

ALONE

there when you need us

NEWSLETTER

June 2012

HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS

There is an old Irish saying chiselled into a granite stone in front of a cluster of ALONE houses in Artane. Many of us will remember the phrase from primary school: 'Níl aon tinteán mar do thinteán féin'. Literally, the words mean, 'there is no fireplace like your own fireplace', but maybe the best translation would be, 'Home is where the heart is'.



Pictured left to right at ALONE housing in Artane: ALONE volunteer, Phyllis Nolan, ALONE residents, Jimmy Sweetman and Sean Wolohan, ALONE volunteer, Ray Bowden.

Between two purpose-built clusters of housing, and properties we own in the community, ALONE gives homes to 100 older people who would otherwise be homeless. Although not every ALONE home has a fireplace, they do all have their own front doors and they are warm, comfortable and well maintained.

The ALONE Housing Support team develops support plans with all residents to maximise their independence and help them to age at home with dignity and a good quality of life. Levels of support are flexible as individual needs change. Demand for this service is high: we receive 10 applications for every vacancy in ALONE Supportive Housing.

We think that everyone ageing at home should be able to depend on the levels of assistance that ALONE offers, when they need it. That is why we have been speaking out in recent months, welcoming the proposed review of the Fair Deal Scheme and challenging the unreasonable delay in bringing forward legislation for standards in home care (page 3).

At ALONE we value companionship and fun as basic elements for a full life. That is why we provide a varied social programme to suit a range of interests and abilities, including quarterly dinner dances, a cinema club, cultural outings and the annual summer holiday

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(page 2). We have launched a new billboard campaign to bring awareness to the social isolation suffered by some older people and the possibility of supporting ALONE's work to befriend the lonely (page 3).

CSO projections (page 4) point to a rapidly ageing Irish population. We need to agree our priorities and plan well if we are to care for each other as we would all wish, as friends, living in our own homes for as long as possible.

ALONE SUMMER HOLIDAY

34 older people went on the annual ALONE Summer Holiday this year; supported by 2 family carers, 17 volunteers and one staff member. The holiday was for three nights in the Silver Springs Hotel in Athlone, with accommodation and all meals provided. We asked one of the volunteers and one of the older people to share their memories of the holiday with us.

Helen Egbalana has been an ALONE befriending volunteer for the past year.

“The Shannon river cruise was perfect. It was a lovely day and it was an open boat. Everyone came. There wasn't so much moving about once you were in the boat, which was great as the older people didn't get exhausted, and everyone was singing! It was lovely to see all the sites, I really liked seeing horses drinking from the side of the river.

“The Legends of Vegas party night at the hotel was brilliant fun, with an Elvis impersonator. Everybody wanted to get up and dance. Staff, volunteers and older people were all together. The people in wheelchairs were joining in clapping their hands. One man who has been having problems with his mobility, got up and danced, and there was a sight-impaired lady who was dancing and having a great time too! One of the ladies I was looking after thought she wouldn't enjoy it and wanted to stay in her room. With a little encouragement she joined us and then was so happy as it was such great fun!”



Pictured on the ALONE Summer Holiday: Donna O'Brien, Volunteer Project Leader, Emma Kennedy, Volunteer Coordinator, Reg Lacey, ALONE resident

When Florence O'Neill's husband passed away 3 years ago, she contacted ALONE to see if a volunteer would visit her. He had suffered a stroke and his condition deteriorated after a fall which left him housebound. Florence says, “I cared for his every need, 24/7. For all that time, I didn't know what life was like outside the home. ALONE saved me. I am still on a high after the holiday, I have the cinema club tomorrow and we'll have a lunch and then we have the dinner dance to look forward to in September. I know my husband was looking down on me at the holiday, and having a laugh at me jiving at the party in the hotel!”

