



St. Francis Hospice Blanchardstown



Hospice foundation stone unveiled



▲ Pictured at the unveiling of the hospice foundation stone are (L-R): Mr. Justice Peter Kelly, chairman St. Francis Hospice; Ethel McKenna, Chief Executive and Brian Lenihan TD, Minister for Finance

October 5th 2009 marked another red letter day in the development of the new St. Francis Hospice Blanchardstown project when Minister for Finance, Brian Lenihan TD unveiled the foundation stone for the new building.

The foundation stone, which was unveiled at a ceremony in The Blanchardstown Centre, was then transported to the site of the new hospice beside Connolly Hospital where it will be put in place in the new state of the art buildings currently under construction.

Speaking at the launch, the Minister told the very large attendance that the new hospice "will serve the northwest corner of the city including all the way out to the airport and the new city of Blanchardstown."

The Minister acknowledged "the enormous commitment that everyone has made to this great charity and in particular I acknowledge the huge help given by the people of Dublin 15."

Mr. Lenihan spoke about the "amazing" generosity of local people towards the project. He also acknowledged the support of "local business people who gave all the cars which were used to raise so much money in raffles while local people also contributed greatly. I am thinking here of the generosity

of Katie Bracken who made such an amazing contribution to the project when she donated the proceeds of the sale of her house to the project," he said.

The need for the hospice service is now greater than ever. According to the Minister "we are all living longer these days. An old age pensioner in 1909 had a life expectancy of 70 and only received their pension when they reached the age of 70. Now that life expectancy is 85 and it is important that we make proper arrangements for the care of the

elderly. In particular we must make arrangements to give them support and dignity in the last year or so of their lives."

This point was also emphasised by Archbishop Diarmuid Martin who, together with the Church of Ireland Archdeacon of Dublin David Pierpoint, blessed the foundation stone. "People are certainly living longer these days and I like to say that living longer is a gift from God to our generation," he said. "However it can't just be about people living longer it must also be about giving them a proper quality of life as they do so."

The need to continue with fundraising for the project was stressed by Mr. Justice Peter Kelly, chairman of St. Francis Hospice who said "I have just recently signed two of the biggest contracts I have ever signed in my life – one for €20m with the builders and one for €15m for a bank loan.

"We have no expectation of any further funding from the state in the foreseeable future so I'm appealing to everyone to keep the fundraising going to cover the loan that I have signed with the bank as I don't want to end up in my own court as a defendant."

Outlining the importance of the project, Justice Kelly explained "the construction of our new Blanchardstown facility is crucial to expanding the range of specialist palliative care services we can provide in the west Dublin area. The addition of 24 new in-patient beds will more than double the current number of beds we have available at our Raheny hospice and will greatly help reduce waiting lists for our in-patient services.

"Our goal is to ensure that each patient in need of our services can readily access them. Once the new facility is completed we will be well positioned to meet the needs of this local community in West Dublin," he said.

According to Ethel McKenna, Chief Executive of St. Francis Hospice, work on the new hospice is now well under way. "The builders have been on site since July and they have been making excellent progress.

"We are already providing services in the area and since



▲ Prof. John Bonner and Anne Maher from Castleknock at the unveiling of the foundation stone

2007 our Hospice care team has been based in temporary accommodation on the Navan Road. Unfortunately at present patients have to come to Raheny for their day care and in patient services but that will all change with the opening of the new premises here in January 2011, she said.

Ms. McKenna was high in her praise for the fundraising

efforts of the local community over the past few years. "Thanks to the Dublin 15 fundraising committee for their fantastic achievements in raising funds and also to everyone else in the area who gave such great support we will be able to offer a full range of palliative care services in the new hospice when it opens in January 2011," she added. ■



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▲ Matt and Helen O'Dwyer, Ballsbridge and Kaye and Vincent Brannigan of John Taylor's man's shop who sponsored the Hermitage golf outings for the hospice, pictured at the event in The Blanchardstown Centre

St. Francis Hospice Blanchardstown



Our new hospice



▲ An architect's impression of the new hospice

The new St Francis Hospice, Blanchardstown will undoubtedly be regarded as the finest state of the art facility of its type in the country when it opens its doors in early 2011.

