

# ALONE

there when you need us



# NEWSLETTER

## Winter 2012

## MIRIAM SHARES THE CHRISTMAS SPIRIT

We were delighted to be supported by Miriam O'Callaghan as we launched our 'Share the Christmas Spirit' campaign in the Powerscourt Townhouse last Monday.



As Miriam enjoyed a cup of tea with ALONE guests Alice Macken and Tom Kearney she acknowledged the difficulty facing some older people around this time of year and she echoed our appeal for support .

"I have interviewed a lot of older people over the years and they have told me how lonely they can be. I think ALONE's 'Share the Christmas Spirit' campaign is a great message that reminds people to check on their neighbours living alone and make sure that they are okay."

Sean Moynihan our CEO highlighted the increased pressure on our time and resources in recent times. 'Demand for our services has increased by 125% over the last 2 years and this means that now, more than ever, we are relying on

the support of the general public to run our essential services. Whether it's time, money or a specific skill or resource you have to offer, all support received goes a long way towards making a difference to the lives of the isolated and lonely.'

"We find we are particularly stretched during the Christmas period. There are over 120,000 older people in Ireland who live on their own so we are asking people to spend some time this Christmas supporting older people in their community. A quick visit to check on levels of heating and food, or just to spend some time in the company of an older person and to 'share the Christmas spirit' can really make a huge difference."

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## CHRISTMAS CARDS

This year, why not get the festive season off to a good start by sending an ALONE Christmas card to family and friends. Each pack of 10 cards costs €7.99 (plus P&P) with €5 from each sale going directly to benefit older people in need this Christmas.

We also have an e-card available for companies who give a minimum donation of €100. Each e-card can be personalised with your company logo which you can then forward to all your business contacts. Please contact the fundraising office on 01 6791032 or email [fundraising@alone.ie](mailto:fundraising@alone.ie) for more details.

## AT HOME FOR CHRISTMAS

This year, our Community Response team responded to over 300 crisis calls from older people in the community. A vast majority of these calls were in relation to inadequate and dangerous housing. 'It's shocking the conditions that many older people are still living in' says Kevin White, Community Response Worker. 'It may be 35 years since the first ALONE volunteers took to the streets however for some older people, not very much has changed'

One such story is that of a lady call Rose from Inchicore. Rose lived in her home for most of her life however in recent years it had fallen into a serious state of disrepair. 'When we went out to the house the conditions we found were quite grim' said Kevin White, ALONE's Community Response worker . 'There was a leak in the roof and the water was dripping from the ceiling.' Kevin also noted that the house was very damp with a lot of water damage throughout. 'We were very worried about the electrical system in the house as there was a serious risk of fire.'

Rose was not open to the idea of alternative housing but wished to remain in the home she knew for most of her life. Our team advocated on Roses behalf, liaising with various statutory and voluntary organisations to find a satisfactory solution for Rose. Through consultations with the relevant bodies we were able to secure the funds and get the work underway.

This is only a temporary solution and we will be working for a long term solution in the new year.' For the moment however Rose is delighted to be at home for Christmas. 'I've spent every Christmas for the last 60 years in this house and I'm so happy to be able to spend another one here too. My home is warm and dry – what more could I ask for'

In ALONE we are committed to ensuring that older people can live independently in their own homes for as long as possible. We work to solve the immediate problem however we place our major focus on finding long term solutions.



**A BIG 'THANK YOU' TO ST. DOMINICS, CABRA WHO HAVE CHOSEN ALONE AS THEIR CHARITY OF THE YEAR. THEY WILL BE DONATING ALL FUNDS RAISED FROM THEIR CRAFT FAIR THIS DECEMBER.**

## IT'S THE PARTY SEASON

The annual Christmas Dinner Dance is always one of the highlights of the year for ALONE members, volunteers and staff alike. This year's event took place on Sunday 2nd December in the Red Cow Hotel and was another overwhelming success.

With over 190 in attendance our 'Santa Noel' was busy distributing gifts to all. After a delicious 3 course Christmas dinner we were entertained with carols from the Song Sisters and we then danced the night away to the Foggy Dew.

A huge thank you to everyone who made the night such a great success, and especially to the Large Events Team for organising it all.

Jeremy Chapman and Sr Mary Dempsey





# GIVE A LITTLE TIME THIS CHRISTMAS

For some older people Christmas can be a time to reminisce on happier days gone by, shared with loved ones, family and friends. ALONE resident Margaret remembers her childhood Christmases in her native Tyrone being 'loud, busy and full of laughter'. 'I had 7 siblings so it's was an active home around the holidays' Margaret recalls. However to many isolated older people, their memories of Christmas past are very different to their current situation.

There are over 120,000 older people in Ireland living on their own. 'And around this time of year there can be a heightened sense of loneliness and vulnerability among this group.' reveals Sean Moynihan, ALONE CEO 'As loneliness has been proven to be as big a killer as smoking or obesity the importance of social interaction cannot be underestimated. You can make a huge difference by simply visiting an older person living alone.'