“You know what they say that you can go on a holiday with loads of money but if you haven't the weather it could be a disaster. There was fantastic sun. The accommodation

– I had my own little room – food and drink, everything was marvellous. A highlight for me was our visit to the Derryclad Folk Museum. I never saw anything like it in Dublin. They had everything from the late 17th century on, that people would have used, like the first kind of washing machine and all of the household things and farmers tools. A man played an old gramophone with a scratchy John McCormack recording and me and a couple of ladies joined in the singing! One of the volunteers was looking at these old clothes pegs that must have been a foot long and turned to me and asked, ‘Were those the ones you used when you were young?’ I never laughed so much. I said, ‘I might be old but give me a chance!’

THE KEY TO OUR SUCCESS

The Holiday is a great example of volunteers and staff working together, and having a laugh along the way! There is great work happening at the moment, and remaining true to the ethos of ALONE, volunteers are at the core of what we do, supported by our staff team.

The majority of our volunteers carry out the befriending role of one visit per week. It is a testament to ALONE that we never have to advertise for these volunteer roles; our biggest problem can be keeping up with the demand! In 2011 we had a focus on recruiting daytime volunteers who would be available a day a week. These volunteers are involved in visiting, school talks, working in reception/administration, gardening & DIY, driving, and the supply of pendant alarms.

Volunteers are members of the ALONE Board, lead Project Teams, and experienced volunteers act as Mentors to those who are newer. There are new faces involved in organising social events, and together with the expertise and experience of longer term members of these teams, we have much to look forward to!

ALONE has secured a full-time worker through JobBridge (National Internship Scheme), and a maintenance worker through Tús (Community Work Placement Initiative). The spirit of volunteerism has kept us connected with the community we serve for 35 years. We will continue to look for new and innovative ways of involving volunteers, while continuing to support and strengthen the traditional volunteer roles that have ensured that ALONE makes a difference to the lives of older people we work with.

NEW BILLBOARD CAMPAIGN



Watch out for this billboard and a matching one with a photo of an older woman.

We are very grateful to leading outdoor advertising company JC Decaux who have given us free adspace this summer. This support has allowed us to roll out our billboard campaign nationwide. Our current campaign focuses on social isolation. While advances in health care and improved social services mean that we stay healthier for longer than ever before, loneliness remains a big problem for many older people.

130 ALONE volunteers visit over 200 isolated older people every week. Although simple friendship is often the greatest need, our volunteers also offer practical support, and assist the people they visit to get involved in the ALONE social programme. Volunteers accompany the older people to these events, and ALONE organise transport for everyone. Our quarterly dinner dances typically have more than 150 older people in attendance, along with volunteers and carers. We also have regular smaller events: in June we are organising a group trip to the Hugh Lane Gallery.

We hope our outdoor campaign will increase awareness of the loneliness of many older people. We hope that those who are worried about friends or family, or themselves feel isolated or depressed will contact us. The posters also invite people to support our work, as ALONE's essential services, 365 days a year, are dependent on donations.



Vincent Holloway with ALONE volunteer, Marge Larkin

HOME CARE CRISIS

An RTÉ Prime Time programme on May 24th revealed poor quality home care services, including incidents of cruelty and neglect of service users, and an almost complete lack of staff reference-checking, vetting or training, in some services. In response, ALONE repeated our call for the immediate introduction of statutory standards for the home care sector.

In January, the Law Reform Commission, on the basis of the Health Act 2007 for Nursing Homes, recommended the Government quickly bring in statutory standards for home care, by amending existing legislation and extending the HIQA standards that exist for nursing homes. Speaking on Prime Time, Kathleen Lynch TD, Minister with Responsibility for Older People, said these measures are queued behind other legislation and will probably not be brought in until 2016.

Prime Time also reported a lack of service provision in some cases, where funding remained unspent. The Government could save money by auditing these services, delivered by home care companies with agreements with the HSE, rather than cutting a further 500,000 hours of care, which is its intention.

