

## Company Club: one year on



Roz Davoren and Kay Forristal.

The Company Club is preparing to celebrate one year in existence.

The brainchild of Kay Forristal from Ferrybank, The Company Club has proven to be a resounding success since it was founded last year.

Kay's experiences of coping with life after her husband John died from cancer in 2010 prompted her to try and provide those who are widowed, divorced or single with a social network enabling them to build new friendships.

On Wednesday May 22nd 2013, 63 people attended the club's first meeting in The Showboat, The Glen.

During the first four months, more than 200 different people from various backgrounds attended the club's weekly meetings. A core group of about 60 members meet every week, while more participate in various other different activities.

A coffee morning is held every Tuesday morning and regular meetings still take place each Wednesday evening in The Showboat.

The concept of The Company Club has also spread nationwide.

A club opened in Cork two weeks ago with 80 people turning up on the first night.

Clubs have also been established in Tralee, Nenagh, Carlow, Kildare, Clonmel, and there are plans to develop in Dublin as well.

Kay is justifiably proud of what has been achieved.

I recently met with Kay and Company Club member Roz Davoren to discuss the impact which the club has had on their lives and the lives of others.

"I knew there were other people in my situation, but I never thought I would be contacted by so many people. Hundreds of people have contacted me from many different counties," said Kay.

"Nobody is alone anymore. There is always someone to go someplace with you. We've been to the cinema, the theatre, we've been for walks and picnics, and members also have more informal get togethers amongst themselves."

Roz, who lived in the USA and moved to Passage East five years ago, believes life has blossomed for many members as they have made new friends and grown in confidence.

"A lot of the people who have come to The Company Club have found new interests and friends," she said.

"They have found like minded people who do like minded things. That's an answer to a prayer for a lot of people."

Roz continued: "We are a young crowd. We get up and dance and have fun. We had a great fancy dress party at Halloween. My son actually said to me the other day that I never seem to be at home! I'm always doing something! It's so good to have such lovely friends and we all feel comfortable together."

Roz assured any prospective members that a warm welcome awaits them at The Company Club.

"I would say to people to come along and give it a few weeks. At the end of that they will have made friends," she said.

"A lot of people say that they have found so much confidence. When they're having a bad day they can ring somebody. There

is a support system available that wasn't there before."

Kay added: "Recently there was one gentleman I hadn't seen for a while and I sent him a text and said 'Haven't seen you, hope you're doing ok'. He asked 'Does anyone care?' He said he did not think there was one person in the human race that cared what way he felt. I told him that we in The Company Club cared. He said he'd come along next week and he did."

Kay hopes The Company Club can hold a large convention in Waterford once a year and bring business to Waterford.

She also hopes the local club can raise money to enable them to provide a bus to reach members in outlying areas of the city.

"People come from a geographic radius of 30 miles," explained Kay.

"Many members are rural based. They have no access to transport and some have disabilities or are unable to drive. A bus would solve these problems so that these excluded people can join. The Company Club can then grow even further and offer itself to more people."

Kay is very grateful for the use of the Garda bus which will be used by members for a trip to Cork on May 6th.

At the moment, The Company Club comprises more female members than male.

Kay hopes more men will be encouraged to join.

"Men are even more isolated than women as they won't talk about things," she said.

Roz added: "For the men who have joined, it has totally changed their lives and they're not afraid to say it."

The Company Club will hold its first anniversary dinner dance at the Bridge Hotel on Friday May 23rd at 7.30pm.

Kay and Roz are encouraging any lapsed members to attend and any new members who would like to see what the club has to offer.

Many more activities are planned for the coming months, ensuring a busy summer lies ahead for Company Club members.

Kay especially thanked The Showboat, Peter Griffin of Waterford Hackneys and Brigid O'Keeffe for supporting The Company Club.

For more information, contact Kay on 085-8684019.