

# HIGHER DIPLOMA IN BEREAVEMENT STUDIES

In conjunction with the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI), the Irish Hospice Foundation has recently launched the country's first Higher Diploma in Bereavement Studies, which is accredited by the National University of Ireland (NUI) through RCSI.

This is a part-time, modular course that takes one year to complete. It is structured to accommodate people who are working full-time, with lectures held during evenings and some weekends. Ms Orla Keegan is the co-ordinator. Ms Margaret Daly (University College Dublin) and Dr Susan Delaney (Irish Hospice Foundation) are teaching core modules.

The Higher Diploma is not a counselling qualification; rather it provides a deeper understanding of grief and grief support and a greater sensitivity to the factors which affect the grieving process. At the end of the course, students will have developed enhanced skills in the delivery of effective grief support; an ability to critique bereavement literature and a broad understanding of types of bereavement support.

Some of the specific educational objectives of the Higher Diploma are:

- To provide students with theoretical understanding, skills, practice and knowledge on grief and grief support structures which may be applied in health, community and other organisations and in the voluntary sector
- To develop core competencies in the application of grief theory and in counselling skills in the context of loss and bereavement
- To develop an understanding of different perspectives on loss and bereavement, including loss through the life cycle, family bereavement, cultural issues, gender issues, ethical issues
- To reflect on personal development and personal growth through the educational experience
- To develop competencies in searching and critically analysing bereavement research

We had the chance to speak with three students on the course to see how things are going so far. Anne McKeown is a bereavement officer in University Hospital Galway, Eddie O'Neill is a principal social worker based in St. Francis Hospice, Dublin, and Annette Wall is a teacher and counsellor at Colaiste Abbain, Co Wexford.

When asked what they would like to take away from the course, each student discussed how useful it would be to acquire more theoretical knowledge about grief and bereavement. Anne and Annette mentioned that this would hopefully give them 'more confidence' when dealing

with families, while Eddie was hoping he would bring, 'a more informed, reflective approach' to his work.

While there are support structures in place for Eddie, Annette, Anne and others working in the area of bereavement within institutions, the students are finding that one of the best aspects of the course is to be able to meet and form networks with others who are doing similar work. According to Eddie, *'There aren't that many people doing this kind of work, and it can be difficult to gather them together. This course satisfies that need.'* Anne also mentioned the benefits of meeting and talking to classmates, saying, *'Part of what makes the course so interesting is the fact that people from a wide variety of backgrounds are in the class, including teachers, psychotherapists, social workers and nurses. Everyone brings a different perspective, which has already helped me by opening me up to other schools of thought and has challenged the way I think about things.'* Annette also commented on the positive results of just meeting others who work within the same field: *'Sometimes my work can be quite isolated, and if something does happen, I'm seen as the one who knows exactly what to do. It's extremely beneficial to be able to talk to others who have been in similar situations. It's a very social, supportive environment.'*

As each of the students I spoke to is already working in the community in the area of bereavement, I asked how the people they work with will benefit from their experiences throughout the course. Anne responded, *'Having concrete knowledge that is theory-based can help in all settings in the community and can enhance the information that is available for people. It helps me to recommend resources to patients and families if I've already read a piece and know what it's about and what can help them.'*

Eddie, Annette and Anne each mentioned that one important notion that they will take back to their communities and the families they work with is that grief is a personal, unique experience for everyone. According to Eddie, *'There is a real perception that people need to 'get over it' after a certain period of time. The fact is that bereavement is something that is complex and life-changing, and that we don't simply 'get over it.' The more awareness there is about this, the more families can support one another through their loss.'* Annette also commented on how this knowledge will help her directly in her work, saying, *'It's impossible to say how a person should react to bereavement, and it's useful to know about the different ways in which people grieve, and that they're all OK. An important part of doing the counselling work is to be able to understand where people are coming from and to just try to be with them, as they go through their experience.'*

We wish Anne, Eddie, Annette and their classmates the best of luck as they continue their studies. If you would like further information about our Higher Diploma, please contact us at 01 679 3188.

## THE IRISH HOSPICE FOUNDATION NEWS

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IN BEREAVEMENT STUDIES

## IRISH HOSPICE FOUNDATION LAUNCHES NEW WEBSITE

### Background

In 2003, the Irish Hospice Foundation moved premises and undertook a broader range of activities than before. We have since launched new education and training programmes, such as the Higher Diploma in Bereavement Studies and have also launched the Care for People Dying in Hospitals Project. As an organisation, we felt our website should reflect these developments, while still providing people with clear and concise information. The funding for our new site was very kindly provided by the Department of Health and Children, as part of a capital grant.

Our overall objectives for the website are to inform the public about who we are and what we do and to also provide accurate and up-to-date information on all our activities.

We hope to serve the needs of a wide range of website users, including healthcare professionals, information seekers on hospice care and bereavement support, volunteers, students, researchers, potential donors and the media.

