Northern Ireland’s first lymphoma clinical nurse specialist
Welcome

A warm welcome to a very special 30th anniversary edition of our newsletter.

2015 is set to be a big year for Friends of the Cancer Centre as we celebrate 30 years of supporting local cancer patients and their families across Northern Ireland.

It’s hard to believe that the charity is 30 years old, but it all started in 1985 at the old Belvoir Park Hospital with a small group of people passionate about supporting local people with cancer. Since then the charity has gone from strength to strength, and you can see some of our milestone moments on pages 4 and 5.

Over the years we have been committed to supporting the patients and staff in the Cancer Centre through the projects we fund in research, clinical care, and patient comfort and care. One of our most successful projects is our Clinical Nurse Specialist Programme, which funds vital specialist cancer nurses in the Cancer Centre. As it’s such an important part of the work we do, we are thrilled to start our 30th year by welcoming our new clinical nurse specialist, Laura Croan. Laura is Northern Ireland’s first and only clinical nurse specialist for lymphoma and you can read about the vital role she plays for local patients on the next page.

As this year is such a milestone year for the charity, we have lined up some new and exciting additions to our calendar of fundraising events. First up we are giving our supporters the opportunity to abseil one of Northern Ireland’s most iconic buildings for the very first time – Belfast City Hospital’s tower block. The interest in the abseil has been fantastic and we hope lots of you will take on this once in a lifetime challenge. We only have a limited number of spaces available for the abseil, so make sure you register as soon as you can to avoid disappointment. We’ll have a few more special events coming up this year, so stay tuned to find out more.

Since the charity was established in 1985 it has had a vital role to play in local cancer care. Today, the role of Friends of the Cancer has never been more important and as we face a future of uncertainty and further cuts to the health service, the work that we do in supporting the Cancer Centre will be even more vital. Cancer touches us all in some way, at some point in our lives and the money that you raise for Friends of the Cancer Centre ensures that we can continue to add to the already excellent care available at the Cancer Centre when you, or someone you love, needs it most.

This is your Cancer Centre and we are your charity.

Thank you for all of your support over the last 30 years and here’s to a great future for Friends of the Cancer Centre.

Colleen Shaw
Chief Executive
Friends of the Cancer Centre

Did you know...

Last year alone, we put nearly £1.5 million into the Cancer Centre through the projects that we fund to support local cancer patients and their families.

Today, Friends of the Cancer Centre funds 31 additional staff including doctors, nurses and researchers.

Friends of the Cancer Centre aims to raise over £5 million over the next 3 years to fund existing and new projects throughout the Cancer Centre.

TO DONATE £5 QUICKLY AND SECURELY TEXT FOCC01 £5 TO 70070.
Laura leads the way in lymphoma care

For the first time in Northern Ireland, lymphoma patients will benefit from a specialist cancer nurse who will be on hand to guide them through their diagnosis and treatment.

Friends of the Cancer Centre’s clinical nurse specialist for lymphoma, Laura Croan, is the only clinical nurse specialist of her kind in Northern Ireland. With over 350 people being diagnosed with lymphoma in Northern Ireland every year and up to 1,000 people living with the disease every day, Laura will make a huge impact on the lives of many people locally.

Laura, who was awarded the Patient’s Choice Award in the Royal College of Nursing NI Awards in 2013, has been working with leukaemia and lymphoma patients in her role as staff nurse for ten years. When the opportunity to take on a more specialised role came up, Laura jumped at the chance.

“Since I started my nursing career, I have always wanted to work my way towards a clinical nurse specialist post. It’s such a great opportunity to advance and specialise in an area of cancer that fascinates me. My mum has been through breast cancer twice and was really well looked after by a clinical nurse specialist herself. As a nurse, I have always seen the benefit and the need for specialist cancer nurses, but it’s only when you experience it from the other side that you see just how vital these posts are to patients.”

Laura will play a pivotal role in a patient’s care, on hand from their very first appointment right through their treatment and after care. Despite being one of the most common forms of cancer in Northern Ireland, lymphoma is one of the lesser known cancer areas and this is one of the biggest challenges Laura faces in her new role.

