

Autumn 2024 Vol 21 Issue 2

# THE SURVIVOR

Irish Polio News

Polio  
Survivors  
Ireland



## At the Conference Pat McCabe and Ann Pepper

*Photo: Andres Poveda*

# Know the signs Find Lung Cancer Early

Approximately 2,700 people are diagnosed with lung cancer each year in Ireland.

Treatment options and survival rates are better than ever - especially when lung cancer is found early.



Call your GP TODAY if you notice any of the following



A new cough, lasting for more than 3 weeks



A change to your usual cough



Breathlessness more than is normal for you



Coughing up blood



Unexplained chest pain



Chest infections that keep coming back



Loss of appetite



Feeling very tired all the time, more than is normal for you



Unexplained weight loss

**Don't be scared Don't delay  
Call your GP today**

Visit [www.hse.ie/cancerearlydetection](http://www.hse.ie/cancerearlydetection) for more information

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**General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)** To facilitate your membership with us, Polio Survivors Ireland will process personal and, if applicable, especially if you use any of our services, possibly sensitive information relating to you both digitally and in manual format for the duration of your membership. **You have the right to access this information at any time by calling 01 889 8920 or emailing [info@polio.ie](mailto:info@polio.ie).** This information will be destroyed if, or when, your membership of the organisation ceases.

## From the Chair

*Greetings to all our members. I hope you are keeping well and enjoying the summer, whatever the weather!*

Since our Spring issue, we have had what turned out to be a very successful Conference and AGM. In particular the members present valued the presentations of the two politicians, Councillor Vicky Casserly and Senator Annie Hoey, and their lived experience of disability. Their stories were heart-warming and thoughtful. A lively discussion of issues followed, with the members making vital points and the politicians writing copious notes. It was an excellent exchange. We thank them for listening, giving us their time and their commitment to enhancing services to those living with a disability.

The outline of our New Strategic Plan for the next three to five years was presented to the members by our CEO, Fran Brennan. The plan is now being finalised for approval by the Board at our next meeting. Following on from that, the programme of implementation will be drawn up and put in place.

Congratulations to Michael Keegan on being awarded the Jim Costello

Hero Award. Mick co-ordinates the Telephone Support Service and is a wonderful example of our mantra "For Polio Survivors By Polio Survivors". Our organisation was founded on members helping each other and I hope that this esprit de corps will continue with members offering to do their bit in whatever way they can. To our volunteers on behalf of all our members, thank you, you are the heartbeat of our organisation.

Overall, the day was a success and on behalf of the board, I wish to thank the staff for all the hard work they put into organising and making the day run so well. A big thank you also to those who manned the car park in spite of the heavy rain – volunteering at its very best.

Thank you to those of you who filled out the emailed survey from the European Federation of Neurological Associations (EFNA). This European Union wide survey is an important way for us to highlight polio, enabling us make an impact both here in Ireland and across the European Union.

As well as the survey EFNA are asking individuals to sign their Charter. The aims of the Charter are outlined in the summary and you will see that many of them would be so beneficial for polio survivors.

I ask you to sign the "Call to Action" as well: [www.efna.net/rnc-cta/](http://www.efna.net/rnc-cta/)

A big welcome to Dr Vera Keatings, retired, who recently joined our board as a board nominated director. We are absolutely delighted to have Vera on our board.

There are some new faces among the staff too, Siobhan Banville who is doing policy research for us and is holding the fort while Ciara Power is on maternity leave. Also on board is Elizabeth Derwin, our new Administration Officer, who replaces Gill Jackson and Aline Gomes, Assistant Administrator. Those of you who were at the Conference will have met them and we all wish them well in their careers as they work for Polio Survivors Ireland.

The European Polio Union (EPU), of which we are members, held their AGM in Budapest on 25th May. Pat McGillion and myself were elected to its board for a further term of 3 years. One of the priorities of the AGM was the ratification of the Statutes of the EPU by the members to bring it into line with Belgian law. There was an excellent talk on a spa in Hungary which holds 12 places for polio survivors. Pat and I are actively looking into programmes that are available within the EU for polio survivors to see how

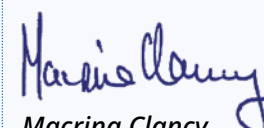
services here might develop for our members.

One super development is the establishment of a Chair for the study of polio survivors and post-polio syndrome in the University of Burgos, Spain. This is a very exciting and important development and one which the EPU fully supports.

Back to home matters. It is great to see many of our social support groups back in action. If anyone is not in a group and would like to join one, please contact the office and either Nuala or Órna, our Membership and Engagement Officers, will be delighted to point you in the right direction. It is good to get together for a cuppa or lunch, have a chat, a laugh and discuss common interests, even arrange outings together.

So far we haven't seen that much sun, so when it shines, drop everything and go out and enjoy it – it will do you a power of good. There is always tomorrow for the to-do list. That's my excuse anyway.

Keep well, keep safe, get vaccinated in the autumn and mind yourselves. God bless.

  
Macrina Clancy  
Cathaoirleach



# Conference 2024

We were quite happy to be back in the Tullamore Court Hotel for our Conference in June this year, after a six-year break. Hard to believe it was 2018 that we were last there, and we greeted the hotel like an old friend, albeit one that had gotten a new hairdo. The Conference area has been refurbished, providing a comfortable and sumptuous setting for this year's meeting.

