



Welcome

July 2016



2016 is proving to be a very exciting year with the celebration of our fifth birthday. It is hard to believe so much time has passed, as it only feels like yesterday when Ireland's finest purpose-built cancer support centre opened its doors to the public in 2011.

As you may have noticed, to mark this fifth anniversary the logo has been enhanced. We have also made a small change to our name and will now be known as the Solas Cancer Support Centre. These changes better reflect the service provided and are in response to feedback from our clients and the community we serve.

As always our priority is to provide the very best cancer support services to meet the needs of the community and in Autumn 2015, we extended our opening hours (until 9pm) on Wednesday evenings. This has proved very popular with clients of the centre. In fact over the last 12 months there has been an increase of almost 20% in the number of people accessing cancer support services in the centre. Recognising the diversity of the community we serve, we have established new services including Art therapy, Crochet, Music

therapy, new regular meetings of the South East Stoma Support Group and Lymphoedema information sessions. However, the highlight for this year will be the opening of Solas Cancer Support services in Dungarvan in September, initially operating one day a week. This will be the most significant expansion of services to west Waterford since the establishment of the charity 17 years ago.

Many successful events have been organised this year to promote awareness and fundraise for services. These events included the annual Boobs and Balls bike trip and the Kilmeaden Tractor Run which ran in July. An amazing Dance for Life event took place in April where we saw over 50 brave and glamorous supporters tread the boards in the splendid Theatre Royal. A first for Waterford was the Kube event in June which saw contestants pitc their skills against each other and the Kube! I wish to offer a sincere thank you to everyone who organised and supported any events associated with the Solas Cancer Support Centre in the last year.

The 2016 South East Run for Life and Fun for Life will take place on Sunday October 9th and I would encourage everyone (including family and friends) to participate in either the 10-mile run or the 5-mile family walk, which is always an inspiring event.

The Solas Cancer Support Centre is supported by over 70 volunteers, 25 counsellors and therapists, 6 community employment scheme workers and 4 staff members (1 full time and 3 part time). I wish to acknowledge the essential contribution of every member of the community which ensures we can deliver services to those affected by cancer, all of which are provided free of charge to our clients.

We would like to extend the warmest welcome to Tracy McDaid who commenced as the Centre Manager in June. Tracy has extensive management experience in the hospitality industry and longstanding involvement with voluntary groups and the Solas Cancer Support Centre. We are delighted to have someone of Tracy's calibre on board, particularly at this busy period.

Our mission at the Solas Cancer Support Centre is to provide support, offer understanding and to respect those affected by cancer and their families. We look forward to enhancing these services in the coming year thanks to the continued generosity and support of the community here in the South East. Please visit our website (solascentre.ie) for further information and as always, we appreciate any feedback or suggestions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Brian Creedon'.

Dr Brian Creedon, Chair



Thank you to our wonderful supporters!



Dance for Life



Boobs & Balls Charity Bike Trip



The Solas Kube



Star for Life



Lismore Firemen Presentation



Ladies Lunch



Kilmeaden Vintage Tractor Club, Tractor Run

Client Testimonials



Albert Burke

“ In January 2011, I noticed a change in my voice. I started to get slightly hoarse and at times had difficulty actually speaking. There was no pain, no sore throat, and no indication that there was anything to unduly worry about.

At first I put it down to my work environment, which at times was extremely dusty. I'd given up smoking 2 years earlier so I was convinced it had nothing to do with the cigarettes. Over the next 6 months my voice got progressively worse until it got to a stage where it was difficult to speak without forcing my voice.

After some persuasion from family and friends I paid a visit to my GP who decided the problem needed further investigation and sent me to E.N.T at University Hospital Waterford. After my visit to E.N.T, I was sent for a biopsy which confirmed I had cancer of the larynx.

Two decisions saved my life, one was giving up smoking and the second was visiting my G.P as the early intervention

and diagnosis meant the cancer was detected at an early stage. After the initial shock of being diagnosed my thoughts turned to how best to deal with the situation.

After a lifetime of playing GAA including coaching and training teams and being fully aware of the physical and mental strength needed to overcome adversity, I now realised I was faced with the biggest battle of all, except this time my opponent was the dreaded Big C, namely cancer.

