

## Pieta House hopes for new Waterford centre



Pictured at the 'Darkness Into Light' launch in City Hall last were, from left: Niamh Connolly (Dungarvan Committee), Betty Dillon (Waterford City Committee), Nicola O'Leary (Electric Ireland - sponsors), Teresa Wright (Mayor of Dungarvan), Sean Kelly MEP, Joan Freeman (Pieta House CEO) and John Cummins (Mayor of Waterford). | Photo: Willie Dempsey

The inaugural 'Darkness Into Light' walk, in aid of suicide and self-harm crisis centre Pieta House, takes place in Waterford city on Saturday, May 10th, while Dungarvan shall host the event for the third time.

Speaking at the launch held in City Hall's Large Room on Wednesday last, Pieta House Chief Executive Joan Freeman also declared her hopes about the future opening of a centre in Waterford city.

"There's a company in Waterford called Sun Life which is spearheading Pieta to come here," she said.

"And they're going to get in contact with other businesses and ask them to use a small percentage of their corporate responsibility funds which will pay for the service to be provided for the people of their community, and that's how it works - that's the only way it can work.

"They've already been trying to find a premises, trying to form a committee and they're hoping to secure money from their fellow companies in Waterford, and that's such a wonderful thing...

"Six years ago we started 'Darkness Into Light' with 200 people in the Phoenix Park, and we genuinely couldn't believe that many people came. Last year, 40,000 people walked in Ireland across 20 venues, and this year we're hoping to have double that number participating, spreading a message of hope, that those experiencing problems can emerge from the darkness and into the light...

"And just as Michelangelo depicted Mary holding the broken body of her dead son in the Pieta, Pieta House is trying to hold the broken lives of our communities - we can create a tomorrow for someone who only sees an end."

Mayor of Waterford John Cummins, who attended the launch, along with Mayor of Dungarvan Teresa Wright, County Councillor

Liam Brazil, Senator David Cullinane, MEP Sean Kelly and City and County Manager Michael Walsh, is looking forward to May 10<sup>th</sup>.

"I don't think there's a family in Ireland that doesn't know of someone who has been affected by suicide or self-harm, or someone who is depressed or going through a tough time," he said.

"I myself have lost two friends to suicide. One of my friends from my scouting days, with whom I went to the explorer belt in the United States with in 2005, he was the life and soul of the party and I never would have suspected what sadly happened.

"He was always someone who had a good word for everyone but he died by suicide a couple of years ago, which was obviously very sad for his family and friends and to all he left behind.

"Nobody can understand the stress, strain and anguish that a person goes through in the time before such an act.

"In my own life as a Councillor and indeed a little bit in my own personal life, the stress and strain you can be under...you might think that you'll never crack, you might think you might never do anything like that - but anyone is breakable. Absolutely anyone."

Mayor Cummins said that organisations such as Pieta House provide an invaluable resource service "in helping people through those difficult times many of us face", and he's looking forward to attending the earliest held event during his Mayoralty.

The support of the Waterford public for Pieta House has already been demonstrated in stunning terms in Dungarvan.

Last year alone, the Dungarvan 'Darkness Into Light' Walk last year raised €40,000, making it one of the most successful per capita Pieta House fundraisers in the country in 2013.

The event, which is sponsored by Electric Ireland, takes place in 37 venues around Ireland on May 10<sup>th</sup>, commencing at 4.15am on a designated five-kilometre route, which can be either run or walked.

And for the first time, the fundraiser shall have an international dimension, with events being staged in both London and Sydney.

The city walk begins at the Regional Sports Centre, while Saint Augustine's College is the new starting point for the Dungarvan fundraiser.

Pieta House was founded by Joan Freeman in Lucan, County Dublin in 2006 by Joan Freeman (a trained psychologist), and currently operates nine centres across the country.

Pieta House provides a professional, one-to-one therapeutic service for those who are experiencing suicidal ideation or engaging in self-harm. A doctor's referral or a psychiatric report is not required and the service is completely free of charge.

To date, the charity has supported more than 12,000 people, with almost 4,000 of those seeking help in 2013 and it's aiming to have a centre within 100 kilometres of everyone in Ireland.

For registration and further details, please visit [dil.pieta.ie](http://dil.pieta.ie) and see future editions for more on 'Darkness Into Light'.

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