It was a busy event with over 100 people attending. It is always a pleasure for staff to meet with our members, and to see old friends from over the years meeting and greeting as the day goes on. After a minute's silence for all those who have passed away over the year, our Cathaoirleach laid out the agenda for the day. First up was the presentation of our **Jim Costello Polio Hero Award**. Eileen Dunne, former RTE journalist and newsreader, presented the award, in the late Jim Costello's memory. Jim was one of our founding members and was renowned for his tenacity and selflessness. The Award this year was presented to Mick Keegan, National Coordinator of the Telephone Support Service, who works tirelessly behind the scenes to keep this vital service going. Mick was humbled by the announcement and straight away went to thanking those who volunteer with him.

Afterwards, Eileen Dunne moderated our Political Town Hall on accessibility

and disability, with Councillor Vicki Casserly and Senator Annie Hoey. A lively discussion followed with questions from the floor, personal stories from Vicki and Annie, plus issues of importance to polio survivors were highlighted by members. The session gave us an excellent opportunity to ensure that politicians hear the real stories and problems encountered by polio survivors. An improved understanding is essential if we are to ensure that survivors are not forgotten, especially when it comes to change.



Following a tasty lunch, the Annual General Meeting commenced, with reports from Macrina, Fintan our Company Secretary and Miriam our Treasurer. Our CEO Fran Brennan then gave a presentation of the new Strategic Plan, giving an overview of the process and the main strategic objectives that the organisation is to focus on over the next five years.



## Out of this presentation, Fran reminded members:

- For us to provide you with a good service, we need information, so please do return our questionnaires.
- Do contact the office as there is a wealth of information available.
- Do attend Social Support Groups where possible to keep this service going, to combat isolation and to gain peer support which is invaluable.
- There is an obligation on us to undertake more advocacy work – we certainly plan to follow up with the politicians who we engaged with ahead of the Town Hall.
- We plan to strongly advocate for medical cards, physio in the community and for the cost of disability to be addressed
- The organisation acknowledges that advocacy is now vital and should the Pobal funding not be renewed, the Board will undertake to finding

an alternative resource to continue to fund it.

- We need to ensure that our staff team remains strongly resourced.
- Extra volunteers are essential to continue the services and we will look to family and friends.

Evelyn Wainwright, the Cork SSG Convenor was thanked for helping us to tap into Cork County Council and other local fundraising. If other members are aware of Council grants or funds in their local areas, please contact Emma or Megan.



# Conference 2024

Finally we announced the results of the Spring Survivor Sweepstake Draw with congratulations to Sarah Scannell, Tommy Watkins and Joseph Flynn, who each won €50 in the lucky dip draw. No-one matched 4 on this occasion.

Raffle prizes were drawn throughout the day, with huge thanks given to supporters of our raffle, with an amazing 14 prizes this year! In particular, Ann Pepper supplied some beautiful knitted-blankets that were raffled off – some people were even looking to buy these. A big hit.



We would also like to say a big thank you to our standholders: Lyle's Shoes, Donal Murtagh Mobility, Access Stairlifts and ISB mobility. We saw lots of members having great discussions at the stands and were so glad for the presence of suppliers who are so relevant to polio survivors needs!



We appreciate all the contributions and support this year, also to all those who managed the Fundraising Table. We raised over €1,000 from our efforts!

*We hope everyone who attended enjoyed the day.*



## Caption Competition

Can you put a caption to this moment captured at the Conference during the AGM?

Whatever did our Co. Secretary and our Treasurer say to each other!

Send your suggestions to: Emma cdo@polio.ie or by post to the office. Prize for the best one!

# Polio Hero Award 2024

By Bess Blackburn



The **Jim Costello Polio Hero Award** first began in 2022 after Jim Costello, a founding member of the organisation and the last man in Ireland in an iron lung, passed away. The award was created to honour his legacy. Jim, like so many polio survivors, was truly independent, determined and selfless.

This year, the award was given to Mick Keegan for his active role in the organisation as Telephone Support National Co-ordinator. Telephone Support is a peer support service for polio survivors, by polio survivors, particularly helping those who feel isolated or are unable to get to meetings.

Mick contracted polio at just seven months old and has been affected by Post Polio Syndrome since his forties.

Despite these challenges, he is a stalwart supporter who makes an essential contribution to the organisation, from running telephone support, to his work in advocacy, media activity and disability activism.

When asked how he felt about receiving the award, Mick said: "I was speechless. I mean I was stunned. I got it for something I like doing, connecting polio survivors with each other."

While Mick was delighted to get the award for his work co-ordinating Telephone Support, he felt it was important to note: "There are other people here [who helped] me... and the people making the telephone calls as well... thanks for the opportunity."

## More pictures from Conference 2024



## MVRO Update

**As Membership and Volunteer Recruitment Officer (MVRO)** for the past year (in addition to my MEO work), my main task has been to build on the organisation's rich tradition of volunteerism. Soon, those who signed up and trained to become Active Members / Volunteers, will take on their new roles. These include:

- Recruiters in our Recruitment Network, under the supervision of new Recruitment Network Coordinator, John Nelson, will work to encourage and facilitate those on the Polio Register, to become full members of the organisation. This continues to build strength in numbers and show 'we're still here'!