### New Features

The full range of our activities is included on our site and is structured in an attractive and user-friendly manner. Some of the new features of the website include:

- A direct link to our library catalogue, which hosts a unique collection of material on bereavement, death and dying and related topics, such as spirituality and self-help material. The database of this material now holds over 1100 items and can be searched through our website by subject, title or author. For example, to find material on Children and Loss, type these words into the search box, click on 'subject' and then click on 'search'. A list of relevant references will then appear with copy and location details.
- Our on-line shop, where people can browse and purchase the products that we have on offer, such as sympathy cards, Christmas



Winners! The children of Scoil Mhuire National School in Newtownforbes, Co. Longford proudly wear their Muc masks as they head to Fossett's Circus.

cards, our most recent special project, *Peter & The Wolf* and the well-loved children's book, *Woody: A Whale of a Tale*. Proceeds from all Irish Hospice Foundation products purchased in this way come directly to us.

- An on-line donation system, where supporters can donate by credit card on a secure site to support the work of the Irish Hospice Foundation.
- News and updates on our current activities and projects, announcements regarding upcoming events and recent press releases
- Information about hospice care and bereavement in general
- On-line booking forms for our workshops and courses
- Downloadable versions of Irish Hospice Foundation publications, including a series of bereavement leaflets. These informative, readable pieces focus on the death of a parent, partner, child, and sibling and contain personal stories as well as useful information that we hope will help people through the pain of losing a family member or friend.

### Accessibility

We've tried to make our website as user-friendly as possible by colour coding each section and having a special 'print' button on each page. For the visually impaired, the text of the website can be broadcast and listened to, providing the user's computer has special software. We have information about these software needs, so please contact us for further details.

Visit our website at [www.hospice-foundation.ie](http://www.hospice-foundation.ie) and let us know how it works for you. If you do not have access to the web, our library has several computers with Internet connections and is open to the public. For opening hours, please phone Caroline Pfeifer or Maura Dunne at the Irish Hospice Foundation.

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## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

### MUC IN FOR HOSPICE

Secondary School students will be asked to perform the very difficult task of taking part in a sponsored **No Homework Day** this year, as part of our on-going *Muc in for Hospice* fundraising project. Each secondary school in the country will receive information nearer to October, but if students, teachers or parents would like to learn more about the project, please contact us directly. We will have raffle prizes for a lucky school, class, teacher and an individual student. This secondary school initiative is kindly sponsored by Cornmarket Group Financial Services.

### CHILDREN'S HOSPICE BALL

This year, the Irish Hospice Foundation and the Laura Lynn Foundation are coming together to raise much-needed funds for children's hospice care. This will be the biggest ball either charity has organised, with 850 guests in the Burlington Hotel in Dublin on Saturday, November 13th.

This evening promises to be a very special pre-Christmas event, and many tickets have already been pre-sold. Tickets are €150 per person – please contact us at 01 679 3188 to book. Corporate tables are also available.

## EVENTS NEWS

7,000 primary school children from schools around the country took part in the *Muc in for Hospice* fundraiser on April Fool's Day, each decorating their own Muc mask and wearing it to school on that day while raising funds for children's hospice care. For the second year, Fossett's Circus sponsored the event and the pupils, teachers and parents of Scoil Mhuire National School in Newtownforbes, Co. Longford won the prize of a trip to the big top.

In May, the Lady Golfers held their **annual walk to Howth Summit**. Under the chairmanship of Joan Wylde, it was once again a great success and has brought in over €31,000 at the time of printing. Since the first Howth Walk, the Lady Golfers have raised over €400,000 for the Irish Hospice Foundation's Children's Hospice Homecare fund.

The Foundation has been the beneficiary of the generosity of two companies who have chosen us as their charity of the year – Ladbrokes and Xerox. Each company is holding a series of events in order to raise money for hospice care.

For the third year running the committee of '**A Night in Havana**' nominated the Irish Hospice Foundation as one of the charities it supports each year. Run by a group of friends, this year the casino night was held at the Four Season's Hotel in Dublin.

## NATIONAL FUNDRAISING

### SUNFLOWER DAYS

Due to the hard work of staff and numerous volunteers all over the country, this year has been another very successful year for national fundraising. Sunflower Days, held on June 11th and 12th was helped along by Irish Olympian cyclist Robin Seymour.

### IRELAND'S BIGGEST COFFEE MORNING

Ireland's Biggest Coffee Morning will be held on September 16th. This is the 11th year that Bewley's have sponsored Coffee Morning, and hundreds of thousands of cups of coffee will be consumed all over the country on that day, with the goal of raising €1 million to aid local hospice care.

# 'Care for People Dying in Hospitals' Project

The Irish Hospice Foundation has recently launched its 'Care for People Dying in Hospitals' project in partnership with the North Eastern Health Board. The project will be situated in Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda, Co. Louth over the next two years. All aspects of death, dying and bereavement in the general hospital setting will be examined, with a view to enhancing the quality of life for people who are dying in hospitals and their families. This project also looks at the needs of hospital staff members.

We hope that by the end of the two-year period, we will have established a process of change that can be applied to other hospitals in Ireland and, perhaps, internationally.

