

O'Connor Memorial Cycle funds new marine equipment

The annual Donal O'Connor Memorial Cycle takes place every year during World Suicide Prevention week to raise awareness about positive mental health, to remember loved ones lost to suicide and to raise for Waterford Marine Search & Rescue.

Waterford Marine Search & Rescue was founded in 2010 by Darryl and Declan Barry to provide a 24-hour 365 days a year search and rescue service on the lakes, rivers and tributaries in Waterford city and county. They operate a weekend suicide patrol system in Waterford city which has saved over 70 lives to date.

"Waterford Marine Search & Rescue run a completely voluntary service," said cycle founder Mags Durand O'Connor.

"Not one person in the organisation takes a wage, they receive absolutely no funding and they are reliant on the generosity of the public to keep the organisation going.

"Their volunteers are available 24/7 and are out on the water and the streets in rain, wind, hail and snow all year round keeping people safe.

"Volunteers clock up 400 hours a year on patrol nights. It's genuinely heart-warming to think that these people are giving up their free time to keep our loved ones safe without any personal gain. We are delighted to be able to contribute to this service with the funds raised by the Memorial Cycle."

This year's cycle raised €3,200 which was presented to Waterford Marine Search & Rescue on Thursday last, December 4th. Some of this money is going towards a new piece of sonar equipment which will help to reduce the search and recovery time for a body that is in the water.

Said Darryl Barry: "The sonar unit that we are getting is a big bonus to the service and is another tool in the box for search and recovery. This sonar unit will be a mobile unit for Waterford city and surrounding areas.

"These state of the art sonar units have been used around Ireland in the search for missing people in lakes and rivers. The unit will give us a picture of the river bed so we will be able to search the surface and the river bed at the same time hopefully cutting the search times for missing people."

He added: "We have had searches on the river Suir lasting up to 35 days and we are hoping this new unit will shorten the time and will relieve stress on families and loved ones. This is a big investment for Waterford Marine Search and Rescue and we could not carry out our work without the support of the people of Waterford city and surrounding areas and the continued support of the Donal O'Connor Memorial Cycle each year."

Mags Durand O'Connor concluded: "Christmas can be a hard time for some people, it's a time when many people feel lonely and isolated and the pressures of delivering the 'perfect Christmas' can put families under unnecessary strain.

"Sadly, this means the lads in Waterford Marine Search & Rescue tend to be busy over the festive period. We can all play our part in making this a happy Christmas, give your time to people who might need a listening ear or a shoulder to cry on, ask people how they're doing and be open to helping lift the loneliness for those who Christmas is hard for.

"And if you see a volunteer out and about on patrol make sure to say thanks!" Next year's Donal O'Connor Memorial Cycle will be held on Saturday next, September 12th.