- A new batch of Telephone Support Leaders will soon make those

life-enhancing calls to our members. The new Leaders will work with the service's National Coordinator, Mick Keegan, to further grow and develop the service's reach and positive impact.

Further Telephone Support training will take place in late October / early November, and again in 2025.

### Feeling inspired?

Without our volunteers very little of this meaningful and essential work would be possible. Thanks to all our volunteers and those now becoming Active Members. If you feel inspired to get involved, please feel free to contact me. We can chat about the various roles and what may suit you best.

*Nuala McLaughlin: 086 1672036, nualameo@polio.ie*



## Supporting Survivors

By Bess Blackburn 

*We have asked some of our members and their spouses for advice on how to support polio survivors who are dealing with the Late Effects of Polio or Post Polio Syndrome as they age, and here are some of their tips:*

### For polio survivors:

- Have Patience/Be Kind to Yourself: as frustrating as it can be to age and, in particular, to lose mobility, don't be too hard on yourself. It is only natural that things will change as you get older and adding polio to the mix can make it even more difficult.

- Be Realistic/Accept Your Limits: it is hard to accept that you can't do all the things you used to do, but trying to do everything at the same pace as you did when you were younger will just leave you tired, in pain and frustrated. Take life at a more leisurely pace. Be aware of pacing – we have literature in the office to help you if you need it.

- Get Assistance on Holiday: when travelling, especially during the summer months, make things easier for yourself by booking assistance ahead of time. Companies like Airport Assist can help you get to and from lots of major airports. When travelling by ferry, having a Blue Badge can sometimes get you a discount.

- Be Open to New Methods: while most of us develop our own way of doing things over time, anyone can get stuck in inefficient habits. So, keep an eye out for new, easier ways of completing tasks and ask other polio survivors how they manage with trickier tasks.

### For family/friends supporting polio survivors:

- Respect Survivors' Habits/Way of Doing Things: on the flip side of the last tip above, it is important to remember that survivors know themselves and their bodies best. They have created habits to work around the effects of polio and have been doing things a certain way for decades. In many cases, they have already created a system that works best for them.

- Help survivors to attend meetings or events so they can seek advice from their peers. Fellow polio survivors or people with disabilities will often offer the most practical hints on how to manage everyday tasks that are becoming difficult.



# The Value of Adult Vaccination - GSK Report Launch

In July, Polio Survivors Ireland were invited to Leinster House to participate in the launch of a report promoting Adult Vaccination. The report from the Office of Health Economics (OHE) was commissioned by the pharmaceutical company, GSK and titled, 'The Value of Adult Vaccination in Ireland'.

The report shows that adult vaccination is not only beneficial for health but for the economy as well. The money spent on vaccines can be returned 23 times back on average - thanks to benefits to individuals, the healthcare system and wider society, due to a reduction in morbidity and mortality along with direct medical costs. These results are similar to those found in other countries, meaning that an adult vaccination campaign could lead to nearly five billion euros in net monetary benefits.

The report focuses on vaccines for Influenza ('flu), Pneumococcal Disease (PD), Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV), and Herpes Zoster (HZ), known as shingles, immunisation programmes.



The event, which took place in the AV Room of Leinster House, was well attended by politicians and polio survivors alike. Guests included Senator Tom Lombard, Senator Fiona O'Loughlin, Senator Mark Daly and Senator Lisa Chambers. Our own Cathaoirleach, Macrina Clancy, gave a presentation and members who attended were Mick Keegan, winner of this year's **Jim Costello Polio Hero Award**, along with Joyce and George Henderson.



Other speakers included Kate O'Connell (Pharmacist and former TD), Simon Brassell (OHE Consulting Ltd.), Prof Samuel McConkey (RCSI) and Senator Gerry Horkan. Our Cathaoirleach, Macrina, shared her experience of contracting polio at just three years of age, as well as highlighting the lifelong impacts of this disease which is now eradicated in the Western world due to vaccination. During the Q&A session, Mick Keegan pointed out the financial strain that vaccines put on people with a limited income, such as older polio survivors. Kate O'Connell thanked Macrina and the other survivors in particular for sharing their experiences, and for being a visual representation of the impact of not being vaccinated.

Macrina was also interviewed by Fergal Bowers from RTÉ and highlighted in media coverage, giving Polio Survivors Ireland an important opportunity to remind the public, the media and politicians of the challenges and issues faced by polio survivors today.