Also on home care, ALONE has welcomed Minister Lynch's announcement that she will review the Fair Deal Nursing Home scheme. We are keen to see a greater shift in emphasis to care in the community. The Minister for Health has repeatedly said that home care is the preferred option over nursing home admission; it is also significantly less expensive. Unfortunately his statements have not been reflected in his actions.

In our experience the Fair Deal scheme operates with different levels of success depending on region and training of staff. Assessments are used primarily to decide whether or not someone should be placed in long-term care, without equal weight being given, as intended, to the home care option. Where it is determined that their care needs might be better managed with a home care support package, this support is not available. 65,000 people in Ireland are currently in receipt of home care.

THANK YOU...



Paramount Pictures Ireland chose ALONE as their nominated charity for their viacommunity day and hosted a special screening of Titanic, followed by lunch. Everyone really enjoyed themselves and a big thank you to all involved



Suzanne O'Reilly, ALONE, Gary Hagel, Dublin Site Director eBay, Louise Phelan, VP Global Operations Paypal, Jacqui Lewis, ALONE volunteer and eBay employee

Another big thank you to all of the staff at eBay and Paypal who nominated ALONE as one of their Charities of the Year and donated 5,000 through the Give Foundation to ALONE Supportive Housing.



We are delighted to have reached 1,000 followers on our Facebook page. If you want to get connected with ALONE for updates on our work, and age and rights related issues, search ALONE-Ireland and like us!

FROM THE ARCHIVE

ALONE founder, Willie Bermingham was at a funeral in Glasnevin Cemetery in 1984 when he saw a wooden box on a wheelbarrow. When he asked what this was he was told that it was the body of somebody who had nobody to bury them, and it was bound for a 'paupers grave', which meant burial in an unmarked piece of ground between the other graves. According to an ALONE Bulletin from that year, "He swore from then on that nobody in Dublin would ever be buried in an unmarked grave again." ALONE began looking after these kinds of burials, either people who died without friends or family, or unidentified, or homeless people: In 1988, Dublin's millennium year, the charity secured a plot from Glasnevin - the Millennium Plot - which we have maintained ever since. Every person who is laid to rest in the Millennium Plot has their burial marked by ALONE with their name inscribed on a headstone. Sometimes people come to the plot to find the name of a family member who had gone missing. They can take some comfort from the knowledge that the person was treated with dignity in death. Many ALONE service users choose to have their last resting place in this plot. This often gives a sense of security to an older person who would otherwise be anxious about what would happen after they die. They are also happy they are being laid to rest among friends. We are planning a memorial service to mark our 35th anniversary, for all of those people who have worked with ALONE, or found a home, support and friendship with us. We will have a ceremony in July at the newly designed plot. More news about this in our next Newsletter.

SPORTS CHALLENGES

A big thank you to all the ladies who took part in this year's Flora Women's Mini Marathon in aid of ALONE. We really appreciate everyone's efforts and for helping to raise much-needed funds as well as awareness for ALONE.

If you didn't get to take part in this event, or if you would like to continue on with your fitness buzz, there are several other sporting events coming up over the next few months. We are again encouraging our supporters to get involved on behalf of ALONE. These events include:

Saturday 30th June - Irish Runner 5 mile - Phoenix Park

Sunday 22nd July - Fingal 10km - Swords

Saturday 25th August - Frank Duffy 10 mile - Phoenix Park

Saturday 15th September - Dublin half marathon - Phoenix Park

Monday 29th October - Dublin marathon - Dublin city centre

If you would like to take part in any of the above events, please contact Suzanne on 01 6791032 or email fundraising@alone.ie for your sponsorship pack. Your help really will make a difference.

CENSUS FIGURES

Recently released Census 2011 results show that the population of older people in the Republic, aged 65 or over, increased by 14.4% since 2006. The CSO predicts that the number of over-65s will double by 2026 to 909,000. The largest increases are expected in the mid-east (+133%) and Dublin (+75%). The oldest population meanwhile - those aged 80 or over - is expected to jump two-thirds by 2021.