From feeling fit and healthy to suddenly being confronted with this obstacle was a mind numbing experience and one which I decided to meet head on. Not for me all the hype the specialists were trying to encourage me to avail of e.g. counselling, listening, support groups etc. No! I was going to deal with this the same way as I dealt with everyday problems, totally focusing on the positives with no negative thoughts; however this attitude only gets you so far. I was now a part of the cancer family whether I liked it or not, and had to adjust my way of thinking accordingly, as cancer has no respect for thoughts, feelings, gender or age.

After spending 6 weeks in St. Luke's Hospital, Dublin, receiving radiotherapy and round the clock care, my thoughts were that I was in the process of getting rid of the cancer and when I left the hospital I would be cancer free, not realising I was only starting on the long road to recovery which would involve many different methods and procedures.

On completion of my treatment I was suddenly without the support structures that I had come to depend on. Well meaning family and friends were there for me, however it is hard to understand what a cancer patient is going through unless you have been in their situation. It's a life sentence with every day bringing its own set of fears and worries.

It was at this stage I began to think of the Solas Cancer Support Centre as an aid in my recovery. I had heard so many positive things about the services they provided, I felt it was a step in the right direction for me at that stage. It turned out to be one of the best decisions I made during this difficult time.

On entering the Solas Cancer Support Centre the thing that struck me most was that it is an oasis of calm and comfort, that made me feel at ease straight away such was the caring and helpful attitude of everyone there. I availed of the services on several occasions and I firmly believe it helped through the worst days of my recovery.

I have since taken part in the South East Run for Life and intend to do so for as long as possible. The feeling of camaraderie with everyone joining in a common cause is amazing. It really is an unbelievable experience. The South East Run for Life and the 5 Mile Walk for Life deserve the full support of the wider community. Nearly every family will be touched by cancer in some way at some stage of their lives, so it's vital that the Solas Cancer Support Centre services are maintained.



Valerie Leahy

“ 2009 was my first engagement with the Solas Centre, when I took part in the South East Run for Life. Little did I know that the following year I and my Mam Kathleen would be availing of the services. In May 2010, Mam's breast cancer returned after 12 years of being in remission. From that moment on our lives changed forever. The oncologist in University Hospital Waterford suggested we contact the Solas Centre for support.

Once Mam was strong enough, mobile to go out, we visited the Solas Centre. Straight away Mam felt at ease and was so happy that there was outreach support. She availed of the reflexology, which she loved, found very relaxing, helpful,

especially if the pain was bad. As a career, this same opportunity was opened to me, which was fabulous, because as a daughter and career seeing your Mam going through the challenges of cancer was very upsetting and scary. During this time we both felt that going to the Solas Centre was an escape. Mam loved chatting with the Solas Team, she loved the laughing and the chitchat. She always came out good humoured, feeling, as she used to say "Like I'm walking on a cloud", "I feel like a million dollars", "Right where to now!" The Solas Team gave her so much confidence and support. Mam had such inner strength she was ready to face the world and live.

August 13th 2014 Mam passed away after four and half years with cancer. For the first year, the Solas Team, were absolutely amazing to me. They helped me so much, through my grief, because it is only when everything is over, you begin to realise the effects it has on you as a carer and a close family member. I was offered a range of support options; from counselling, reflexology, yoga, meditation, art therapy, anything from one on one to group classes. There is a range of support services offered so you can avail of what suits you as an individual. Solas helped

me and supported me move on and gave me the courage to take each step at a time through this first difficult year.

