermanagh opens in May. This area contains a 15 minute audio-visual presentation, interactive kiosks, snippets from the archives, a collection of photographs, and lots more...

Booking & Enquiries - 071 9182599
www.colemanirishmusic.com

COMMUNITY DRAMA ALIVE AND WELL IN TUBBERCURRY!

It's been a very busy year for the Phoenix Players Amateur Drama Group in Tubbercurry. The Phoenix Players are one of the oldest amateur drama groups in the country and celebrate their 65th anniversary this year.

The Group has performed with distinction on the amateur drama festival circuit for many years but for the last number of years the group have interspersed their festival runs with "big shows". The big show ranges from musical, pantomime, Passion play, Nativity play and the sole purpose of the big show is to ensure that as many people as possible within the community get involved in a production.

The Group has just finished a hugely successful run with their production of "My Fair Lady". A cast of over 70 people of all ages were assembled with a back-stage and front-of-house crew in excess of 30 people, all under the directorship of Mary Barry-Leonard who produced the play.



The production ran for seven nights to large audiences in the newly renovated St Brigid's Hall and such was the success of the show that, on the last few nights of the run, people had to be turned away at the door as the "house full" sign had gone up.

The youngest person in the cast was nine years old and let's say the eldest person would have received their travel pass a good number of years ago!!

Eamonn Gallagher, Chairman of the Phoenix Players, states that it is the



ethos of the Group to try and run the drama group as a community drama group to give as many people as possible the experience and the opportunity to perform on stage.

The Group, jointly with the Western Drama Festival, hosted the All Ireland One Act Drama Finals also in St Brigid's Hall in the first weekend in December. Again, this was a hugely successful weekend and involved the whole town of Tubbercurry getting behind the joint organising committee. The National Joint Committee of the ADCI and DLI were fulsome in their praise for the manner in which Tubbercurry host the event.

The Group also made an application to the Department of Community, Gaeltacht and Rural Affairs in conjunction with the Western Drama Festival and St Brigid's Hall for grant assistance towards the cost of a new tiered seating system for St Brigid's Hall. The Group were successful in the application and the new tiered seating system was put in place for the recent run of "My Fair Lady". Great work has been done by the Committee of St Brigid's Hall in recent years in the renovation of the Hall and the addition of this new tiered seating system now has made St Brigid's Hall a pristine venue which can host any event.

This application was made jointly by three separate Committees in the town and, again, it is a great sign of community development that the Committees of all three organisations

had the foresight to identify the need and get together to put forward a concrete proposal and see it out to its conclusion. The Group would like to publicly acknowledge the assistance of Minister Eamon O'Cuiv and his Department officials in furnishing the grant assistance towards the tiered seating.



The Group also has a youth wing, again trying to involve youngsters in amateur drama and they performed a newly commissioned performance piece designed by Kelly Hughes of Blue Raincoat Theatre Company for the opening of the All Ireland One Act Finals in December. The adjudicator who adjudicated on the festival remarked in his closing comments that the performance piece by the Phoenix Players Youth Theatre was "a magical piece of theatre". Undoubtedly community drama and indeed community spirit is alive and well in Tubbercurry and South Sligo.

JOINT POLICING COMMITTEES IN SLIGO

Representatives from the community and voluntary sector are one of a number of groups taking part in the Joint Policing Committees (JPC) in Sligo. In accordance with the Garda Síochána Act 2005 (section 36) two Joint Policing Committees have been established in Co. Sligo, one in the Sligo Borough Council Administrative area, which was established as one of 22 pilots nationally in 2006, and one in the Sligo County Council Administrative area which was established in December 2008.

“Joint Policing Committees (JPC) are intended as a means of building trust and confidence, and as a forum for discussion”

As well as community representatives, members of the Oireachtas, Local Authority Members and members of An Garda Síochána also participate. The purpose of the JPCs is to serve as a forum for consultation, discussion and recommendation on matters affecting the policing of the Sligo Borough Council and Sligo County Council administrative areas by keeping under review levels and patterns of crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour in these areas.

Joint Policing Committees (JPC) are intended as a means of building trust and confidence, and as a forum for discussion.

The aim is to bring communities together in a way in which all participants feel

comfortable. It is intended that the JPCs should engage with local community groups to the greatest degree possible, as these groups are an important resource in tackling the issues addressed by the JPCs.

