

SLIGO COUNTY COMMUNITY FORUM NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2010



SLIGO COUNTY
COMMUNITY FORUM



INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

Bridging Cultural Divides

6

**Training for
community groups
at St. Angela's**
Get the dates here

Charitable Status
*What it is and how
to apply for it*

**It's National
Spring Clean Week**
*How you can
do your bit*

**Addressing
DRUG ABUSE
in our
communities**

PLUS...



3



3



6



8

SLIGO FORUM EXECUTIVE WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS

Sligo Forum is a network of community and voluntary organisations in County Sligo. It is set up to be a voice for the sector and to represent the views of Community and Voluntary organisations in local government and on County and Regional Boards.

The Forum is managed by an executive. Four representatives from each of the local electoral areas sit on the executive as well as representatives from five sectoral interests: The Traveller community, New communities, Older People, Young People and People with Disabilities.

Recently five new people have been co-opted onto the Forum Executive. These are Sharon Dineen (Ballymote), Sean Mc Hugh (Sligo Strandhill), Vanessa Clarke (Sligo Strandhill), Pernille Burns (Sligo Drumcliffe) and Joe Fogarty (West Sligo Forum). We would like to take this opportunity to welcome them onto the forum.

To learn more about us and what we do check out www.sligocommunityforum.com or call our office at 071-9111814 ... we are always open and waiting to hear the views of the community and voluntary sector in Sligo.

Regards, Margaret Conlon



Back row, left to right:

Brendan Queenan, Tom Mc Gettrick, Maeve Whittington, Sharon Boles, Sharon Dineen, Joe Fogarty, Brian Scanlon, Joe Walsh, Sean Mc Hugh and Paddy Sexton.

Front row:

Brian Crummy, Margaret Conlon, Larry Mullin, Chris Davis, Martina Conlon and Vanessa Clarke.

COMMUNITIES IN ACTION: HARD WORK AND COMMITMENT REALISES COMMUNITY PARK

If you've been in Riverstown recently, you'll probably have seen the brilliant park and sports facility that has been developed in the town.

by Claire Galligan



Caroline Markham

This achievement has been down to the vision and commitment of a local community group, the Riverstown Community Park Development Committee. Here, one of their members, Caroline Markham, shares her experiences of the journey they've been on and what they have learned.

How did the community park project come about?

Back in the 1930's land had been left in trust to the community to develop a park. In the 1990's the trustees developed a car park and dressing rooms. In the early noughties they approached all of the community organisations to see if they wanted to develop a park. Each organisation put forward 1 person, and this group of 13 became the Riverstown Community Development Committee.

What were the challenges around funding?

Funding came from a range of sources including the Sligo County Council, the National Lottery, FAS, Sligo Leader Partnership Company Ltd and not forgetting massive local fundraising. The biggest challenge was getting match funding in place for each lottery application, we made three in total. The criteria changed a bit each time and we had to reapply each year with all of the same documentation. All of the agencies had different payment methods and there was a lot of paperwork to download money. Getting the funding to the banks in time to pay cheques was an issue we had to deal with.



What about the park?

The park is built on a flood plain between two rivers with a rock basin, so it was a difficult project from a geographical and architectural perspective; it needed a specific drainage system. In the end we developed a full size soccer pitch, full size Gaelic pitch, grass training area, astro turf play area and a full size walkway around the perimeter of the park. Every year it will cost us €7000 just to maintain all the surfaces.

What kinds of difficulties did the group encounter?

Fundraising was a huge challenge but



also one of our greatest achievements. Having the right wording for funders, you had to have a flair for writing and you had to get to know the language. The actual practicalities of getting all of the information together, just finding out and knowing what a feasibility study is and how to go about it, these were all big learning curves. One time, over 6 weeks, we raised €110,000 through selling €100 tickets; this is some achievement for the committee and the local community.

That is a huge achievement, what made it work?

The first committee that came on board said that they would stick it through to the end. Yes there were disagreements and meetings that went on till 2am but we all had a vision, that this was something that we could all be proud of and that everyone in the community will use.

Secondly we had to lobby everyone to get them on board. At the end of the day you have to sell your product and let people see that it is worth the investment, we were good at this.

Thirdly: huge commitment. When the construction started we had a member on the site at least five times a day, which really says something about the kind of group we were.

