

Time to dig deep for Daffodil Day

The Irish Cancer Society's annual Daffodil Day takes place on Friday March 22nd. Volunteers in Waterford launched their campaign last week at the Waterford Health Park

DAFFODIL Day, which is supported by Boots Ireland, takes place on Friday March 22nd and funds the Irish Cancer Society's vital services for cancer patients and their families nationwide. Local volunteers launched Daffodil Day 2019 in Waterford Health Park on Wednesday last March 6th. They are appealing to the public to volunteer to sell daffodils on March 22nd and to donate to support people affected by cancer.

On average, over 800 people in Waterford are diagnosed with cancer annually. Funds which are raised each Daffodil Day help provide crucial support services like Night Nursing and lifesaving cancer research.

Waterford has certainly never been found wanting when it comes to supporting this hugely worthwhile campaign.



Anna Drynan Gale (Nurse at UHW Daffodil Centre), Averil Power (CEO, Irish Cancer Society), Niamh Foley (Boots), Josephine Kelly (Night Nurse) and Barry Moloney (Volunteer Driver). Photos: Mick Wall

CEO of the Irish Cancer Society Averil Power was in attendance at last week's Waterford launch event and praised the "tremendous commitment" of Waterford people who have been associated with Daffodil Day down through the years. She praised those who volunteer on Daffodil Day for never letting bad weather "dampen their passion and commitment". When Daffodil Day originally commenced, she pointed out that only three in ten people survived a cancer diagnosis. Today, that figure is six in ten. She said the improvements which have been made in fighting cancer are thanks to people who continually fundraise for the Irish Cancer Society through events such as Daffodil Day.

“Your support enables us to be there for people at every stage through their cancer,” she said. “Every day I hear personal stories about the difference your work makes. It’s really important that communities across Waterford and Ireland come out on Daffodil Day and make sure nobody has to go through cancer alone.”

She highlighted the improvements which have been made in preventing cancer, improving treatments and detecting cancer earlier. One of the overall aims of the Irish Cancer Society is to ensure that nobody has to go through cancer alone. “Hearing those words ‘you’ve got cancer’ is still terrifying,” said Averil.

Thankfully, there are now many different services available for those who have received a cancer diagnosis.

One such important local service is the Daffodil Centre at University Hospital Waterford (UHW).

Daffodil Centres are staffed by specialist nurses and trained volunteers, who provide both practical information and emotional support.

Anna Drynan Gale, Cancer Nurse at UHW Daffodil Centre, explained that they meet with many people who have just received a diagnosis as well as their family members. She pointed out that a cancer diagnosis affects everybody in the family unit. “It can completely change the role of the main bread winner and children can become carers,” she explained. “We’re very cognisant of the fact that the role of carer is equally as difficult, if not more challenging, than having a diagnosis yourself. You’re a very busy person when you have a diagnosis. You’re meeting your medical team, you have appointments, dates are set. It can be very difficult to watch somebody going through this difficult time.”

Anna outlined the range of information which is available at the Daffodil Centre, including on topics such as caring for someone with cancer. Daffodil Centres are also working to create a culture within hospitals where people are given their diagnosis in “a very supportive manner”. Delivering news which will “radically alter” somebody’s life needs to be done in a supportive environment, she said, with the appropriate people present.

Efforts are ongoing to ensure that those who have just received a diagnosis are signposted to the services available to them and aren’t left with lots of unanswered questions.

“We wouldn’t be able to work on these programmes if it wasn’t for your fundraising efforts,” she told those present at last week’s launch.



Des Daunt (Chair of Waterford Daffodil Day Committee) and Averil Power (CEO of Irish Cancer Society).

“Waterford has been exceptionally committed to fundraising.” Also in attendance at the launch event was Irish Cancer Society Night Nurse Josephine Kelly who spoke about her work to support terminally ill cancer patients at home. Last year 42 terminally ill cancer patients in Waterford received 163 nights of care, allowing them to remain at home during their last days. Josephine, who has been an Irish Cancer Society Night Nurse for 11 years, described her work as an “absolutely privilege”. “Yes, it’s very sad. When you pull up outside somebody’s house you know there will be tears, sadness and upset,” she said. “But end of life care should be celebrated as much as birth. We’re not going to take away all of the pain. Our job is to help alleviate the pain a little bit.”

She explained that those providing care to their loved one are always encouraged to get some sleep when the Night Nurse arrives.

“When I go into a family home, I am there to support the patient, and also their family members,” she said.

“Many are exhausted but it’s a labour of love. We encourage them to go to bed for a couple of hours, get some sleep and, if

there's a change, we'll call them." Whether it's entering a "12 bedroom mansion or a caravan", Josephine said she is always conscious that she is entering somebody's home and strives to create a peaceful and calm environment "I do my best to create a supportive and calm atmosphere at a very difficult time," she explained. "When I finish my night shift, I go home knowing I have made a difference to my patient and their family. Losing a loved one to cancer is heart-breaking but I'm privileged to hear afterwards from many families about what a source of comfort it was to spend those precious final moments at home with their loved one."

Averil Power said the Irish Cancer Society regularly receives thank you messages from people who have experienced the Night Nursing service.

"Every single Night Nurse I've spoken to has said that they love their job," she said.

The Irish Cancer Society's Volunteer Driver Service is another very valuable service which funds raised on Daffodil Day makes possible. Volunteer Driver Barry Moloney outlined his role in bringing patients to their chemotherapy appointments. "The people we drive are very grateful for the service provided," he said.

Barry explained that drivers generally do not speak about cancer with those they are providing transport for.

He outlined how he became involved with the Irish Cancer Society as a volunteer driver and said volunteers are currently being sought in the Dungarvan area to drive people to Cork. Praising the service, Averil Power pointed out that it's often the non-medical issues that cause the most concern to cancer patients.

She explained that practical issues such as transport and a fear of burdening family members can cause great upset. Averil expressed her thanks to all who are involved in Daffodil Day locally and said it takes a massive effort to put together a fundraiser of this scale.

She outlined the importance of Daffodil Day to ensure services such as the Volunteer Driver and Night Nursing services can continue. In order to provide these services and other free supports, the Irish Cancer Society needs to raise over €4m nationally on Daffodil Day this year "Unfortunately the number of people getting cancer is increasing, due to an ageing population and lifestyle," she said. "It's an increase we're determined to meet to ensure nobody has to go through cancer in Ireland alone." This year marks 31 years of Daffodil Day in Waterford. Chairperson of Waterford Daffodil Day Committee Des Daunt said: "People in Waterford have always been generous in their support of Daffodil Day, but with more people being diagnosed with cancer, we need to ramp up our efforts to ensure they get the help they need. Not only will donations fund services like Night Nursing, but also cancer research to help more people survive cancer. Please help us by volunteering to sell daffodils, or simply by buying a daffodil on March 22nd."

Ensuring it's a family affair, his wife Susan and daughter Shannon are also involved with Daffodil Day.

Other stalwarts of Daffodil Day in Waterford were in attendance at last week's launch including Olive Daunt (mother of Des) and Joe Hurley who recently celebrated his 90th birthday. Members of the public can volunteer to sell daffodils on the day, or simply buy a daffodil from local volunteers or their local Boots store. As the official main sponsor of Daffodil Day, Boots Ireland stores will be getting involved in the fundraising efforts once again this year. Over six years, Boots Ireland have raised over €1.4m for the Night Nursing service. Customers can buy a pin in store or add a €1 donation when making a purchase.

To get involved in Daffodil Day locally contact Des on 087-1277591 or Nicola on 087-9980547. For more information visit www.cancer.ie/daffodilday