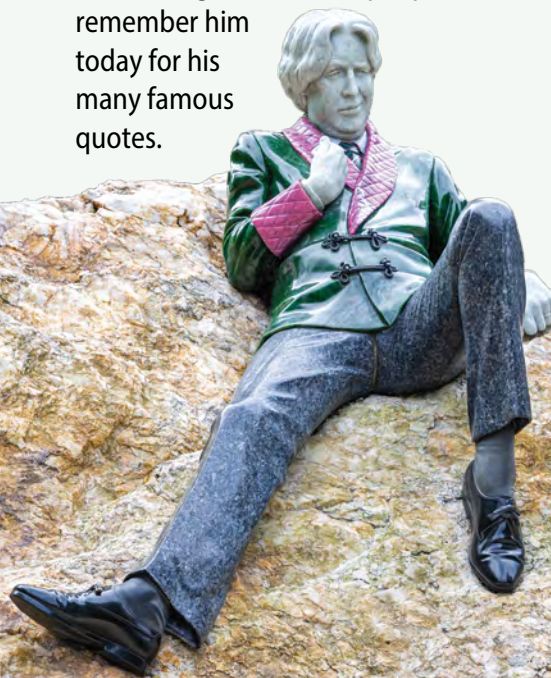
# Hidden Things in Dublin - Oscar Wilde Statue

By Mya O'Reilly

*There are many hidden gems in the city of Dublin, one of which is the famous Oscar Wilde statue in Merrion Square.*

Oscar Wilde was born in Dublin in 1854. He attended Trinity College in Dublin. He was a famous playwright and poet throughout the late 1800s. One of his most famous plays that you might recognise is *The Importance of Being Earnest*. And one of his most famous novels is *The Picture of Dorian Grey*.

He was also well known for his wit in the things he said and people still remember him today for his many famous quotes.



Oscar Wilde grew up in a house in Merrion Square in Dublin, which is now open to the public to tour (with an entrance fee).

His famous statue in Merrion Square was designed by an artist named Danny Osborne. The statue is stationed opposite his childhood home and was unveiled in 1997. The statue depicts a life size Oscar Wilde sitting on a large boulder with two smaller statues across from him.

Oscar Wilde was a tall man (6ft 3inches) so the statue is quite large. He is shown dressed in his famous jacket, which is carved from jade. His statue is made from other different types of stone and materials such as porcelain, granite and bronze.

The most interesting part I found upon visiting his statue was the expressions on his face. When you stand to the left side of his face his expression is happy or maybe even smug. However, when standing to the right side of his face his expression is sad. This represents his divided nature during his life.

Then there are the two smaller statues in front of him, one which was his wife Constance, who is shown six months pregnant. Oscar had two sons with Constance. The other statue is the male torso of Dionsysus, who is the Greek god of fertility. Both statues are mounted on stands, which have quotes from Oscar Wilde written by people from the Irish art and literary worlds, including the President of Ireland Michael D. Higgins.



The SURVIVOR

It also includes his quotes from those who helped to create the statue, all depicted in their own handwriting.



*Some of these quotes are:*

"I have nothing to declare except my genius."

"The truth is rarely pure and never simple."

"Who, being loved, is poor?"

"Nothing that is worth knowing can be taught."

"Experience is the name everyone gives to their mistakes."

The statue is truly an amazing and beautiful work of art. It represents the clever and witty man Oscar Wilde so well and is a must see for those visiting the area.

Please note: Oscar Wilde House is committed to making the house accessible to everyone. However, they do not yet offer ramps for disabled access. It is something that they do intend to rectify in future.

## MEO Update



Summer is time for taking time and being with family, so that's what the MEOs have been doing, following a busy time before and after the very successful Conference in Tullamore in June.

Órna's time has been with the incoming Convenors of Limerick and Galway, who completed their final training session in Limerick and will be up and running for the Autumn meetings! She has also been in contact with Clare Volunteer Centre with regards to the Clare Social Support group; she is also busy planning for upcoming Area Meetings.

Nuala has been busy assisting Social

Support Groups in her region to get back up and running, helping to source incoming Convenors and support the existing Convenors, etc. She has also been contacting members who are interested in developing their IT/Digital skills, and she is currently organising autumn Area Meetings for Sligo, Mayo, Mullingar and North County Dublin.

Both MEOs are continuing to work on online Social Support meetings, which are still open for new members.

Órna Maddock

ornameo@polio.ie or 086 152 6944



## New Staff Profiles

### Siobhan Banville – Research Officer

Siobhan has over 15 years' experience working as an Occupational Therapist with adults in community and hospital settings. Prior to that she worked in Planning and Purchasing for a medical device company. She has travelled to many countries and lived in Australia and the USA for several years.

Siobhan has joined Polio Survivors Ireland on a temporary basis to carry out research on issues affecting members, with the aim of advocating for better access to services and benefits. She looks forward to meeting and speaking with members to gain a better insight into the challenges faced by polio survivors in Ireland today.

### Elizabeth Derwin - Administration Officer



Elizabeth is a dedicated professional with a rich background in sales and marketing, having worked in the banking and pharmaceutical sectors.

After taking a career break to focus on personal pursuits, she returned to the workforce with renewed energy and a commitment to making a meaningful impact.

Recently, Elizabeth has been

volunteering with Age Action, where she teaches digital skills to the elderly. This role has allowed her to use her communication skills to help bridge the digital divide and empower seniors to navigate the online world with confidence.

Following her volunteer work, Elizabeth joined our team in an administrative capacity. Her diverse experience in sales, marketing, and her recent hands-on experience in digital education make her a valuable and versatile team member. Elizabeth brings a unique blend of expertise, compassion, and dedication to her work, contributing positively to both her colleagues and the community.

### Aline Gomez - Administration Assistant



Aline joined Polio Survivors in February 2024, to assist with administration such as our financial record keeping and office organisation. She works with our new administration officer, Elizabeth.