What lessons can you offer to other groups or agencies?

Go and talk to other groups who have done something similar before. They will help you to avoid the pitfalls and take as many shortcuts as possible.

There are so many things that groups have to have, and each group always seems to start from scratch. There should be templates available to groups for things like constitutions, feasibility studies, equality responsibilities, safety statements, policies and procedures – each group is re-inventing the wheel – having standard templates that groups could adapt would make a lot of sense.

USEFUL WEBSITE

Why not check out www.thewheel.ie

It is a very useful website for community organisations. In their 'question point' section is has great tips on issues of governance, fundraising and management of voluntary and community organisations.



ST. ANGELA'S COLLEGE HOSTS TRAINING FOR COMMUNITY GROUPS

Last year Sligo Forum assisted St. Angela's in helping them to identify training needs of community organisations.

Now St. Angela's are pleased to announce that they will be offering an Introductory Programme of 24 Hours for which a certificate of attendance will be awarded by St. Angela's Centre for Life Long Learning. The programme will be delivered over three Saturdays (in September, October and November) the specific dates are as yet not agreed.

The course outline is as follows:

Saturday 1

9.00 – 1.00
Governance and Accountability
2.00 – 6.00
Health and Safety

Saturday 2

9.00 – 1.00
Finance and financial reporting
2.00 – 6.00
Employment Law

Saturday 3

9.00 – 1.00
Human Resource Management/leadership
2.00 – 6.00
Chairing of Meetings and Minute Taking



There will also be a one day module on Fundraising and PR. Participants who complete this Programme may if so desired follow on to further accredited study currently being developed in the College.

For further details contact:

Mary Martin,
Human Resources Manager,
St Angela's College, Lough Gill, Sligo.
Tel: 071-9155502

HOW DO WE... APPLY FOR CHARITABLE STATUS?



For further information visit:

http://www.wheel.ie/user/questionpoint/forming_a_charity/setting_up_a_charity

and

Office of the Revenue Commissioners, Charities Section, Government Offices, Nenagh, Co. Tipperary.
Tel: 067-35533 Fax: 067-32916

Sligo Forum was recently granted its charitable status. A lot more community groups are applying for this status, so here's a quick how-to guide on how to go about it.

In Ireland when an organisation has charitable status this means that it is recognised as charitable by the Revenue Commissioners for tax purposes. Groups can apply to the Revenue Commissioners for exemption from certain taxes and the Valuation Office for exemption from rates on buildings.

This is important for fundraising and for exemption from certain taxes. Charitable status does not give legal status to an organisation. A group can have charitable status without having legal status and vice versa.

Go to: The Revenue Commissioners or download the form CHY1 from the revenue website <http://www.revenue.ie/publications/leaflets/infolef7.htm#char>

What you need when applying...

A copy of your governing instrument (e.g. constitution), statement of activities, latest financial accounts, names and addresses of officers. The aims of the organisation as set out in the constitution must be exclusively charitable and must come under one of the following headings or definitions of charity:

- The relief of poverty;
- The advancement of education;
- The advancement of religion; or
- Other purposes beneficial to the community



YOUR FORUM REPRESENTATIVES

The aim of Sligo Forum is to be a voice for the community sector across Sligo. Listed below are the community representatives for your area.

Sligo Drumcliffe Local Electoral Area

Brian Scanlon, *Sligo*
Larry Mullin, *Ballinode*
Paddy Sexton, *Ballinfull*
Pernille Burns, *Cliffoney*



Sligo Strandhill Local Electoral Area

Maeve Whittington, *Strandhill*
Sean Mc Hugh, *Strandhill*
Vanessa Clarke, *Sligo*

Dromore West Local Electoral Area

Brendan Queenan, *Easkey*
Gerald O Connor, *Skreen*
Margaret Conlon, *Easkey*
Joe Fogarty, *Coolaney*

Tobercurry Local Electoral Area

Francis Flanagan, *Killaraght*
Joe Walshe, *Tubbercurry*
Michael Rochford, *Aclare*
Tom Mc Gettrick, *Killavill*

Ballymote Local Electoral Area

Martina Conlon, *Ballymote*
Sharon Dineen, *Riverstown*

People with Disabilities:

Brian Crummy, *Sligo*

Young People:

Joe Doherty

Older People:

Chris Davis

New Communities:

Position not filled

Traveller Community:

Position not filled

If your community or voluntary organisation has an issue they want to bring to a wider forum, don't hesitate to get in touch with your representative through our forum office at **071-9111814**

SLIGO FORUM ANNOUNCES DIVERSITY TRAINING PLAN

In 2009 Sligo Forum was awarded a tender from the Sligo Peace and Reconciliation Partnership Committee to deliver Diversity Training in County Sligo. An 'Intercultural Studies FETAC level 5' has already been successfully delivered, however if you missed this a number of other events are planned in the year ahead:

June 2010: Portrayal of Ethnic Minorities in the Media

Workshop for journalists and reporters. This workshop is aimed at people who are working in the media. The workshop will bring in an expert facilitator to lead a discussion on the subject and explore attitudes and practice.

September 2010: 'Challenging racism and sectarianism using community development approaches' Conference

This conference will bring together experts from this field to talk about work they have undertaken to challenge racism and sectarianism through community development.

It is planned that on the day there will be inputs from people who have been subjected to racism/sectarianism to share their stories and how community development may have supported them. In addition, it is planned that expert workshops on different themes will be held to help people develop their own responses.

October 2010: 'Working with Diversity in community projects' residential

This action will be targeted at community organisers and managers who are trying to address the issues of sectarianism and racism in their work. The aim of the project is to bring community organisations to visit a range of projects that are working to address racism/sectarianism. We are currently looking at visiting Bradford in England, due to its history in addressing inter-community tensions and promoting positive community relations.



If you are interested in participating in any of these events, contact Claire Galligan or Catherine Brennan at Sligo Forum on 071-9111814 or cbrennan@sligococo.ie

BRIDGING CULTURAL DIVIDES

Since December 2010 a group of individuals from Sligo have been coming together to undertake an Intercultural Studies FETAC level 5 course organised by the Sligo County Community Forum.

The course which is being delivered by Claire Galligan brings together Irish people from diverse backgrounds and people who have come to live in Ireland over the past number of years. Fifteen students are taking part. One of the students commented 'We have learned so much about people from different cultures and the contribution they make to Irish society, we have

talked about how people got their names, it was an amazing exercise because it revealed so much about the rich background and values of the people in the group .. we should be more open in society to meeting up with and discovering more about the people around us, it would be a way to



Back row: left to right: Vanessa Job, Bernie Burns, Eghe Amakpavboya, Marie Mc Hugh, Shupai Matewa, John Harte, Augustine Des Mennu, Maura Mc Cormack, Okwuchukwu Emmanuel Okeke, Mohammad Lali. **Front Row:** Catherine Brennan, Anameje Chinene, Sinead Doherty.



had wide ranging discussions in the class from sectarianism to prejudice and white privilege – it has been a real eye opener for me”.

Sligo Forum and Claire Galligan applied to the Sligo Peace and Reconciliation Partnership Committee to deliver ‘Diversity Training’ in County Sligo. The Chairperson of the Forum, Margaret Conlon said ‘Within Irish society and here in Sligo we have a lot to learn about how to welcome our new communities and minority groups, to build a new inclusive and fair society into the future”. Claire Galligan, a partner in the project also commented ‘So much about our history in this country has been about the divisions, be it Catholic or Protestant, north or south, or The Border. We need to analyse our history and build bridges so that we do not repeat the same mistakes into the future”.

The group undertaking the course comes from a variety of different ethnic and cultural groups. One of the students said ‘On the first day we

break down the prejudice and divisions that exist currently”.

The course has also revealed key inequalities in the lives of people living in Sligo, due to their skin colour, ethnicity and legal status. One of the Irish participants said ‘I really thought that Ireland had moved forward, but there seems to be so much evidence that people are still being judged on their skin colour and being excluded or treated badly as a result ... we always think that racism is something that happens out there, but it is right here on our doorsteps and we need to deal with it”.

Overall the students say that they have greatly enjoyed the course. It has allowed new communities to learn about Irish culture and vice versa. Students have also considered the relationship society and the state have with different groups living in the country. “We have

made such great friends on this course, I will be sorry and really miss it when it ends” one student commented.



YES YOU!

COME ON... ORGANISE A COMMUNITY CLEAN UP!