“Many new lymphoma patients often face additional stress caused by not knowing much, or anything, about their particular type of cancer. My first job when meeting a new patient is to educate and inform. Arming people with factual information on their own particular cancer and their treatment path is a powerful thing and it can help alleviate some of the stress and anxiety. It’s also my opportunity to reassure them that they are not alone in this and that I will be with them every step of the way.”

With over 60 different forms of the disease, lymphoma is one of the most complex cancer areas, making the need for a lymphoma clinical nurse specialist all the more vital. Laura will act as the lynchpin between the various teams involved in a patient’s treatment, providing a central point of contact for the patient to turn to at any time, often for emotional support. Laura explains:

“While treatment can take its toll on a patient physically, we cannot underestimate the emotional and mental stress that comes with a cancer diagnosis. Being the familiar face when a patient comes for an appointment, or the friendly voice at the end of the phone when someone needs a chat, is a huge part of my role.”

Laura has big plans for the future for lymphoma care locally and is proud that her work is being supported by thousands of people across the province.

“The fact that people across Northern Ireland have made this post possible makes me love and appreciate my work even more. I feel really proud to wear the Friends of the Cancer Centre badge – it’s my badge of honour.”

TO DONATE £5 QUICKLY AND SECURELY TEXT FOCC01 £5 TO 70070.
What an incredible 30 years

For the last 30 years, Friends of the Cancer Centre has been making a real and lasting difference to the lives of those affected by cancer and thanks to your support, we have been able to do some amazing things for patients. Here are just some of the milestones that we have been able to reach.

1985
Friends of Montgomery House was established when cancer services were based at the old Belvoir Park Hospital in South Belfast. Over the next 20 years, the charity would go on to fund major projects, including the purchase of a £1.2 million MRI scanner, which brought waiting times down from two months to one week.

2006
Cancer services transferred to the new Cancer Centre at Belfast City Hospital. The move marked a new chapter for the charity, which also moved to its new home and changed its name to Friends of the Cancer Centre.

2008
First major project at the new hospital site with the £150,000 refurbishment of the on-site patient hotel, Glenview House, which is used by nearly 2,000 people every year.

2009
Charity funds its first complementary therapist, who is specially trained to offer cancer patients free treatments such as massage, aromatherapy and reflexology. Over the last 5 years this service has grown, with over 1,500 people benefitting each year.

2007
Our Europa Abseil in 2007 was one of the first major fundraising events under our new name, Friends of the Cancer Centre.

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2010
We fund our first specialist cancer nurse, Elaine Shaw. Elaine, who is our breast cancer clinical nurse specialist, is still funded by the charity today.

2011
Special relaxation and exercise classes are funded by the charity for the first time, giving patients free access to yoga, pilates and tai chi classes. These classes are still funded by us today, with over 1,600 people availing of them every year.

2012
The charity funds its first doctor, Dr Suneil Jain, who is a specialist in prostate cancer. Dr Jain works directly with patients in the Cancer Centre and is also heavily involved in cutting edge cancer research. Since 2012, Friends of the Cancer Centre has gone on to fund another medic, research fellow Dr Phil Turner.

2013
We fund two more vital staff within the Cancer Centre. Renee Reid joined us as our clinical nurse specialist for teenagers and young adults and Lindsey Anderson joined the radiotherapy team as our information and support radiographer.

2014
We invest £1 million in local cancer research through a unique partnership with the Centre for Cancer Research and Cell Biology at Queen’s University, Belfast. The investment has funded vital posts and today our researchers are working on cutting edge clinical trials that are vital in developing new treatments for various types of cancer.

OUR COMMITMENT TO THE FUTURE
In the last 30 years, Friends of the Cancer Centre has been committed to enhancing the care for patients in the Cancer Centre through the vital projects that we fund in research, clinical care, and patient comfort and care. We are dedicated to keeping this commitment and in the next three years alone, with your continued support, we aim to raise £5 million to ensure that the Cancer Centre remains the leading facility for cancer patients in Northern Ireland.

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With a little help from our friends

Local people across Northern Ireland play a huge part in raising money for the charity through community based fundraising groups. Fundraising groups are groups of people who come together to raise money in their own local community on behalf of Friends of the Cancer Centre. Check out some of our groups below to see how their support is making a real difference to the work that we do.