Aline has been living in Dublin since 2015. She has a background in Finance from Brazil. She is currently studying to increase her knowledge in cyber security. In June, Aline gained her Irish citizenship - congratulations Aline!



**Social Farming Ireland** (SFI) is a nationwide organisation funded by the Department of Agriculture. It offers people with physical, mental, intellectual and social differences/disabilities a welcoming environment in which to be and to grow. The organisation is also a great tool for older people, people with dementia, refugees, and more, giving them a place to socialise and grow in confidence in their chosen skills. SFI offers many activities for participants, from outdoor activities like gardening and animal care, to indoor activities like baking and jam making, with the programme tailored to fit individual needs. Most people go to the social farms once or twice a week for different periods of time, from as short as a month to several years.

There are SFI farms in almost every county across the country, with most farms located in Counties Cork and Limerick. Social farming is helpful for everyone as it allows farmers to diversify their income and also give back to their communities. The farms involved with SFI are working farms of all types, from equestrian to dairy and beyond, rather than specialised treatment centres. However, farmers

still go through training to work with participants' needs when they are present.

There is a lot of joy to be found at SFI, and as one participant puts it, "I probably do more laughing here than I would in a week away from here." Another participant describes the experience as "A very positive place to be. It makes you feel good about yourself, you feel a sense of achievement... when you finish the job, you can see the fruits of your labour."

In 2023, SFI won the Better Farming Award for Best Public/Community Engagement Scheme, thanks to its work towards helping Irish agriculture meet economic, social, and environmental challenges.



*If you or someone you know is interested in learning more about this organisation, you can visit [www.socialfarmingireland.ie/contact](http://www.socialfarmingireland.ie/contact) or call +353 (0)86 7905596.*

*By Bess Blackburn*

# A Reluctant Lover called Sleep - in the Twilight Zone

*Dedicated to Insomniacs*

I toss and turn and all I see  
are colours of darkness surrounding me  
shadows and feelings simmer there  
and dance about the cool night air

Come take me in your arms tonight  
and lead me to a place that's bright  
and chase away those demons there  
who try to leave me cold and bare

Where are you my twilight friend?  
when I want to hide the fears, I need to keep inside  
Take me Sleep, and let me drift  
into a world of dreams,  
and hold me there  
a little while so I can face the day  
that's coming around the corner  
and is only hours away

Seduce me with your silence  
And I will drift away, into a world of  
fantasies I may meet along the way  
And like a lover I will take, and hold you for  
a while and give you back in return  
a happy morning smile  
for I will have surrendered to you  
as very often lovers do  
A Kiss.

*Bridget Quigley O'Brien*

## COVID UPDATE – IS IT COVID?

If in doubt at-home tests are widely available in local shops and chemists.

**Symptoms of the latest FLiRT covid variant include:**

- A high temperature
- A new, continuous cough
- Changes to your sense of smell or taste
- Shortness of breath
- Fatigue
- Aching body
- Headache
- Runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhoea

### How to wear a face covering

Cover your nose and mouth



Nope



Not quite



Try again



That's the one!

In preparation for the paralympic games, Ottobock held a Mini Paralympic Games at their clinic to showcase some Paralympic sports and promote activity and community amongst prosthetic and orthotic clients.



This event was dedicated to promoting inclusivity, raising awareness about different abilities, and celebrating the resilience and achievements of individuals with disabilities. Polio survivors were invited to attend in the full day of activities, including football, hurling, Bocce, and an obstacle course.

A wide variety of patients joined in from prosthetic users, wheelchair users etc., to our own members and they also enjoyed lunch, snacks and an award ceremony at the end. Liam and Bridget thoroughly enjoyed the day as you can see!

*Pictured are members Bridget Quigley O'Brien and Liam Porter joining in the Mini Paralympics Day, organised by Ottobock in Cappagh Hospital on Saturday 17th August.*

## PAST TIMES

*This letter was published in a number of Ireland's national and provincial newspapers in 1960.*

### Dear Sir,

The warnings issued some time ago regarding the dangers of polio in this country for the year 1960 have, unfortunately, been proved well founded. Figures show that we are in the throes of a peak year for polio and, according to the experts, by the end of the year the number of victims will far surpass that of our previous "record" year. Grave warnings have been issued by Medical Officers and our Department of Health, and parents have been advised to protect their children from this terrible scourge in every way possible.

No precautions, no expense and no inconvenience should be considered too great in our efforts to protect children.

Facilities are available for parents to avail of the protection of an anti-polio vaccine but such wonderful medical discoveries were not meant to take the place of elementary cleanliness and sanitation. One of the simplest precautions against the spread of polio is for parents to ensure that their children wash their hands thoroughly after using the toilet and there is no

excuse for any parent failing to insist on this simple precaution. We are now entering the two most serious months, September and October, and by then many children who are at present healthy and happy will have fallen victim.

Early in September, the vast majority of these children will return to our national schools where they will be compelled by law to spend some five hours of each week day. Inside these schools, parents will have little or no chance to safeguard their children from infection so the responsibility must be borne by our teachers, school managers, Medical Officers of Health and our Department of Education. Between them they must ensure that not even one child is subjected to risks that might be detrimental to their health or that might spread disease amongst the community.

