

A new era for the Holy Ghost

Steeped in history, the Holy Ghost Residential Home is now entering a new era of care for the elderly in Waterford.

THE Holy Ghost Residential Home is among the oldest charitable institutions in Waterford City still carrying out the intentions of its founders. On August 15th 1545, James Henry Walsh received a charter from King Henry VIII that the house be owned by the charity, governed by a Board of Trustees and their successors. In 2019, this tradition continues as the Holy Ghost Home is still run as a non-profit charitable organisation, governed by a Board of Trustees and the Charities Regulator. The Holy Ghost Home provides supported residential care to the elderly population of Waterford City, County, and surrounding catchment areas. Manager Bridget Roche describes the Holy Ghost Home as offering a “unique service” in Waterford, responding to the needs of older people finding it difficult to manage at home but not requiring full time nursing home care.



Staff, Residents and Friends of the Holy Ghost pictured at the presentation of funds raised by the special event staged at The Haven Hotel, Dunmore East in July. Photos: Mick Wall.

Bridget says there is a “misconception” as to what the Holy Ghost Home actually is and the services which are provided. “We’re not a nursing home, we’re a supportive care home,” she explained. “We provide a social/medical model. Residents at the Holy Ghost still retain a level of independence. If an older person requires supportive care and they receive it, it improves their life and they still have something to give back to society and they are still a part of their community.” The holistic needs of the residents are catered for to ensure they continue to enjoy a good quality of life. The care received often reduces the level of hospital admissions. “We’re filling a gap and it’s cost effective. Nationally, this model is helping to save money,” said Bridget.

Impact Bridget says she has seen the difference which residing at the Holy Ghost makes to people’s lives and has seen how people thrive.

She explained that the average length of stay is about five years, but some residents have stayed more than ten years. In fact, the longest resident at the Holy Ghost is Richard Power who has been a resident since February 2005. It's the support structure and peace of mind, combined with independence, which makes the Holy Ghost so attractive. Residents can enjoy the security of having a 24-hour call bell in their room and the knowledge that help is always at hand if required. "The residents are settled and feel secure. It's very much a homelike setting," explains Bridget. "They keep their independence but can get assistance if they need it and we're in the heart of the city, near all of the amenities, so the residents can retain their community links."

Residents can also retain their own GP service but staff at the Holy Ghost can intervene if an issue is identified. "When a resident becomes unwell, we can identify the issue and intervene and ensure the correct supports are in place," explained Bridget.

Residents have their own Residents Association and regular satisfaction surveys are carried out. "They are very forthcoming and will tell you what they like or wouldn't like," says Bridget. "Once they're happy, we're happy. Our objective is to deliver care for residents. This is not a workplace; we work in their home. This is the residents' home."

Friends

There are many activities offered to residents at the Holy Ghost, and the staging of these is heavily reliant on the goodwill of volunteers who come in to provide such services. People who provide entertainment do so on a voluntarily basis, including Olive Cullen who sings for the residents every Thursday. Many of the improvements made at the Holy Ghost, and many of the extra services which are offered, are as a result of the goodwill of the people of Waterford who have assisted through the Friends of the Holy Ghost. This is a voluntary group which raises funds for the residents' social activities, enhances décor and contributes to the overall comfort fund of patients.



Richard Power, longest resident at the Holy Ghost since February 2005.

The Friends of the Holy Ghost was formed in 2010 and currently includes Chair Michael Sheridan, Vice Chair Cha O'Neill, Secretary Vivienne Wallace, Treasurer Mavis Cullen, staff members at Holy Ghost CJ Aldridge and Sheila McGrath, and Board of Trustees member Hilary Quinlan. The activities of both the Board and the Friends of the Holy Ghost are undertaken on a voluntary basis and Bridget praised the work and commitment of all involved. Master of the Board of Trustees Hilary Quinlan spoke of how committed the Friends of the Holy Ghost are. "Where would Ireland be without volunteers?" he said. "We have had people coming in here for years and the minute you come up with an idea, they're offering to help. There is always someone suggesting or organising a fundraising event for us." Numerous fundraisers have been held such as concerts (including a special concert by Dordán Choir on the Waterford Greenway), bingo, barbeques, and bag packing events.