All right, so there are not many upsides to the recession, but one of them is that we have a bit more time to give back to our local communities. One way you can do this is by organising a local community clean-up – on your street, beach, park, anywhere! Here we offer a six step guide on how you could go about it ...

- 1** Don't wait for someone else, you take the initiative!
- 2** Set a date, time and venue for the clean up – **Saturdays** and **Sundays** are best.
- 3** Contact the *Environment Section* of *Sligo County Council*, 071-9111900. You should be able to arrange with them to come and pick up your waste at the end of the clean up.
- 4** Round up family, friends, children, grannies... everyone! Put a note in your local paper, announce it in churches and schools, spread the word!
- 5** Ask people to bring plenty of bin bags and rubber gloves.
- 6** **Celebrate!** mark the occasion of everyone coming together at the end, agree to make it a regular thing!



An Taisce is also running its 'National Spring Clean' programme during the month of April. If you register your clean up event with them you will receive the clean up kit, it contains valuable tips on how to hold a successful clean-up event, posters to advertise your event, ideas on how to make your event different, certificates for volunteers and lots more useful information. The pack also includes plastic bags in which to collect your litter and recyclable material, tabards to keep your clothes clean and gloves to keep your hands safe and clean. Because National Spring

Clean encourages recycling, a number of colour coded bags are provided for collection of litter that can be recycled.

To register contact:

National Spring Clean,
Environmental Educational Unit,
An Taisce, Unit 5a, Swift's Alley,
Francis Street, Dublin 8.

Tel: 01 400 2219
Fax: 01 400 2285
E-mail: nsc@antaisce.org
Web: www.antaisce.org



Sligo County Community Forum supports community clean up initiatives. Call us for any advice or support on 071-9111814.

COMMUNITY PEOPLE

HELEN O'HARA



“ Never too late to go to College ”

For each newsletter we like to meet with someone who is involved in their community. This issue we hear the inspirational story of Helen O'Hara, a community worker from Cranmore in Sligo. Helen O'Hara is currently working with the RAPID urban collective and Sligo Arts Service delivering two projects the 'Yeatsian Legacy' and the 'Legacy of Belief funded by the Sligo Peace and Reconciliation Partnership Committee.

Helen, what brought you into Community Work?

I have been living in Cranmore for 36 years and I've always been involved in the community in one way or another. It started out in neighbourhood watch and in my own area, Cranmore place. My children are now aged between 16 and 36 years and for years I worked in a factory to educate them. I always dreamed about going to college. In my breaks in the factory I used to always read, I think that this stood to me later on.

So how did you make that change in your life?

In a factory you have to 'just do it' no matter what it is. I was working on a machine that wasn't working properly; I complained but wasn't listened to. I ended up losing the tips of my fingers on it. I had to make a compensation claim, when the paperwork from the claim came back to me it read that I had no qualifications, no prospects, and no chance of getting any more work. I thought to myself, is this it? am I all washed up? I decided there and then to make a change. I went on a back to education course and then on a computer course in Northside. One day a friend asked me to go with her to a meeting about an access

course in St. Angela's College; she wanted me to ask the questions. At the end of the meeting the organisers came up to me and asked me to apply. I was terrified.

How did you manage in college?

The day I got the call that I had a place I was in church at my son's Holy Communion. My stomach was weak, I was excited and terrified. I am proud of getting through because I was a mother, a student and a community activist all at the same time. I knew I had to keep going with my voluntary community work so that I could get the experience. Within two months of leaving college I had a job with the Cranmore Peace II Project. While other students had youth on their side I had experience and this stood to me. Never let age stand in your way of going back to college or doing what you want to do.

So, do you like your work now?

This job is no chore, it's something that I love. I have been through a lot in my life, which as a community worker, has enabled me to empathise with the struggles that people have now. I had a child before I was married, in the

early years of my marriage I had my ESB cut off because we couldn't make ends meet and my marriage eventually broke down. All of these things make you stronger and allow you to identify with the struggles that others are going through. As a community worker my philosophy is always to focus on the positive rather than the negative. The people of Cranmore have been much maligned, but I know they have the best heart and soul. I think that it is much more important to look at the skills that people have and build on the positive and allow them to use these skills to contribute to the community. People get a sense of pride from contributing to a community; this is at the heart of community work for me.

If you had a motto what would it be?