During the past few weeks, I have seen some of these schools and many of them are in a filthy and neglected condition. In many cases the sanitary arrangements are primitive and disgusting and facilities for washing hands non-existent. It would be no over-statement to describe some of these national schools as veritable cesspools of infection.

In some cases, I have been assured by local parents that this will be the condition of the schools when the children return after the holidays. No cleaning, even of the lavatories, will be done until the children on the instruction of the teachers, do it themselves. A Government that would permit such scandalous conditions and compel young children by law to endanger their health in such a manner would be failing in its most elementary duty to the health of the nation.

It is too late for many when an epidemic of polio, or other infectious disease, strikes an area, to close these schools, as was done during the previous polio epidemic. Any national school that has already been condemned by a Medical Officer of Health or which cannot be certified by him as being in a proper sanitary condition, should not be permitted to open. Once children enter such schools, parents are helpless and it is the duty of parents, under such circumstances, to write to their Medical



Officers of Health, their public representatives and their newspapers and demand that full co-operation is given to them in their efforts to protect the

health of their children while they are receiving compulsory education.

This should not be the concerns of parents of national school children only, all responsible people should give their support to such efforts made by parents because we must bear in mind that polio knows no class distinction. It may originate and spread through the neglect and filth of the local national school but once it hits an area it respects no barriers, either of age or class.

No Medical Officer of Health can carry out his duties and protect the health of the people in a proper manner when children in his area are compelled by law to spend the best part of each day in school buildings that time and time again have been rightly described by prominent members of the I.N.T.O. as "places of disease and even death." This fact should be particularly obvious this polio peak year.

Yours faithfully,

CONSTANCE O'CONNELL  
SCHOOL CHILDREN'S PROTECTION  
ORGANISATION

August 20, 1960

*Constance O'Connell set up the School Children's Protection Organisation in 1954 and was an ardent campaigner against child abuse in the national and industrial school systems.*

# Margarete Steiff

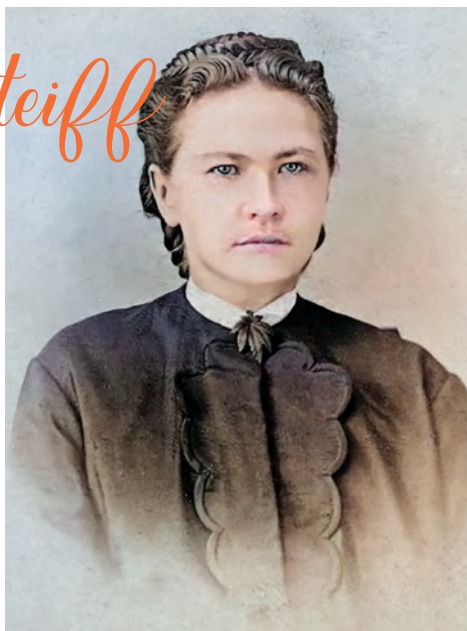
By Jackie Minnock

*The famous Steiff teddy bears are sold throughout the world for considerable sums of money – and if you have one, hold onto it.*

The founder of the Steiff company was Margarete Steiff, who was born in the small German town of Giengen in 1847. She contracted polio the following year, in 1848, and it took doctors three years to diagnose it.

Following the diagnosis, Margarete was confined to a wheelchair and had difficulties with her right arm. Despite this, she worked as a seamstress and started making clothes for people. She managed to save enough money to get her own sewing machine which she did by also performing and playing the zither. In 1880, she founded the company 'GmbH', more popularly known as 'Steiff', making toys and stuffed animals. She opened her own shop in 1887.

At this time, patterns for soft toys were very much in vogue and Margarete decided to make some toys using felt and lambswool. She first made them as gifts for friends and family, but later began to sell them to the public.



In 1892, Margarete applied for a patent 'for the making of animals and other figures to serve as playthings.' Her brother realised there was a wider market for Margarete's toys and took them to a samples market in Heidenheim. This resulted in many orders for the toys. By 1892, the name over the factory door read Felt Toy Factory.

In 1902, Margarete's nephew, Richard Steiff, designed a toy bear with moving parts which Margarete decided to make. It was known as 'Bear 55 PB'. It became very popular, particularly in America, where it was called after the then President of the United States, Theodore Roosevelt – thus becoming the world's first 'teddy bear' - Teddy being short for Theodore.



It became a very big seller there. Margarete was a very ingenious woman indeed as she made all the sample animals herself so that she could uncover any problems which might arise later when they went into production.

In 1910, at the Brussels International Exhibition, Margaret won the Grand Prix, a very coveted prize. She is among the best-known toy makers to this day and was also an important figure in German entrepreneurship. Despite being from a small German town and having a life-long disability, she was the founder of one of the most famous German businesses, which still exists today.

*Nothing held Margarete back – not even polio. She died in 1909, aged 61.*

## Do you have an URGENT NEED?

Talk to us



We are here to help

Contact Kerrie in the office at 01 889 89 20 or by email [sic@polio.ie](mailto:sic@polio.ie)

Contact Ciara in the office at 01 889 89 20 or by email [asic@polio.ie](mailto:asic@polio.ie)

ADVICE • INFORMATION  
SUPPORT • ADVOCACY  
A LISTENING EAR

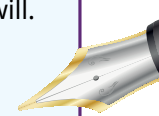
Confidentiality Assured

## Are you making a will?

Please consider leaving a Legacy to Polio Survivors Ireland in your will. Leaving a gift to the charity in your Will can help us greatly to continue providing support to polio survivors. You can alternatively request donations to the charity in lieu of flowers.