The construction cost of the hospice is just under €19.4m and when the various professional fees and fitting out costs are included it is hoped that the final cost will be of the order of €24m.

Offering a wide range of palliative care services, the hospice will operate 24 single room in-patient beds, a full range of therapies such as complementary therapy, physiotherapy and occupational therapy, a hospice day care, and education and conference facilities. It will also provide a base for the St. Francis Community Palliative Care Team currently working in the Dublin West area.

According to Fr. Eugene Kennedy, one of the founders of the local hospice initiative, "our aim is to provide end of life care with dignity, respect and compassion for all, regardless of race, colour or creed, at no charge."

The centre was designed by the firm of Burke Kennedy Doyle who designed the original hospice in Raheny and the construction work is being carried out by Bennett Construction.

Ethel McKenna, Chief Executive of St. Francis Hospice points out that since the hospice was first opened in Raheny in 1989, many improvements have been implemented and many new ideas implemented in the delivery of palliative care.

According to Ms. McKenna, "a recent international report on palliative care recommends that all hospice rooms should be single rooms. While our hospice in Raheny is a centre of excel-

lence, we decided this would be a great opportunity to enhance Blanchardstown in line with best international practice."

The Raheny facility has 19 in-patient beds - seven single rooms and three 4 bedded rooms. However the new Blanchardstown hospice will boast 24 single bedrooms - 12 on each of the two floors.

While the current recession has thrown up major difficulties for most service providers in Ire-

land, the consequent reduction in construction costs has however proved of major benefit to the hospice project.

Originally predicted to cost in excess of €30m, the drop in building prices has seen the cost of the drop to a more manageable €19.4m. ■

Hospice services

The new hospice will provides specialist palliative care to patients with advanced cancer and Motor Neurone Disease living in Dublin 15 and other parts of north west Dublin.

The comprehensive care which will be provided will offer supportive services to patients, their families and carers - without any financial cost to patients.

These services will include:

- A community palliative care team to advise and support families caring for a loved one and to enable the person to be cared for in his/her own home
- A day care service to provide additional care and support to patients living at home
- A 24 bed in-patient unit offering admission for respite care, symptom management and specialised care in the final stages of illness
- Bereavement Care for a patient's family

Community care

The St. Francis Hospice Community Palliative Care Team is a group of specially trained doctors, nurses, social workers and chaplains who provide professional palliative care expertise and support to patients and families in their own homes.

Many patients facing a life-limiting illness prefer to remain at home, in familiar surroundings, being cared for by friends and family. The relief of symptoms is a key element in enabling many patients to remain at home.

The Community Palliative Care Team works closely with the patient's GP and Public Health Nurse (who continue to have overall responsibility for the patient) to provide optimum symptom control and promote quality of life. The team's support also extends to meet the emotional and spiritual needs of patients and their families.

Day care

Hospice Day Care provides a specialist advisory and support service to patients and their families. It works in close conjunction with the Community Palliative Care team and complements the care given by the patient's GP and Public Health Nurse.

Hospice Day Care offers patients an outlet to meet and socialise with people in similar situations to themselves. The service also provides respite for families and carers at home, usually once a week.

Patients using the Day Care Centre can avail of many different activities such as complementary therapies, relaxation, art, hairdressing, beauty therapies, and musical entertainment. ■



The aims of hospice care



The philosophy and aims of the hospice are:

- To enable terminally ill patients to live as normally as possible within the limits imposed by their illness by the control of symptoms and by providing emotional and practical support. The control of pain and other distressing symptoms is a right of all patients and in so far as is possible that a pain-free and peaceful death should be available to everyone
- To involve patients in decisions about their care, reducing feelings of isolation and uselessness, and enabling them to adapt to a changing but positive role
- To discern spiritual needs and arrange for pastoral care, if desired
- St. Francis Hospice is founded on Christian principles but the service is offered to patient/family in need of Hospice Care regardless of religious beliefs or practices
- To admit patients to the in-patient unit when continuing care is not possible in the home environment. To help the patient and family to accept the need for this
- To create a life-affirming climate in which the patient maintains control over his/her life, prepares for death in his/her own way and lives his/her life in comfort with a sense of personal dignity
- To support families caring for a dying person, both emotionally and practically and to continue this care through bereavement.