Currently, issues being focused on by JPC's include: Illegal drugs; Traffic management; CCTV; Youth diversion; Public Order; Vandalism; Safer neighbourhoods; Planning of major events attracting large crowds; Casual trading; Litter; Community-based crime prevention initiatives; Consideration of drink licensing application and Estate management (including tenancy enforcement and public lighting).

Each JPC meets four times per year and

the Local Authority elected members of the JPC appoint the Chairperson and Vice Chairperson (as per the Garda Síochána Act 2005) and these positions then rotate between the Local Authority elected members.

If you would like to find out more information you can contact **Geraldine Timlin, Project Officer, Community & Enterprise, 071-9111804**

COMMUNITY PEOPLE: BRIAN CRUMMY

What got you into Community Work?

I have polio since I was sixteen and I guess I have been an activist on disability issues for over forty years!

What kind of community work have you been involved in?

I have been a Director of the Disabled Drivers Association for over thirty years and was Chairperson for twenty years. I have been a Committee Member of PwDI (People with Disabilities in Ireland), Sligo Network since it was formed ten years ago and was Chairperson up to last year. I have been a member of the Sligo Community Forum for three years and find it very worth while work on behalf of all the communities within the county. I am also a Director of Sligo Sport & Recreation Partnership, and of Sligo Disability Consultative Group. I am also

a Volunteer Information Officer and a Director of Sligo Citizens Information Centre and work there one half day per week.

What drives you in your work?

This is something I enjoy doing and this organisation does great work; I hope that I contribute in some way towards that work. I retired from work with the North Western Health Board over six years ago and have been kept going at one thing or another ever since then.

What are your hobbies?

I enjoy swimming, singing, Bridge, Chess, reading when I get a chance, TV.

If you had a motto, what would it be?

Do a good deed if you can, even when it doesn't appear to be appreciated.



Brian Crummy has been a voluntary community worker in Sligo for over 40 years...

Thank you and Well done Brian!

CARA: CALRY ACTIVE RETIREMENT ASSOCIATION



2008 and early 2009 have been a very busy time for the Calry Active Retirement Association. We are a group of older people who meet to learn, socialise, keep fit and have a bit of company and craic. Twice a month we have a general meeting to assist in the organisation of our events.

Every week we run a walking group that meet on Monday mornings at the Calry Community Park in Hazelwood. Afterwards all walkers enjoy a cuppa and a chat - good for the body and the mind! The Clarion Hotel is our venue every Wednesday morning for our Gym and Swim Sessions after which, once again, the cuppa and the chat are on offer thanks to the Clarion Hotel. These sessions provide a social outlet for the older people in our rural area and introduce our older members to new skills, experiences and opportunities for contact and interaction. As well as this, the group have produced 2 editions of stories and poetry, namely CARA Creations and Calry Tales.

During 2008 we hosted a large number of events that we hope to run again in 2009. We have had regular Health Promotion talks and activities such as kurling, card games, art and craft workshops and floral demonstrations at our regular meetings.

We also had some interesting trips over the last year. At the end of April we ventured down south to the banks of the Lee for a visit to County Cork. Our members had a great time for a week taking in all the sights and a visit to the Cobh Heritage Centre where they had the "Queenstown Experience" with its exhibition of Irish history. The Heritage Centre also houses a history of the Titanic.

On a very sad note, on the morning after returning from Cork, we lost a dearly loved member Pat Branley, who died suddenly. Pat is sadly missed from our group. Ar dheis De go raibh a h-anam.

Later in the year we had an overnight trip to Buncrana with a day trip to the City of Derry. A day trip to Belvedere House in Mullingar which is described as "an oasis of beauty in the midlands" was enjoyed by all during the Summer months.

At the end of September our group took a very active part in the Positive Ageing Week which was run in conjunction with Sligo Leader Partnership. PAW is a festival to highlight the positive aspects of ageing and celebrates the contribution older people have made and indeed continue to make in their communities. Our support worker, Christopher Davis, organised informative talks on Fire and Crime Prevention and was also very active in the organisation of the Gala Ball which was held in the Radisson hotel to culminate a very action packed week. Our group were presented with an award at this function in recognition of their participation throughout the week. We would like to acknowledge our local community who helped with fundraising and also thanks to Sligo Leader Partnership and the HSE North West for their continued support.