Contact Alan Raftery at 01 872 7120 or email [legal@holohanlaw.ie](mailto:legal@holohanlaw.ie) and Alan will explain everything you need to know to draft your will.

**HOLOHAN LANE**  
LLP SOLICITORS





On Saturday 6th July we had our summer outing.

Thirty-one members of the Cork Social Support Group went to Clonakilty Pudding Visitor Centre, organised by Evelyn.

Edward Twomey bought the shop with his wife Colette in 1976 and started the black pudding business from a secret recipe handed down through the generations since 1880. It was originally made by a farmer's wife, Johanna O'Brien, who wanted to subsidise the farm income by making black pudding

and selling it to Philip Harrington's butcher's shop in Sovereign Street, Clonakilty.

After the tour of the Centre, we had a lovely brunch of sausages and pudding.

It was great to meet everyone and to catch up with old friends and new. Sean was on hand to provide transport for some of the members.

Congratulations to Evelyn and her team for a very enjoyable day out.

Angela Sheehan



The Dublin North City Group's outing in June to Blanchardstown Shopping Centre was a good time for all. Fifteen people joined the trip this time, with some even coming from Kildare and Portlaoise.

Once members arrived, they were able to enjoy some nice conversation over a cup of coffee as well as a bit

of shopping before sharing a meal together. Afterwards, they all attended Susan McCann's concert, the "String Of Diamonds" Concert Tour, in the Draíocht Theatre.

The group looks forward to their next meet up in September, this time at the Clybaun Hotel in Galway.

## CONVENOR TRAINING



Convenor in-person training took place in Limerick on 2nd July, with Stephen and Aziz, from Limerick, Kay from Galway and Maeve our Trainer.

Many thanks to all for participating and we look forward to seeing how this will benefit our Social Support Groups in the future.

If you are interested in Convenor training, contact me or Nuala to find out more.

Órna Maddock  
 ornameo@polio.ie or 086 152 6944  
 Nuala Mc Laughlin  
 nualameo@polio.ie or 086 1672036

## Good news for wheelchair users who get the DART



*Dart Update - By Bess Blackburn*

750 new DART carriages with automatic wheelchair ramps and open-plan linked units are due to be added over the next ten years. 37 of the new carriages will come into service in the next year. As our members know, wheelchair users would need to call a day in advance to schedule the use of a ramp getting on the train, but this will no longer be necessary with the new carriages. People with vision or mobility issues will also no longer have to worry about the gap between the carriage and the platform.

Referring to wheelchair and disability access to carriages, an Iarnród Éireann spokesperson told the Irish Independent, "At the moment, people often have to ring ahead if they want a ramp. They won't any more. Every carriage has these automated ramps which come out before the doors open. It's a game-changer." Besides these accessibility features, the new carriages will have modified bike racks and USB and USB-C charging outlets between the seats so that you will no longer have to reach for outlets in front of you or have wires stretched across your lap.



## Update on hearing aids information HSE



*By Brendan Moore and Mya O'Reilly*

If you have a HSE medical card, you are entitled to free hearing aids, but be warned, it's a long waiting list. It can take up to 8 months to see an audiologist who will prescribe a hearing aid if needed. While the waiting time for a hearing aid can be up to 6 weeks.

Any repairs to your prescribed hearing aid are now handled by a central location at the HSE Hearing Repair Centre, Grangegorman Upper, Dublin D07 H984.

You can post your hearing aids to be repaired and they will be sent back within 72 hours. Or you can call into the office at the Grangegorman Primary Care Centre.

To get there, you can take the Luas to the Grangegorman stop, or you can get the Number 46a, 155 or 4 bus to the North Circular Road. If you are being dropped off due to mobility issues, the drop off point is inside the gate. The public office of the Repair Centre is open Monday to Friday, 9.30am to 12.30pm, then 2pm to 5pm sharp.

If you require hearing aid batteries, you can phone your local HSE office, no matter how far away it is from you. Once you do that, you can then request the battery size and they will send them to you.

You will also have time until the next day to pay by your bank card – so there's no need to travel miles to get top quality batteries.

If you lose your HSE issued hearing aid in public, you must report it to the HSE Hearing Centre in your location. To get a replacement hearing aid, the HSE will send out a questionnaire asking for your details, including when and where you lost your hearing aid.

They will also ask if your hearing aid is covered under your house insurance contents policy. If your policy covers you for theft or loss of personal items in public, the HSE could issue you with a charge to replace the lost hearing aid.

Also, Chime, the national hearing charity, provides a free hearing aid test.

## Housing Adaption Grant

By Bess Blackburn



The Housing Adaptation Grant for People with a Disability is a new grant for those with a physical, sensory, mental health or intellectual disability and provides funding for accessible home improvements. These include stair lifts, grab rails, a fixed track hoist, ramps, accessible home extensions such as a downstairs bedroom, accessible bathroom facilities, and more. While it does not cover the VAT on the construction, you can apply to Revenue for a VAT refund.