**Fermanagh**

The wonderful people of Fermanagh have been supporting the work of the charity from the very start and Jim Gamble and Avril Graham are now two of our longest serving fundraisers, raising over £500,000 over the last 30 years. The group has grown in size and has gone from strength to strength and last year alone the team raised an incredible £55,000.

**Antrim**

The group was created by Donna Taylor and her sister, Adele Woods, after Donna was treated for cancer at the Cancer Centre. Motivated by the desire to help other families in the local area affected by cancer, the sisters decided to start a fundraising group for the Antrim area. Since it was established, the girls have recruited others to the group and in just over two years they have raised over £40,000.

**Dromore**

The Dromore fundraising group, led by Elizabeth Rutherford, has been raising funds in their own local community for the last 6 years, with their annual brunch becoming the highlight of the local social calendar. Not only has the group raised over £25,000, but its members have also been great ambassadors for the charity, highlighting the impact our work has on many people in the local community.

**We need you!**

We are currently looking to set up new groups in Cookstown, Armagh and Belfast. If you would like to get involved and help establish a new group in one of these areas, or if you would like to know if there is a fundraising group already in your area, please call Claire on 028 9069 9393 to find out more.

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Be inspired

If you’re looking for some motivation to hit the streets for us in this year’s Belfast City Marathon, look no further than the Fee family from Tempo in Fermanagh. Here, Cathal Fee tells us why he and his family took on the marathon for us last year.

“In 2013 my mum, Dympna, was diagnosed with a brain tumour and told she would have a year to live. She started radiotherapy in January 2014 and stayed in the Cancer Centre for 6 weeks. Before she started treatment, mum lost the power of her right arm and right leg, so she needed constant care. The staff in the Cancer Centre were incredible; nothing was ever a problem and they made time to really get to know mum, treating her more like a friend than a patient.”

Inspired by the care his mum was receiving, Cathal decided to raise money for Friends of the Cancer Centre. Along with his uncle, aunt and cousins, they decided to take on the Belfast City Marathon as a relay team, proudly calling themselves Team Dymps after his mum.

“We hoped to raise around £500, but as mum was a very popular lady and everyone wanted to show their support, it wasn’t long before we passed this. We couldn’t believe how generous people were and we ended up raising a phenomenal £6,800.

“The day of the marathon was one of mixed emotions. Mum would have loved to have been able to come out to cheer us on, but unfortunately she wasn’t well enough. I was running the second last leg of the relay, but with the adrenaline rush I decided to run the last leg with my cousin, Caroline. We crossed the finishing line hand in hand!”

Sadly Cathal’s mum passed away in July last year, but he is taking on the marathon again this year in her memory. His advice for anyone thinking about taking on the challenge is: “Go for it! The feeling you will get will be hard to beat. Mum was incredibly proud of what we did and even though she isn’t here to cheer us on this year, we are still going to enter a team in her memory and make sure that Team Dymps lives on.”

Get involved

Help us make our 30th year our biggest yet by taking part in our great events. Here are just a few of the things that we have in store for you in the coming months and make sure you check out our back page for details of a very special challenge. Who’s in?

Belvoir Walk
Bring the family, friends and even the dog for our annual summer stroll followed by a delicious complimentary lunch. Registration for this event is £5 per adult with children under 12 going free.

Dragon Boat Race
Get 16 friends, family members or work colleagues together to take to the water and compete for the crown of Dragon Boat Champions 2015. Registration is £10 per team member.

Friendship Day
Be part of the very first Friends of the Cancer Centre Friendship Day by getting your family and friends together to raise money for us with your very own Friendship Day event. More details coming soon.

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Take on the Tower

Abseil 190ft down Belfast City Hospital’s iconic tower block

Saturday 11th & Sunday 12th April

This is a once in a lifetime challenge and with only 250 places available, early registration is advised to secure your place in history.

Registration is £40

For more information or to register, contact Claire on 028 9069 9393 or email clairehogarth@friendsofthecancercentre.com or text TOWER to 07900 782 492

www.friendsofthecancercentre.com
Charity No. NI00080