I love to encourage people and get them involved, people will always hear me saying 'come on... give it a try'. But if I was to name a motto then it would have to be 'Can Do!'

VOICE OF THE ASYLUM SEEKER

by Claire Galligan

In January this year a range of agencies in Sligo and Leitrim came together to participate in a seminar called 'Voice of the Asylum Seeker'.

This seminar was organised to give a space for asylum seekers to talk about their experiences since coming to Ireland and identify how agencies can work together to better support their needs. Sligo County Community Forum was one of those in attendance.

An Asylum Seeker is a person who seeks to be recognised as a refugee; therefore those who apply for asylum should do so because of a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion within their own country. At the seminar it was discussed how the public often mistake asylum seekers as 'economic migrants'. While this was the case for Irish in the past and now again, this is not the case for asylum seekers, who leave their countries for the reasons stated above.

The speakers at the seminar spoke of how they have been grateful to Ireland for giving them a chance at a new life, however they also spoke of the challenges of the 'direct provision' system that exists in Ireland and the way that asylum seekers are NOT allowed to work in this country, unlike most countries in Europe. One man said 'you need to work for your own sense of well being and to feel that you are contributing to the society, I know one person who has been in the asylum system for over five years, it is not healthy and eradicates a person's self esteem'. Despite this, many there spoke of how they contribute to society through voluntary work. One of the speakers volunteered as a teacher in a school for two years while she was waited for her case to be processed.

Other people spoke of the pressures on asylum seekers who have to deal with leaving behind their families and communities and coming to a new country. Layered upon this is the pressure of living within the direct provision centres, in which people from different countries share rooms and have very little privacy. In Sligo, Globe House provides 'direct provision' for asylum seekers who are waiting for their cases to be decided by the department of Justice. .

Some of the recommendations from the conference were for an end to 'direct provision', which is actually more costly to the state than people seeking accommodation individually. People also spoke of the need to allow asylum seekers to work. It was also felt that there was over-monitoring of people in direct provision centres. The need to educate the general public about the asylum process and break down prejudices was also discussed. The Seminar was organised by the Sligo LEADER Partnership Company Community Development Programme and the Children's and Families Committee of the HSE.

ADDRESSING DRUG ABUSE IN OUR COMMUNITIES



Lorna Curry, Development Worker, NW Regional Drugs Task Force.

The issue of drug and alcohol abuse in our communities is an issue of growing concern in many parts of Sligo.

In March Lorna Curry, Development Worker with the Northwest Regional Drugs Task Force visited the Sligo County Community Forum to inform them of her work.

The Drugs Task force in this region is made up of representatives from the community, voluntary and statutory sectors in Sligo, Leitrim, Donegal and West Cavan. The purpose of the group is to inform and implement the National Drugs Strategy 2009-2016. It has five key actions, these are to reduce supply, enhance prevention by fostering greater understanding and health promotion, and provide treatment and rehabilitation for those affected by drug abuse and to carry out further research into the subject.

In Sligo, a range of projects have been established under the Drugs Task Force, to respond to needs. In Sligo there are three positions to address drug use in communities, these are the 'Youth Drug and Alcohol Worker', the 'Assertive Outreach Worker' and a 'Substance Misuse Worker'. In addition to these posts a number of services are also delivered. In Sligo town the 'Bill W. Club' is there to support people who are currently in recovery. As well as this a range of Holistic Therapies (based in Ballymote) are offered as alternative therapies to people to help them maintain their recovery. Nearby in County Leitrim a Certificate in Addiction Studies is also offered. To get in touch with Lorna to learn more about the initiatives on offer and the North West Drug Task Force contact lcurry@nwdrugtaskforce.ie, or check out www.nwdrugtaskforce.ie where you will find lots of useful information on the subject. You can also call the task force on **071-9852000**.

CONTACT US

Are you receiving our monthly E bulletin about funding, training and events happening in Sligo? If not get in touch with us and we will put you on the list.

Whether you are looking for information to do with community or voluntary activity, or if you would like to hear more about the Forum or highlight an issue of concern to bring to the Forum executive, don't hesitate to contact Claire or Catherine at **071-9111814** or email cbrennan@sligococo.ie, Sligo County Community Forum, Development Centre, Cleveragh Road, Sligo.

Check out our website

www.sligocommunityforum.com