If you wish to help

St Francis Hospice Blanchardstown

in any way

please contact

The Oratory, Blanchardstown Centre

Tel: 820 0915 / 086 809 0633 or 087 240 4330

You can also email the secretary of the Dublin 15 Hospice Fundraising Committee:

Gilbert.Storrs@valoff.ie



St. Francis Hospice Blanchardstown



The end of the beginning

“We have walked, talked, ran, cycled, golfed, gambled, danced, sang, ate, drank, bought, sold, exaggerated, donated, painted, photographed, climbed and mostly bought and sold and sold.”

This fairly comprehensive list enumerated by Michael O’Keeffe, chairperson of the Dublin 15 Hospice fundraising committee just about sums up the work of that committee over the past six years.

Speaking at the recent unveiling of the foundation stone, Michael listed some of the fundraising activities which have already taken place for the hospice and which have helped raise the already amazing target of almost €4m. These included “sales of work, fashion shows, lunches, dinners and dances; book sales, card sales and art auctions and major event in Dublin Castle.

“We have had golf classics, sponsored walks, sponsored runs and triathlons, sponsored climbs and walks on the Camino de Compostela. We have had race nights, car draws, raffles and all different forms of sponsorship.

“We have also received birthday collections, major inheritances and personal donations

from small to very large. We have received the proceeds from concerts, choral evenings and shows. We have received large sums of money from the Hope 2005 calendar and from CDs produced for hospice,” he said.

But the list doesn’t end there...

According to Michael “we have also received donations at funerals, church collections, collections from at Cemetery Sunday in Castleknock and many, many proceeds from coffee mornings and other individual activities. We have received monies from credit unions, financial institutions, businesses and individuals.”

Another successful fundraising venture has been what Michael referred to as “the money laundering scam we operate at the Blanchardstown Centre where we get the coins from the fountain and have also been the nominated charity of the Centre”.



▲ **Michael O’Keeffe, chairman of the Dublin 15 Hospice fundraising committee**

It has been a remarkable saga both in terms of the range of fundraising activities that have been organised and the range of persons that have been involved, from schoolchildren to retired groups. Contributions have been received from persons and organisations without looking for their support and with no publicity - such is the phenomenal local commitment to the hospice project. After five and a half years of work there is no part of Dublin 15 life that has not contributed in some way to the fundraising efforts.

With work now started on the site, no one is resting on their laurels. Quoting from Winston Churchill who, after a ma-

ajor allied win in one of the great battles of the 2nd World War, said “now this is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning,” Michael said the unveiling of the foundation stone was definitely “the end of the beginning.” However he continued “there is still much work to be done by Dublin 15 in fundraising for the hospice. We will also be working to extend the fundraising effort into other communities in Dublin North West so that residents of these areas may also contribute to the funding of a hospice that will serve their needs also.” ■



▲ **Fr. Eugene Kennedy**

Where do we go from here?

The phrase, “if not you, who?” seems to have been at the heart of the motivation of the people of Dublin 15 and beyond.

Little and large were the donations - young and old were the donors

Catholics, protestants and dissenters, to quote Wolfe Tone, joined hands in cooperation to have the builders on site, even as I write this.

It is the end of the beginning as our chairman Michael O’Keeffe quoted recently at the unveiling of the foundation stone. And, you were there on that historic night through your multi-faceted support. More importantly, you will be there too on the day when the completed hospice will be formally opened in early 2011.

It’s been a great, if difficult, journey for all of us to reach this day. At a time when the Celtic Tiger made some of us self-centred and materialistic, it makes the human spirit feel privileged to do something for others.