CARA is continuing with its wide range of activities during 2009. If you are interested in becoming involved don't hesitate to contact our support worker **Chris Davis at 071-9171149.**

SLIGO PEACE AND RECONCILIATION PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE

In February 2007 Sligo County Development Board (CDB) established as a sub-committee the Sligo Peace & Reconciliation Partnership Committee. Membership was drawn from agencies represented on the CDB. Sligo County Council is the Lead Partner.

Sligo Community Forum representatives on the Sligo Peace & Reconciliation Partnership Committee are Brian Scanlon and Tom McGettrick. In keeping with the ethos of the Peace III Programme and to ensure that all the "target" groups were represented on the Sligo Peace & Reconciliation

Partnership Committee, membership was extended under the umbrella of the Community Forum. A further five Community Forum representatives were appointed; Bernadette Maughan, Piotr Rachwald, Mildred Gilmore, Alan Mitchell and Chris McManus.

As part of the Sligo Peace and Reconciliation Partnership Committee Action Plan, they want to reinforce progress towards a peaceful and stable society by building positive relations at a local level. The aim is "to challenge attitudes towards sectarianism and racism and support conflict resolution

and mediation at the local community level".

In March 2009 the 13 actions within the Sligo Peace and Reconciliation Plan were sent to tender. Over the next year in Sligo there will be a range of actions to address sectarianism and racism within the community. For further information on the Peace III programme in Sligo contact:

Bridie Sweeney, Development Officer, on 071 91 11821 or, e-mail bsweeney@sligococo.ie

IMPACT OF THE DOWNTURN ON COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY GROUPS

In February 2009 the Sligo County Community Forum undertook an email survey of members to assess how the recession is impacting on the community and voluntary sector in the county.

A number of groups responded, reporting differing degrees of impact upon their groups and activities. At a community level, groups reported a degree of 'fear', 'depression' and 'despondency' in communities - *"People are angry and fed up"*. People are seeing those around them losing jobs and there is a fear of spending money. This has also had a large impact on the ability of groups to fundraise. A number of groups said that *"sponsorship is harder to come by"*. Arts organisations reported that it is much harder to attract sponsors and that few firms and banks were willing to donate: *"Trying to find the money to survive and keep up the same quality of performers is a challenge"*. One playground committee stated that they will have to be more *'inventive with our fundraising initiatives'* to draw in the cash. Despite the greater boundaries, many community groups showed that they are trying to be positive and creative around the challenges that they face.

We were also reminded of those groups that did not enjoy equal rewards from the boom, who are at a further disadvantage now during the recession. Employment Response North West reported that people with disabilities are finding it even

harder to find and keep jobs in the open market. It also reported that many of their clients had been let go from their jobs and that *"due to the high number of people looking for a small number of jobs, it is very difficult for people with disabilities to compete"*. Coupled with this is the potential for funding for disabilities services being cut.

In the community sector, cuts have already impacted on community development projects and community groups are very unsure of what the future will bring. There is an appreciation by groups that they will all have to 'feel the pain' in order to balance the country's budget, but there is also a call that the most disadvantaged groups in our society, should not be the first in line. While the recession has impacted on everyone in our country, the hurdles that people living on the margins have to face are raised even higher, when there is greater competition for training places and jobs. There is more of a 'push' on resourced community development organisations to generate projects targeting unemployment specifically. The Community Development Programme has suffered a 6% cut so far and further savings are being required by these organisations.

One place where community groups in Sligo have already taken 'a hit' has been through the withdrawing of small grants funding from the Drugs Task Force. Brian Scanlon a management committee member from the Sligo Northside Project commented *"we lost our youth project of*

250 kids when the dormant accounts funding ended this year. It allowed us to employ five workers each for ten hours a week. As well as this the drug task force money for small grants (Which totalled €60,000 last year to distribute among a number of groups) is also gone this year. This allowed us to run other youth events - at a time when drug use is still as prevalent as ever in our communities, it is very unfortunate that the good work that was being done to give kids an alternative is now gone".

Despite this, one positive spin off from the recession seems to be an increase in volunteerism and community participation. The Sligo Volunteer Centre has reported a 100% increase in volunteerism since this time last year. In sporting organisations, people have also noted an increase in participation. In Sligo mountaineering club they have reported larger groups on most walks.