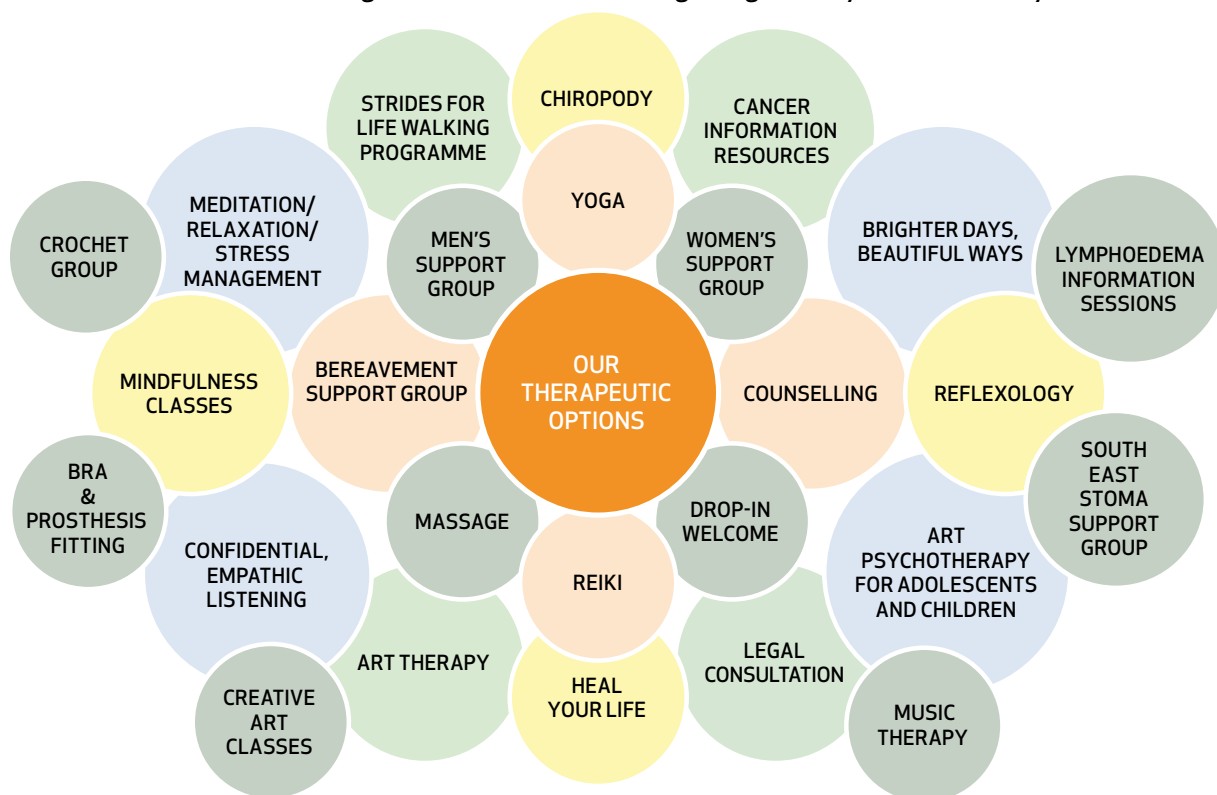
Counselling, helped me to speak openly in a safe environment. Talk about my worries, troubles, fear of loss and my own sadness. I needed to share, but something's I felt I couldn't share with close family and friends as I felt I didn't want to burden them either. They had their own things problems. It was great to have the Solas Centre and their Team, who were neutral, and you can share your inner most thoughts in a confidential environment. You feel you are in safe hands with this professional Team.

This year, I and some of my friends are hoping to do the South East Run for Life once again. To say thank you and to raise money to help Solas continue the work they are doing. I am in the process of organising a concert to raise awareness and money for the Solas Centre, because the support they give to clients, their families and friends is amazing. They give much needed to help everyone during the whole process.

Mam and I would have been lost without them.

Support Options

At the Solas Cancer Support Centre we offer emotional support to those affected by cancer, including family members and carers. Our services, which are available to people in Waterford and the South East, are free of charge and are 100% funded through the generosity of the community.



Where have the last 12 months gone?

We are already well advanced with the planning for the 2016 Run and Walk for Life. The 2015 event was such a success that we have set an ambitious target of 2,500 participants across both the run and walk elements of this year's event.

The addition of the 5-mile walk last year ensured that we had a significantly increased attendance and we hope that many more will now get involved in 2016.

To ensure the safety of the event, we are advising people that the Walk for Life is just that. There will be additional marshalling on the walk and plan to have a "pacemaker" to guarantee a safe but brisk walking pace.

Once again the event has a number of excellent partners helping out with the media coverage, t-shirt sponsorship

and medal sponsorship. The event could not happen without these partners and, as organisers, we are extremely grateful that they have chosen the Run and Walk for Life.

Sunday the 9th October will once again see the streets of Waterford City awash with orange as thousands of people run, jog, walk and maybe even crawl their way around the 10-mile and 5-mile courses. We wish to organise a safe event and with these increased numbers, we will be asking everyone who participates to respect the safety measures put in place.

We look forward to seeing you on the start line and crossing the finish line in the People's Park on Sunday 9th October.



Michael Garland,
Chair of South East Run for Life

Phone: 353 (0)51 304 604
Visit: Solas Cancer Support Centre, Williamstown, Waterford
Web: solascentre.ie

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