An amazing technicolour cloak of ages, religions and ethnic groupings has been behind all the events:

- An elderly lady gave a house worth €200,000
- A six year old climbed 900 steps in Glendalough and even though he was unable to count the sponsorship money himself, he and his mum raised over €2,000.
- Little kids called after mass with fistfuls of coins from garage sales.
- Golf classics raised thousands
- Women ran their legs off in marathons

On and on the story goes as gallons of coffee were sold and drunk to celebrate various events. As Dan Joe would say “thanks a thousand – you’re great, just great.”

So, what next?
I’m afraid that I don’t do fortune telling but I do know that St Francis Hospice Blanchardstown will be a reality in 2011. There can sadly be no more state aid for the project in the foreseeable future. You and I will have to make more sacrifices of time and money at this most difficult time. But if not you, who?

If you have good ideas then tell us. Reactivate the Dublin 15 fundraising where possible in your area.

St. Francis Hospice Blanchardstown is for the wider Dublin North West area – for you and yours.

Early in 2010, with the help of the Dublin 15 committee and the executive of St. Francis Hospice, we hope to establish a cell support group in the wider Dublin North West area. All the parishes have been written to and asked for their cooperation.

After Christmas, people from the hospice or Dublin 15 committee will seek permission to speak in churches throughout north west Dublin to create further awareness and to ask for support.

This will allow the fundraising base to be expanded and take some of the pressure off the people of Dublin 15 who have already made such a great contribution to the project.

Finally once again “a thousand thanks to you all – you’re great.”
Please keep this supplement from *Community Voice*. Show it your friends – and watch this space for more...

by Fr. Eugene Kennedy

Annual car draw

One of the big successes of the hospice fundraising over the past number of years has been the Annual Car Draw.

Three such draws have been organised to date raising a total of over €350,000 for the project to date. In last year’s draw 6,000 tickets were sold out well before the closing date and the organisers acknowledged that an even greater number could have been sold, if they had so wished.

According to Larry Kennedy, co-ordinator of the car draw, “the community of Dublin 15 have become legendary for their support of good causes. I am not just grateful but I am actually in awe of the level of support we got from our ticket sellers and from the community generally. There is something about the spirit of the hospice that always brings out the best in people.”

This year’s car draw will be launched later this month and the star prize this year’s will be a Renault Clio supplied by Blanchardstown Renault. In addition a number of other high value prizes donated by local businesses will again be offered to runners up in the draw.

Tickets go on sale early next month and full details will be announced shortly.



▲ **Members of last year’s car draw committee (L-R): Mairéad Ryan, Fergus Lynch, Michael O’Keeffe, Gerry O’Dowd and Larry Kennedy**

St. Francis Hospice Blanchardstown



Where it all started

The story of St. Francis Hospice Blanchardstown started with the 70th birthday of the popular former parish priest of Laurel Lodge, Fr. Eugene Kennedy and his capuchin colleague Fr. Dan Joe O'Mahony.

To recognise their many years of service to the parish, members of the local golf society decided to organise a golf outing and a parish collection to make a presentation to the two men. In the event they raised over €30,000.

When they heard about the collection and the proposed presentation, the two men discussed how the money could be spent. Both agreed that while they may have made their contribution to the parish over the years, Laurel Lodge had also been very good to them.

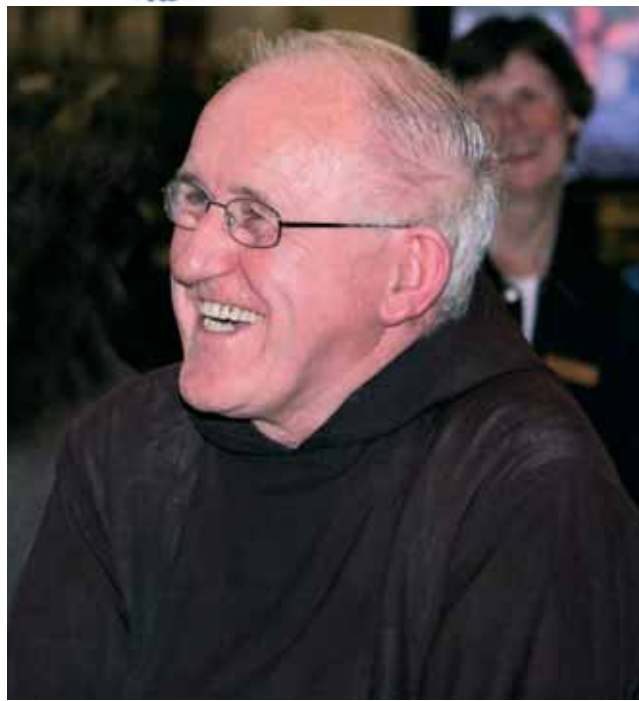
Recalling the conversation, Fr. Eugene said "I said to Dan Joe 'it's payback time, we should make our own tribute to the people so what can we do with this money?' to which Dan Joe replied 'we'll build a hospice boy!'"