If your annual household income is less than €30,000, you may qualify for up to €30,000 or 95% of the cost of the work, whichever is less, so long as your house is more than 12 months old. If it is less than 12 months old at the same income level, you may qualify for up to €14,500. As your annual household income increases, the amount you qualify for decreases. At €50,001 to €60,000 per year for houses more than 12 months old, you may qualify for up to €9,000 or 30% of the cost of the work, whichever

is less. If the home is less than 12 months old, you may qualify for up to €4,350. Households above €60,000 per year do not qualify for the grant.

If you are interested in applying for this grant, you can get a copy of the form from the Housing Grants Section of your Local Authority. A local authority will assess your eligibility using your pre-tax annual household income. This includes your income, your partner or spouse's income, and the income of household members over the age of 18 who are not in school, or students over the age of 23. There are types of income which are not counted as part of your gross annual income, including €5,000 per household member under 18 or full-time students aged between 18 and 23, €5,000 if the person receiving the grant has a relative acting as a full-time carer, Carer's Support Grants, Fuel Allowances, and more.

## Survivor Sweepstakes Spring 2024 Draw Results

The Spring Survivor Sweepstakes Draw took place on Tuesday 11th June, in our Coleraine House office, just ahead of Conference 2024, at which we announced the results.

**The four numbers drawn were 1, 7, 8 and 20.**

No-one matched four numbers on this occasion.

You can check this link for Match 4 proof: <https://www.randomresult.com/ticket.php?t=3708131JMGUN69FN>

**However**

**We ran our €50 lucky dip and the three winners were Sarah Scannell, Joseph Flynn and Tommy Watkins.**



**€50 lucky dip winner's link:**

<https://www.randomresult.com/ticket.php?t=3708133GXQZW9Z9LG>

The draw was witnessed by Suzanna Weedle, Mental Health Reform, Coleraine House.

Huge congratulations to our winners and a massive thank you to all our members and friends who supported this draw which is so important to our fundraising. We are very grateful.

**Our next draw is with this issue.**

# FUNDRAISING NEWS

## Survivor Sweepstakes Autumn 2024 Members Draw



**Pay €5 for 1 row, or €10 for 3 rows**  
**€1,000 Prize - if 4 numbers are matched**  
**PLUS 3 chances to win €50**

Our autumn draw gives YOU the opportunity to win cash and raise vital funds for polio survivors. Thank you for your support so far.

*We are very grateful to members who are able to support us again.*

We are enclosing **two** entry envelopes in case you wish to ask family or friends to enter. There is however, no obligation.

**Pick 4 numbers from  
1 to 25 inclusive**

Cost €5 for 1 row, or €10 for 3 rows to be placed in draw envelope

Make sure you pick 4 different numbers in each row.

2	4	9	24
1	16	18	25
2	5	10	11

*You can request more envelopes if you wish to increase your chances!*

**Please return entries by  
Tuesday 1st Oct 2024**

– and make sure to provide a phone number (or address), so we can contact you if you win.

Permit granted by:  
Supt., Jonathan O'Brien,  
Bridewell Garda Station.

**Match 4 numbers to win €1,000 plus 3 Lucky Dips of €50**

All funds raised go directly to supporting polio survivors. If you are interested in additional entry envelopes to sell, please contact

Megan at 01 8898920. **Please note: there is no obligation to enter, but if you are able to do so, we wish you the best of luck!**

*Terms & Conditions on page 30*

**R.I.P.** *Polio Survivors Ireland was saddened to hear of the passing of these members recently:*

*Noreen Mullane, Frank Murphy, Patrick Fitzpatrick  
James McHugh, Judy Cahill, Donal K. O'Boyle, Martin Foskin,  
Mary (Nelly) McCourt, Michael Ewing, Kathleen McGrath,  
Kevin Breen, Brigid Lally, Anthony O'Reilly (D), Brian Dowman.*

*We acknowledge the contribution these members have made to the work of Polio Survivors Ireland – our thoughts are with their family and friends.*



*Autumn Images by Megan Saunders Smith*

**YOUR FEEDBACK-** *Your opinion counts! Polio Survivors Ireland is your charity, your support organisation, your service and we are always eager to hear your ideas on how we can improve our services and supports and our organisation! You don't have to wait until a conference or meeting to feedback information, opinion, or tell us about your experiences that might help us to help you. Feel free to contact Fran Brennan at [ceo@polio.ie](mailto:ceo@polio.ie) or on 01 889 89 20.*

*If you have any suggestions or contributions to make to the Survivor Magazine, please contact Emma on [cdo@polio.ie](mailto:cdo@polio.ie) or call the office. It is your magazine and we want to hear from you.*

## Survivor Sweepstakes **TERMS & CONDITIONS:**

*Subject to change. Name and phone or email must be included or prize is redrawn. Where a number is repeated on a row, or a number entered outside 1 – 25, then next consecutive number will be entered. Numbers drawn using [www.randomresult.com](http://www.randomresult.com) – winning numbers can be checked each draw by using an assigned ticket number, to be advertised on [www.polio.ie](http://www.polio.ie) and in The Survivor magazine. Judges' decision is final.*



# Conference 2024



*A collage of photos capturing this year's Conference*