Our Befriending Service has over 120 volunteers who visit older people on a weekly basis to provide friendship and companionship to those on their own. Volunteers are fully Garda vetted, trained and are supported by our dedicated Volunteer Coordinators. If you would like to become a volunteer please contact enquiries@alone.ie



Florence O'Neill with volunteer Jennette Donnelly

Mary, an older lady visited by an ALONE volunteer speaks of the difference it has made to her life. 'Having my volunteer come to see me every Tuesday is the highlight of my week. It's wonderful to have someone to talk to and share my news with'.

# AN ALTERNATIVE CHRISTMAS



Volunteer wrapping Christmas presents for ALONE residents

For many people, Christmas Day is a time to relax with family and close friends. However here in ALONE our dedicated volunteers refuse to take even one day's rest! They leave the warmth of their homes to deliver Christmas dinners to older people who are

spending the day on their own. Pamela Campion is one of these volunteers. She is a 32 year old solicitor from Rathfarnham and has been volunteering for the past 3 Christmases. 'It's become as much part of my Christmas as anything else'

Pamela reveals how behind every door she knocks on is an older person who is extremely grateful for the human contact on Christmas Day. 'They always want to chat to you for a few minutes before you go.' says Pamela. 'One year I went to an older man's house and his ALONE volunteer was there giving him presents. He had bought him socks, pyjamas and jumpers and they were opening them together in front of a small Christmas tree. It was such a moving Christmas scene and it really gave me a deeper understanding of the role ALONE plays in the lives of the isolated and lonely.'

Every year our volunteers brave the elements to deliver over 50 Christmas dinners to older people throughout Dublin who are spending Christmas alone. If you are interested in joining the team contact Deirdre Madden at deirdre.m@alone.ie.

# 10 WAYS YOU CAN HELP OLDER PEOPLE THIS CHRISTMAS

1. **VISITING:** Spend an hour visiting an older person in your area
2. **HEATING:** Ensure their homes are kept to an adequate temperature. If they are worried about fuel bills tell them to speak to their energy provider or contact ALONE.
3. **CLOTHING:** Encourage them to layer up during the winter months.
4. **FOOD:** Offer to go shopping for them and ensure they always have enough food in the cupboards to last them for a few days.
5. **EXERCISE:** Suggest going for a walk with them or strolling to the local shops.
6. **MEDICINE:** Offer to pick up prescription or medication for them.
7. **SECURITY:** Make sure they have proper locks, bolts and chains on their doors. You could also encourage them to apply for a pendant alarm if they don't have one.
8. **SAFETY IN THE HOME:** Check to see that they have working smoke and carbon monoxide alarms.
9. **HOUSING:** Check that the living conditions are suitable for the needs of the older person. i.e. modified bathroom, hand railings installed etc.
10. **HAVE FUN:** Listen, learn and laugh! Older people are a wealth of information, knowledge and experience. They see the world through experienced eyes and are always great for honest answers and alternative views. If you go in with an open mind, and not as a charity crusader... you will benefit by making a new friend who will enrich your life.

## CAMPAIGNS

In ALONE we campaign for the rights of older people. Our campaigns are based on the experience of older people who we assist and where possible we facilitate the older person to speak for themselves. Throughout 2012 we have actively campaigned on issues such as ageism, fuel poverty, cuts in home help hours as well as the issue of adequate nursing home care.

## 35 SUCCESSFUL YEARS

This year we celebrated 35 years of ALONE. We would like to thank everyone for their hard work, passion, dedication and support over the past 35 years. We hope that we can continue to make a real and lasting difference to the lives of older people in Ireland throughout the next 35 years.

### OFFICE HOURS OVER CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR 2012

**Christmas Eve, Monday 24th of December - Office open**

**Christmas Day, Tuesday 25th of December - Office closed**

**Stephan's Day, Wednesday 26th of December - Office closed**

**Thursday 27th, Friday 28th and Monday 31st of December - Office open**

**New Years Day, Tuesday 1st of January - Office closed**

**Wednesday 2nd of January - Office back open**

**THE OFFICE MAY BE CLOSED DURING THE CHRISTMAS PERIOD HOWEVER THE WORK STILL GOES ON.**

**NOTES:** Our Services are limited over Christmas. For maintenance emergency only please ring 087 -2690711. Messages can be left on the office phone and will be responded to when we reopen.

## THANK YOU

We are very grateful for all donations we have received throughout the year. Every cent we receive goes a long way towards helping us deliver our services. We would also like to thank those who have donated 'in kind' support. Whether you have offered your professional skills or services, donated goods, equipment or free advertising space, your contributions have been invaluable in insuring we keep our costs down. Thanks to you all!

## VOLUNTEERING

Would you like to volunteer with ALONE? Here are just some of the roles we'll be recruiting for in 2013

- Cinema Club Coordinator
- Befrienders
- Coffee morning Coordinator
- Web designer
- Graphic Designer

If you have a particular skill you would like to donate to ALONE then please get in touch.

## WELCOME

We would like to welcome Áine Duffy, our new North Side Volunteer Coordinator. Áine will be working alongside Deirdre Madden to support our 130 dedicated volunteers.



Volunteer Coordinators Áine Duffy and Deirdre Madden enjoying the Christmas Party.