

A 'giant step' for Men's Sheds in Waterford

Men's Sheds from across Waterford participated in a showcase event at the Butler Community Centre last week

A showcase event for Men's Sheds in Waterford took place on Wednesday of last week at the Butler Community Centre in St. John's Park. In attendance were members of Men's Sheds from across Waterford and the keynote speaker was Enda O'Doherty (aka 'The Washing Machine Man') who delivered a motivational talk.

For Michael Cass, the event was a hugely proud moment as what started off as one Shed in Dungarvan has now grown to a wider network. One of the instigators of the Dungarvan Men's Shed, which is one of the most successful Sheds in the country, Michael admits he didn't expect to see the Butler Community Centre full of people collectively celebrating the Men's Shed movement in Waterford.



Willie Moore and Laurence Foskin (Déise Men's Shed).

He believes the movement has taken a "giant step forward" in Waterford as a result of last week's milestone. Michael, who is a passionate promoter of Men's Sheds, says the momentum is gathering and the movement is very much "alive and well" in Waterford. "After eight years it's so pleasing to see that eight Sheds are now growing in Waterford," he said. He hopes that Sheds which are striving to establish themselves will be fortunate enough to receive as much support as the award winning Dungarvan Men's Shed.

Men's health

Willie Moore is Chairperson of the Déise Men's Shed which is another hugely successful local Men's Shed.

The Shed is now open six days a week, Monday to Friday from 9am – 2pm/3pm and on Saturday from 9am – 1pm in the Six Cross Roads Business Park. Willie says the most important thing for any Shed is securing a premises. “We’re lucky that the two O’Shea brothers and their families came together and gave us a unit,” he says. The members had the use of the premises rent free for the first two years.

They have put their talents to good use and have completed numerous projects within the locality, including raised beds for Scoil Lorcáin, the creation of five picnic benches for St John of God NS, and have built a stage for Holy Cross School in Tramore. The Déise Men’s Shed members have also worked on projects for community groups including Pieta House and the Solas Centre.

“There is great satisfaction in giving something back,” says Willie. He was among the speakers at an event in Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT) last week where he discussed men’s health as part of International Men’s Day. “We spoke about how healthy the Men’s Sheds are and how you can see how men’s mental health changes in the Shed,” said Willie. He says the members are keenly attuned to any fellow members who may be feeling down. “Everybody looks out for everybody else. It’s like being on a team. If someone is missing, we’re asking ‘where is he? Is he alright?’.” “The Sheds are so successful,” he adds. “We have doctors, Brook House, counsellors, all sending people to us. Any of the people that come up love the Shed. No matter what Shed you go to you’ll find people from all walks of life.” The Déise Men’s Shed currently has 50 members signed up.

Willie says he would love to see a Shed established in the inner city and one that could be open at night-time.

Impressive creations

After working for almost 47 years with The Munster Express, Des Hodge turned to arts and crafts late in life.

However, it’s a subject which he was always interested in and had a natural flair for. He embarked on a course at Waterford College of Further Education (WCFE) which included jewellery making, glasswork, timber work and fretwork. After joining the Déise Men’s Shed, he was delighted to see an electric fretsaw on their premises.

At last week’s event, Des was showcasing some of his impressive creations. He also explained that he is currently completing a mandolin. “We have a varied skillset. We could almost make anything,” he says.

Des is a regular at the Shed three to four mornings a week. He says there’s a great social aspect and he enjoys the various outings which are organised. John Lyons is Chairman of Waterford Estuary Men’s Shed which officially opened last year.



Des Hodge of Déise Men’s Shed proudly showcasing his creations.

He says membership is “booming” with almost 50 men now signed up. Their Shed encompasses a wide catchment area in East County Waterford, including Dunmore East, Passage East, Ballygunner, and everywhere in between. The Shed is open

four days a week and boasts what is probably the most enviable location of any Shed in the country overlooking the Suir Estuary. John describes the views from their building (the former Pilot Station building) as “spectacular”. Adorning the wall of the Shed is a framed prescription which was given by a local doctor to one of the men. As he was feeling low, the doctor suggested that he join a Men’s Shed.

Sharing of humanity

Bishop of Waterford & Lismore Alphonsus Cullinan, who said he was delighted to be in attendance at last week’s event, is a passionate supporter of the Men’s Shed movement and has visited numerous Sheds throughout the Diocese. He regularly visits his local Men’s Shed which is the Déise Men’s Shed. “Loneliness can be a real issue for men,” he says. “We are made for community.” He praised the “wonderful, positive sharing of humanity” which exists when men help each other and share their skills. Bishop Cullinan said the showcase event was hugely important so that men could “come together and see that they are part of something really big”. He praised the Men’s Shed movement which he said consists of “men helping men” and reaching out to others.

Waterford Men’s Sheds Co-ordinator Andrew Power said he was delighted with the turnout at the Butler Community Centre last week which “surpassed expectations”.

Andrew, who has an infectious enthusiasm for all things Men’s Shed related, explained that he is keen to see the number of Sheds in Waterford increase to double digits.

“The Men’s Sheds in Waterford are thriving,” he says. Earlier this year, the New Community Men’s Shed was established to cater for men from the ‘new’ Waterford communities. Additionally, Sheds are currently going through the development stages in Portlaw, Lismore and Tallow. “Sustainability is crucial,” says Andrew. “It’s important that we have Sheds that can sustain themselves and grow.” He says last week’s event served an important purpose by “bringing the lads together” and also noted that there was a bit of healthy competition on display! “It was a warm, uplifting community event,” he said.

Get Involved

Barry Sheridan, CEO of Irish Men’s Sheds, says Sheds are having a hugely positive impact across Waterford.

“This event was a chance for Sheds to display their innovation and creativity while also giving men the opportunity to come together, learn from each other, share their skills, and show what they’re doing,” he said.

He acknowledges that it can be difficult for men to take the first step when contemplating joining their local Shed. However, he is encouraging anyone in the locality who is interested in getting involved to take that first step.

“People can be hesitant if they’re walking into a Shed for the first time, but it doesn’t matter who you are or where you come from, the door is open and the kettle is on,” he says. Barry says the men who join a Shed feel more confident and positive and points out that this sense of positivity spreads throughout the local community. “For many men, it’s an opportunity to rekindle a sense of identity and a sense of place,” he says.

He believes there are many more men within local communities that each respective Shed in Waterford can reach out to and engage with. “It’s vital that we get as many men involved as possible,” he says.

With so much energy and enthusiasm on display in the Butler Community Centre last week, it’s clear that the Men’s Shed network in Waterford has a very bright future ahead.