The principles of hospice care are rooted in the belief that no one should have to experience unnecessary suffering when facing death. Most people would like to die peacefully at home, surrounded by family and friends. According to Mervyn Taylor, the Project Manager, however, '*The reality is that over half of all deaths in Ireland occur in hospitals and other institutions.*' This means that, in all settings – the home, in hospitals and in hospices, care should be appropriate and provide people with the greatest amount of choice possible, especially concerning end of life care. Death is a natural process that happens to everyone, yet in many ways it is the last thing we want to think or talk about. However, it is important to consider both the care that is available and the services that we, as a society, may want or need in the future. In recent years, specialist palliative care teams have arrived in hospitals in Ireland, including Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital in Drogheda. This is a very welcome development and means that many patients and their families have access to hospice and palliative care in the hospital setting. Our project sets out to support all of the hospital staff in caring for those facing death through different circumstances and to raise awareness about some patients' and families' needs.



Irish Olympian cyclist Robin Seymour at the launch of this year's Sunflower Days.

### LOOKING AT THE NEEDS OF PATIENTS, FAMILIES & STAFF

In order to fully address the issue of care in a general hospital setting, the needs of not only patients but also family members are to be taken into consideration, especially in areas such as privacy, confidentiality, dignity and choice. We also consider all hospital staff, who work in a highly pressurised environment and face difficult situations, such as the death of a patient and giving bad news to families, on a regular basis. Caring for people who are dying and for their families can be a source of satisfaction, but it can also be a source of distress.

Integral to this project is examining the processes and systems currently used in hospitals, with a view to ensuring that the structures in place are working to help patients, their families and hospital staff. For example, how is bad news communicated to patients and to families? Does the physical setting of the hospital allow for privacy and dignity? For families arriving at hospital during a time of crisis, where do they park? Can they find their way around the hospital? Is everything being done for patients' physical and psychological comfort? Do staff have needs which are not being met?

We are working with the North Eastern Health Board and Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital to fully understand the intricacies of providing care in a large, complex setting such as a general hospital and to answer some of these questions. Given that the project is located in the Boyne Valley, this process of investigation and change has been given a name – the *Newgrange Process*. Commenting on the rationale behind this name, Pat Wallace, Director of the National Museum of Ireland, stated, '*The two key features of Newgrange are the burial chamber at its centre and the shaft of sunlight that illuminates the passage leading to it at the winter solstice, the shortest, and therefore darkest, day of the year. In this era of the Internet, space travel and satellites it is both enormously encouraging and entirely fitting that those who today are looking at issues of death, dying and bereavement in complex institutions such as hospitals, should seek inspiration from earlier generations who grappled with issues of life and death and sought to give creative expression to their association between seasonal change, death and sunrise.*'

As well as project manager Mervyn Taylor, we have appointed an administrator, Ms Caroline Kearns, both based at the hospital. A committee has been established to oversee the project, and already local working groups are focusing on areas for change – such as the information needs of families, the education needs of staff, and the physical facilities at the hospital.

We will update our readers and the hospice community on how the project is going, but if you would like further information in the meantime, please contact the Irish Hospice Foundation on 01 679 3188 or consult [www.newgrange-process.net](http://www.newgrange-process.net).

## MOTOR DISTRIBUTORS STAFF SUPPORT THE IRISH HOSPICE FOUNDATION

In December 2003 the Irish Hospice Foundation was delighted to welcome Motor Distributors to the *Employee Give As You Earn* programme. We would like to thank all staff who very kindly make regular donations directly from their salaries to the Irish Hospice Foundation. We are also very grateful to Jim Farrell and Siobhan Harte in Motor Distributors for all their work establishing this programme within the company. If you or your company would like further information about *Employee Give As You Earn*, please contact us on 01 6793188.

## NEW CEO APPOINTED TO THE IRISH HOSPICE FOUNDATION

The Irish Hospice Foundation would like to extend a very fond farewell to Jean Manahan, who has moved to Atlantic Philanthropies in Dublin. We wish her the very best of luck in her new role.

We have appointed Eugene Murray as our Chief Executive Officer. Eugene Murray was formerly a member of the Executive Board of RTE, where he held a number of senior management posts, including Director of Business Planning, Director of Digital Media and Head of Current Affairs, Television.

In his earlier career in RTE, Mr Murray worked as a producer in radio and television. He was Editor of the flagship TV current affairs programme, *Today Tonight*. Eugene Murray is Chairman of the Governing Body of Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art Design and Technology.

"I am delighted to be joining the Irish Hospice Foundation at this interesting and challenging time in its history. I look forward to building on the good work of my predecessors," said Mr Murray.



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Eugene Murray

## IRISH HOSPICE FOUNDATION CHRISTMAS CARDS

Yes it's that time of year again! Our new collection of Christmas cards for 2004 is now available. This year the collection includes a selection of mixed packs with a variety of designs to suit all.

The cards cost €10 for a pack of 10. All profits from the sale of these Christmas Cards go directly to the Irish Hospice Foundation.

To request a brochure, please e-mail Karen at [karen@hospice-foundation.ie](mailto:karen@hospice-foundation.ie) or ring the Irish Hospice Foundation on 01 6793188.

