

A host of golden daffodils

PREPARATIONS are well underway for this year's Daffodil Day which takes place on Friday March 27th.

Daffodil Day is the biggest and longest running fundraising day for the Irish Cancer Society.

In 2014 Daffodil Day raised an incredible €3.4 million.

This year the Society needs to raise their target of €3.5 million to continue to be able to provide free nationwide support and information services, fund research and advocacy campaigns.

The concept of Daffodil Day originated in Canada.

The Canadian Cancer Society began using the daffodil in the 1950s as it represented the first flower of spring.

The daffodil has become an iconic symbol of hope and cancer research and awareness since, and has been adopted as the logo of cancer societies across the world.

Daffodil Day encompasses a whole host of various fundraising events including coffee mornings in homes and workplaces throughout the country, and of course the traditional street sales of the beautiful yellow flowers.

Waterford had the honour of hosting the Munster launch of Daffodil Day 2015 last month at the Woodlands Hotel.

This was the first time that the event was hosted in Waterford.

"There was great reaction to the Munster launch and we've had many calls of congratulations since," said Chair of the Waterford City Daffodil Day committee Des Daunt.

The positive message from the launch was that substantial progress is being made in tackling cancer.

Those in attendance heard about the amazing research which is taking place at the centre in Cork

Des is now in his second year as chair but has been involved with Daffodil Day for around 14 years.

"Billy Walsh, my mother Olive and Oliver Cleary have been running Daffodil Day locally since it started here in Waterford 28 years ago so I've taken over a machine that's well oiled," he said.

"I manage how the whole process works but as regards each particular centre, each one has its own personnel and they manage their own collection year in, year out which makes it very easy for me as chairperson."

The local committee is comprised of 30-35 people, mostly made up of those in charge of each different Daffodil Day collection centre.

"My challenge is not to change what's there as you don't need to fix something that's not broken, but my challenge is to try and encourage younger people to get involved," explained Des who is always on the lookout for new volunteers.

He would like to see some new volunteers get in touch and in particular young people.

"You're not protected by age against cancer. There are so many different forms so it can happen anyone at any age," he said.

The 'no make-up selfie' craze generated an unexpected boost for the Irish Cancer Society last year and highlighted the fundraising needs to a younger audience.

Des believes the presence of the Daffodil Centre on the grounds of University Hospital Waterford (UHW) has further highlighted the need for support.

"Now that we have the Daffodil Centre at UHW that has made a huge difference because people see it as a focal point," he said.

Des praised the volunteers at the Daffodil Centre (many of whom are cancer survivors) as well as all the volunteers that are associated with Daffodil Day itself.

"Locally we have between 180 and 220 volunteers on the day who commit their time and love to do it. Every year we have volunteers telling us to put their name down again for next year. People come out in great numbers and we have a huge commitment from the local retailers," he said.

"There are a lot of people who can't necessarily commit on the day but they do commit to other events such as coffee mornings in the lead up to Daffodil Day," he added.

And despite the negative coverage which some charities have attracted in recent times, this thankfully hasn't impacted on the fundraising efforts of the Irish Cancer Society.

"Daffodil Day is very transparent," said Des.

"People can see the results and where the money goes."

Despite all the best plans, the success of Daffodil Day each year is determined by one major factor - the weather.

"The first thing we all pray for is the weather," said Des.

Unfortunately, Daffodil Day 2013 proved to be a washout; however the huge number of subsequent donations helped compensate for the bad weather on the day itself.

Since then, organisers have tried to make Daffodil Day as 'water proof' as possible.

Des hopes that, as with every year, the committee will have the support of the people of Waterford and the surrounding areas.

The committee encompasses areas in East and Mid-County Waterford as well as South Kilkenny.

"Many people who don't want to purchase anything, they just donate their money," said Des.

"Every little helps. People contribute whatever they can. Everything is welcome."

Des praised Adam Greene of Killowen Nurseries in Portlaoise who supplies in region of 5,000 bunches of daffodils on the day which are picked the evening prior in prime condition.

Along with daffodils, various other items will be on sale.

Many coffee mornings will take place locally, and last year there were 293 coffee mornings all around Ireland on Daffodil Day. So, whether you purchase a daffodil or host a coffee morning, try to ensure you support Daffodil Day 2015.