

Talented Volunteers entertain ALONE residents with Jigs and Reels

Novartis volunteers entertain older people in need at ALONE's premises in Dublin

23rd April 2014: Volunteers from a Dublin-based pharmaceutical company showed off their hidden talents during an afternoon tea party for ALONE residents in Dublin today. Over twenty of ALONE's residents were entertained with Irish dancing, singing and music by Novartis staff and enjoyed an afternoon of cakes, treats and gifts provided by the enthusiastic volunteers.

ALONE is an independent charity that provides vital support to the one in 10 older people who are in need, including the provision of 100 age-friendly homes. Established in 1977, ALONE provides volunteer befriending services, campaigning services, community response services, long-term housing and crisis support to older people in need. ALONE services and accounts are internally and externally audited and we have achieved an internationally recognised ISO quality standard for our service delivery

Over 30% of older people live alone in Ireland¹, and due to an ageing population, it is estimated that the number of people living on their own will increase substantially by 2021; to almost 100,000 additional older people in comparison to 2002². Nearly one in 10 older people are currently living below the poverty line³, leading to further strains on the national provision of social services.

ALONE provides a crucial support for older people in need and is reliant on volunteers and fundraising. Novartis staff members arranged the afternoon tea party for ALONE to help make a difference to the daily lives of its residents as part of the company's global Community Partnership Day. The initiative encourages staff to lend their time and support to local community organisations and charities in need of volunteers. Since 1997, hundreds of dedicated staff members have taken part in the partnership day in Ireland.

Speaking about Novartis' participation, and her own personal experience of volunteering, Loretta Callaghan, Managing Director, Novartis Ireland said: *"At Novartis Ireland we are dedicated to supporting our community and feel it is vital to give something back to society, especially to those living in hardship or difficulty. We have been involved in the Community Partnership Day for the past 17 years and have been lucky enough to work on a variety of activities with a range of community organisations and charities; all of which has been incredibly rewarding and worthwhile."* (TBC)

Commenting on the Afternoon Tea Party, which was held in Willie Bermingham Place, ALONE's largest housing premises, Suzanne O'Reilly, Fundraising Officer, ALONE said: *"We are delighted to be working with Novartis and to have its Dublin staff involved with ALONE this year. Volunteerism is at the heart of what we do and by supporting this afternoon of entertainment and refreshments the Novartis staff is helping to brighten up our residents' day.. Demand for our services has increased by 50% in the last two year. May of the older people who come to us are finding themselves isolated and in urgent need of assistance and support. ALONE provides vital services to these people and we always welcome volunteers to help us take care of older people in need."* (TBC)

ALONE are running a 'Home Truths Campaign' in the run up to the local Elections highlighting the lack of housing for older people in need. Currently there are over 4,700 older people throughout Ireland in need of a home. ALONE is calling on Local Councils to release boarded-up units to social

housing providers, so that they can provide homes to the most vulnerable older people in our society.

Novartis employs over 222 people in Dublin in its commercial operations, and has operated in Ireland since the 1950's. Staff from Novartis Ireland have put in over 1,000 working hours to date for the 2014 Community Partnership Day, working on various projects in Dublin and Cork. Volunteers joined an estimated 16,500 Novartis associates from across 56 different countries by engaging in community-support and fundraising activities so far this year.

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Notes to editors:

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2. Population Ageing in Ireland report, National Council on Ageing and Older People. Accessed April 2014. <http://www.nuim.ie/staff/dpringle/ncaop-report.pdf>
3. Age Action, Ageing Fact Sheet. Accessed April 2014. <http://www.ageaction.ie/sites/default/files/pdf/Age%20Action%27s%20Age%20Fact%20Sheet%20-%20compiled%20April%202011%20Final%20version.pdf>

About ALONE:

ALONE was founded over 35 years ago and continues its work with the 1 in 10 older people who are at risk of homelessness, socially isolated, vulnerable or in crisis. We provide Supportive Housing, Befriending, Community Response and Campaigning services to over 300 older people on a weekly basis. 100 residents live in ALONE age-friendly homes and staff develop individual support plans with each residents to maximise their independence and quality of life. ALONE Befriending Service volunteers visit over 200 older people every week, offering companionship and practical help. All volunteers are trained and Garda-vetted. The ALONE Community Response Service supports older people in crisis and deals with approximately 30 emergency situations a month. ALONE's 'Campaigns for Change' work to highlight poor or inadequate services as well as campaigning for policy changes to ensure the rights of older people are protected.

All of our services are non-denominational and confidential. ALONE receives no funding for their day to day activities and their services are delivered 365 days a year, operating with a ratio of 1 staff member to every 18 volunteers. Thankfully today the majority of older people in Ireland live happy and fulfilling lives, however 1 in 10 today remain vulnerable and at risk of poverty. ALONE is there for them.

For more information please visit www.alone.ie

About Novartis:

Novartis provides innovative healthcare solutions that address the evolving needs of patients and societies. Headquartered in Basel, Switzerland, Novartis offers a diversified portfolio to best meet these needs: innovative medicines, eye care, cost-saving generic pharmaceuticals, preventive vaccines and diagnostic tools, over-the-counter and animal health products. Novartis is the only global company with leading positions in these areas. In 2013, the Group achieved net sales of USD 57.9 billion, while R&D throughout the Group amounted to approximately USD 9.6 billion (USD 9.1 billion excluding impairment and amortization charges). Novartis Group companies employ approximately 136,000 full-time-equivalent associates and operate in more than 140 countries around the world. Novartis is a leading investor in the Irish health care sector, employing more than 1,200 highly skilled people in two manufacturing plants in Cork and commercial operations in Dublin. For more information, please visit <http://www.novartis.com>.