There may be tough times ahead for the community and voluntary sector. While the sector seeks to support communities to reach their potential - and delivers this at great 'value for money' to the exchequer - funding as well as voluntary labour is needed to 'get things done'. A lower amount of sponsorship, limited fundraising opportunities and imposed cuts are all going to effect the quality and level of community activity. At the same time, the energy within the sector to be creative to face challenges is ever present. It will be up to the sector within the county to act in solidarity and support each other, at a time.

KILLARAGHT NEWS *by Frank Flanagan*

Recently the area was graced by a visit from the Transition year students from Abbey Community College, Boyle. The first port of call for the students was St. Attracta's Catholic Church.

The chief interest here was the two Harry Clarke windows in the Church. Harry Clarke windows are very beautiful for their richness of colour especially the deep blues and their perspective among other things. The windows were put in place about 1920 and as far as I know no other church in Co. Sligo has windows by this very renowned artist. Harry Clarke died in 1931 aged 42 years, less than 12 months after his brother and it is said that they may have died from acidic

poisoning from the fumes in their workshop. He was a great Irishman. The second point of interest was one of the many crannogs that are to be found in Lough Gara - ancient lake dwellings that may have survived up to 1000 A.D. Then they visited a Barrow grave in Co. Sligo just off the Boyle - Frenchpark road. Barrows are supposed to cover the remains of only one individual and they are rather spectacular. Killaraght old cemetery also attracted their attention. The



remains of a hospice founded by St. Attracta in the 5th century are said to be in the graveyard. Maybe you too will come to Killaraght!



LIST OF TRAINING EVENTS

Developing Presentation Skills

26th May 9:30am-1pm

St Annes Community Centre

Developing Leadership Skills

9th June 10am-3pm

Teach Laignhe Tubbercurry



Carrying out a

Community Needs Analysis

25th June 10am-3pm

Northside Centre Sligo

Filling out Funding Applications

9th July 6-9pm

Easkey Community Centre

TRAINING EVENTS FOR COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY GROUPS IN SLIGO

The Sligo County Community Forum is pleased to announce its Spring season of training events for communities in the county. It is intended that the training will respond to the needs of unemployed people, community organisers and volunteers in the county. It will be a chance to meet with other people in your local area, network, raise your confidence and learn some new skills. In all of the training sessions a 'facilitative approach' to learning will be used. All of the training is being delivered by Claire Galligan, who has over ten years experience as a trainer in community and group work.

TRAINING SESSION ONE: DEVELOPING PRESENTATION SKILLS

This training session will be held over one morning session. The aim of the training will be to raise confidence to speak in front of others; using visual aids; presenting material effectively and preparing for presentations. The session is aimed at people who have limited experience of speaking in front of groups. It may be of interest to those who are members of groups and would like to have more confidence to speak out, or those who are applying for jobs at the moment and would like to practice their presentation skills.

TRAINING SESSION TWO: DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP SKILLS

This training session will be held over one day, 10-4pm. The session is aimed at those who are leading groups at the moment or those who would like to lead groups in the future. The session will look at how groups work and how group members participate. The course will also allow participants to identify their own leadership skills.

TRAINING SESSION THREE: CARRYING OUT A COMMUNITY NEEDS ANALYSIS:

This training will be held over one day. This session is aimed at those working in a voluntary and paid capacity in the community. This course will be of interest to those who would like to know how to go about researching and collecting information on their own community, and how to involve the local community in this process. It may be of use to groups who would like to build a profile of their local community or make funding applications.

TRAINING SESSION FOUR: FILLING OUT FUNDING APPLICATIONS:

This session will be held on one evening. It will be of interest to community groups who are having difficulty in filling out funding applications and want to gain more information in this regard. At the session, guidelines for filling out funding applications will be presented and sample funding applications will be used to help give greater direction to groups.

HOW TO APPLY:

In each of the training sessions places will be limited to 20 participants. If you would like to take part in any of the training sessions, you will need to contact Catherine Brennan at the Sligo County Community Forum, email: cbrennan@sligococo.ie 071-9111814, or apply in writing to Catherine Brennan, Sligo County Community Forum, Sligo Development Centre, Cleveragh Road, Sligo.

CONTACT US

If you want to get in touch with the Forum or place an article in the next edition of 'Sligo Forum Community News' you can contact Claire Galligan or Catherine Brennan at:

Sligo County Community Forum, Development Centre, Cleveragh Road, Sligo. 071-9111814 or cbrennan@sligococo.ie.

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WWW.SLIGOCOMMUNITYFORUM.IE