Dunmore Delight

One of the most successful fundraisers held to date was on Tuesday 23rd July when Gerry Cullen hosted an evening of food, fun and entertainment at The Haven Hotel in Dunmore East. Gerry, who travelled the world as part of The Royal Showband, is currently a resident at the Holy Ghost. With the passage of time, Gerry admits he didn't take care of himself and a couple of years ago ended up in hospital gravely ill. He was told he would no longer be able to live alone, and Bridget went to visit him at University Hospital Waterford (UHW). Gerry admits he had a misconception about what life would be like in the Holy Ghost. However, he is delighted to say that he has his own en suite room and is extremely well cared for by all of the staff. He joins his fellow residents in the dining room for meals and can avail of the regular entertainment whenever he wants.

He can also come and go to meet up with friends in town, or pop out to The Haven to catch up with the Dunmore East gossip, where he lived for several years before moving into Waterford.

Gerry has been a Haven regular for many years, from the time when the Ballantynes owned the hotel, before the late John Kelly and his wife Jean took over in 1964. Gerry and John were great friends and Gerry has fond memories of their times together. These days it is John's son Paul who is running the hotel, and the friendship Gerry had with Paul's father has moved on a generation. During a recent visit to Dunmore, and a chance meeting with old friend Tony Comerford of Brass & Co, Gerry hatched a plan to try to repay the Holy Ghost, without which he readily admits he would not be alive. The result of these conversations was a fantastic fundraiser in July which raised a whopping €10,510. The Haven provided a Prosecco reception followed by a delicious three-course dinner. Brass & Co put on a spectacular evening of entertainment and Ken McGrath gave his time to act as compere. Free buses operated on the night, courtesy of Comeragh Coaches.

Thanks to all of the complimentary services which were provided, all of the proceeds raised went directly to the Holy Ghost and were presented at a special event on Thursday August 29th.



Bridget Roche and Catherine Carew pictured with Gerry Cullen.

Hilary Quinlan said the event was one of the most successful fundraisers staged to date.

He complimented all at The Haven Hotel, including Paul, Karen and Sharon Kelly, Jayne Cahill and all the staff.

"They were so generous with everything on the night and we are so appreciative of their hospitality," he said.

Hilary said the interest and support shown towards the Holy Ghost "gives us all a sense of pride and keeps us going". He also thanked Gerry Cullen, Brass & Co and all who helped in any way. Due to the success of this fundraiser, plans are already underway for another similar event for July 14th 2020.

A New Era

The proceeds from the fundraiser will significantly help with the costs incurred as part of the current building programme which commenced around three years ago and which is the biggest development undertaken at the Holy Ghost to date. Previously, many of the rooms at the Holy Ghost were not en suite. Recognising that communal bathrooms are a thing of the past, the Board sat down and decided to take action. Now, a new wing has been constructed and existing rooms have been extended and renovated to incorporate en suites.

There are also a number of other welcome additions including an enclosed garden area and beautiful new pictures of local areas adorning the walls of the dining area and corridors.

As part of the project, a visitors' room is also being developed as well as a board room/meeting room.

Hilary says the Board was committed to improving the facilities and addressing the future of the Holy Ghost.

He says all on the Board are grateful to HSE who have provided support but points out that the Board had to dip into their own funding pot also. "I'm very proud of everyone here - the management, the staff, the Board," he said. "We've a great

manager in Bridget and the staff are very loyal and many have been here years."The total costs associated with the current building programme will be over €3m when completed.

Brigid says she is incredibly proud of all the staff who have worked so well with the builders during the ongoing works.

All at the Holy Ghost are delighted to have recently passed the latest HIQA inspection and are now looking forward to a bright future.It's hoped that the project will be completed in October which will truly signal a new era for the Holy Ghost and will ensure that this valuable service continues in Waterford for many years to come.