"I asked him how much it would cost and, in typical Dan Joe fashion, he said 'I haven't a clue.' So here we are six years and €20 million later."

A committee of local people was formed and they started work promoting the project and inviting local groups and individuals to organise events and fundraising activities for the project.

Before a site had been finally secured and before the builders set foot on that site, the people of Dublin 15 had already raised over €3.7m for the new hospice.

Now with work underway and the new hospice set to open in the next 18 months, the committee is redoubling its efforts and calling again for the support of local residents and groups to step up to the plate again and raise further funds for this vital local project.



▲ Fr. Dan Joe O'Mahony

Katie's act of kindness

There have been many amazing stories of generosity over the past few years of hospice fundraising but undoubtedly the one that has always stood out is the story of Katie Bracken.

Katie and her brother Thomas were lifelong residents of Castleknock living in a rented house in Sandpits. Thomas, who died in 1991, was a well known local poet often referred to as the "Bard of Castleknock."

An aunt of Katie's lived on River Road in Blanchardstown and when she died she left her house to the family and Katie looked after the house maintaining it and its gardens, while continuing to live in her own home in Sandpits. When she heard about the hospice fundraising project she decided to sell the house on River Road and give the proceeds to the hospice in memory of Thomas.

Katie had only one condition. She also presented a framed copy of one of Thomas's poems entitled Castleknock in his own handwriting and including a picture of his home in Sandpits to be hung in the new hospice.

According to Katie, "when I heard about the plans for the hospice, I just felt that I had to do it. I just got the feeling that this was something I should do and now that I have done it I feel very happy about it. It has given me a sense of great contentment."

At a small function where she handed over a cheque for €200,000, Katie was presented with a bouquet of flowers. This for her was the highlight of the evening causing her to remark "oh you shouldn't have, I never would have expected this."

As one hospice committee member said "if Katie considers receiving a bouquet of flowers as generous, how can you ever find words to describe her kindness in giving the proceeds of a house sale to the hospice?"



▲ Katie Bracken, who donated the proceeds of a house sale to the hospice building fund

Volunteers wanted

In keeping with the overall ethos of the hospice service, many of those involved in providing care for patients do so on a voluntary basis.

Speaking at the recent unveiling of the foundation stone, Justice Peter Kelly, chairman of St. Francis Hospice pointed out that in addition to donating towards the funding efforts of the project, volunteering a few hours each week would also be of immense assistance in the ongoing running of the new hospice.

He pointed out that many people who are retiring from work or indeed those who find themselves with time on their hands due to the current recession might consider making their time or talents available to the new St. Francis Hospice Blanchardstown.

There is a wide range of services that can be provided to the new hospice. These include:

- Day care drivers and bus escorts to bring patients to the hospice day care centre
- Community palliative care volunteers to provide a visiting service to patients and offer support to patients' families in the environment of their own home
- Hairdressers to provide a much welcomed hairdressing service to patients
- Musicians and singers to provide entertainment for patients each afternoon in hospice day care
- Complementary therapists to provide such services as aromatherapy, massage, reflexology and reiki as well as hand care and beauty care
- Artists and crafts volunteers to assist patients in painting, creating pottery, personalised gift items and even in discovering talents they did not realise they had
- Volunteers to assist in the library, coffee shop, gardens and in a host of other areas all aimed at making life better for people using the services of the new hospice.



▲ Arts and crafts volunteer in the hospice



▲ Musicians are always welcome to entertain patients