

Power of Friends

NEWSLETTER SPRING/SUMMER 2023



10 years of supporting life-saving cancer research

Find out how your support is helping to find new and improved ways to treat cancer.



Pages 6 & 7

Farewell to our Chief Executive

As Colleen Shaw retires, we look back at the incredible progress the charity has made in the last 17 years

Pages 8 & 9

Our fantastic fundraisers

Thank you to the amazing people who have raised money to support our vital work

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Little things making a big difference

How cushions are changing the lives of patients across Northern Ireland



We are delighted that all tea and coffee docks funded by the charity are now open, ensuring patients and visitors can enjoy a complimentary cup of tea as they wait for treatment and appointments.

Every year, our tea and coffee docks provide over 50,000 free cups of tea and coffee. That's enough to fill the SSE Arena in Belfast five times. More importantly, each cup can be a warm welcome for those travelling a long distance and a comforting distraction at what can be a worrying time.

Friends of the Cancer Centre's tea and coffee docks can be found in the Northern Ireland Cancer Centre's radiotherapy department and Bridgewater Suite, as well as the Sperrin Suite at the North West Cancer Centre at Altnagelvin Hospital in Derry/Londonderry.



A warm welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter, which is full of ways in which your friendship and support is making a difference to local people affected by cancer.

In this special edition we are recognising the incredible contribution that our Chief Executive, Colleen Shaw, has made to the charity over the last 17 years. Although Colleen retired in March, her legacy will continue on through the support that the charity provides to hundreds of families every day. You can read more about some of the changes that have taken place under Colleen's leadership and how families have always been at the heart of everything we do. As Colleen embarks on a new chapter, we are delighted to share with you that the charity's new Chief Executive is Ana Wilkinson, who many of you will already know from her previous role as Head of Fundraising with the charity. We look forward to introducing you to Ana in the next edition of our newsletter.

Also in this edition, we are proud to mark an important milestone in the charity's history: 10 years of supporting life-changing and life-saving cancer research in Northern Ireland. Over the last decade, Friends of the Cancer Centre has invested over £3 million into supporting the vital infrastructure needed to carry out clinical trials and we have pledged a further £1,325,001 over the next 3 years. This support is making a real difference and you'll be able to read about just one of the people impacted by our work on pages 4 and 5. Not only that, but you will also be able to read how the smaller projects funded by the charity are making a powerful difference to people's lives.

Everything we do is only made possible thanks to people like you who donate, fundraise and raise awareness of the charity. We have lots of ways for you to get involved in the coming months, including our Route 66 Virtual Challenge, Take on the Tower Abseil and our Slieve Donard Challenge.

Your support and friendship is central to everything we do and on behalf of everyone at Friends of the Cancer Centre and our patients, thank you for being a friend.

Brian Cave

Brian Cave
Chair



A tribute to our friends Maria and Jim

Last year, the charity was deeply saddened by the passing of two dear friends, Dr Maria Moloney and Mr Jim Gamble.

Maria and Jim served as Trustees of the charity for many years and in that time, they both demonstrated a heartfelt commitment to supporting the charity's work. Maria's influence was far reaching, inspiring new volunteer Board members to dedicate themselves to further the charity's work. Jim, a founding member of the Fermanagh Fundraising Group, was a dedicated volunteer who gave so much time to supporting families impacted by cancer in County Fermanagh and across Northern Ireland.

Maria and Jim are greatly missed by everyone at Friends of the Cancer Centre and we hope that their family and friends are comforted by the fact that they both made a lasting difference to the lives of thousands of people.



Professor Suneil Jain, Friends of the Cancer Centre's Consultant Oncologist

Our £4 Million Investment into the Future of Cancer Care

This year marks 10 years since Friends of the Cancer Centre began its investment in locally led cancer research and in that time, the charity has invested nearly £3 million to help find new and improved cancer treatments. Today, a decade on, the charity's funding of vital research continues with £1,325,001 committed over the next three years which will allow clinicians and researchers to continue their vital work.

Through our partnership with the Patrick G Johnston Centre for Cancer Research at Queen's University in Belfast and the Northern Ireland Cancer Trials Network, the charity provides the core funding needed to pay for the staff required to run research studies in Northern Ireland. The charity currently funds 10 members of the research team including research nurses, radiographers and a data manager.

Last year, 90 cancer clinical trials and research studies were available to both adult and paediatric cancer patients in Northern Ireland covering a range of over 20 different cancers. One of the major clinical trials supported by the charity is the SPORT trial, which is led by Friends of the Cancer Centre's Consultant Clinical Oncologist Professor Suneil Jain. The SPORT trial is a study evaluating the use of highly targeted radiotherapy in men with high risk prostate

cancer that has not spread. The trial is the first of its kind in the UK and has shown that men diagnosed with prostate cancer can benefit from radical radiotherapy that delivers advanced treatment called SABR (Stereotactic Ablative Body Radiotherapy) in five hospital visits instead of the typical 20. Results from the trial are incredibly promising, as Professor Jain explains:

"We are very excited by the results of the SPORT trial which have proven that this large reduction in treatments with advanced radiotherapy is feasible in patients with high-risk prostate cancer. Our hope is that in the future all men with high-risk prostate cancer will require only five treatments of radiotherapy with SABR, improving their chances of disease control, whilst minimising the risk of life-altering side effects."

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT OUR INVESTMENT IN LOCAL CANCER RESEARCH ON OUR WEBSITE

One of those benefiting from the charity's investment in research is John Creswell from Coleraine, who was one of the participants in the SPORT trial following his prostate cancer diagnosis in 2018. John explains:

"Like other men before me, I had symptoms long before I went to see my GP, including needing to go to the toilet multiple times throughout the night, straining and stopping mid flow. When I did see my GP, he took a urine and blood sample. A few days later, the doctor advised that the blood test revealed a high PSA, which is a protein produced by normal cells in the prostate and also by prostate cancer cells. Although this is an indicator of prostate cancer, it is not conclusive, so I underwent a physical examination which revealed that my prostate was an irregular shape and enlarged. I needed a biopsy to further diagnose what was going on. My initial biopsy came back clear, however I was told I would be seen again in three months. By the time my review came around, my symptoms had not eased so I was referred for an MRI scan which indicated that there was an area of interest on the prostate. I was then referred for a targeted biopsy. The results confirmed I had cancer.

"When you are sitting in front of a specialist oncology nurse and she says 'you have cancer', it is a real sledgehammer moment."

A million thoughts go through your mind, but I was actually quite calm about it. My intuition was, from day one, that I had cancer. Possibly my career in the Fire Service taught me to be pragmatic, to take it on the chin and deal with it.



John Creswell

"I started hormone treatment at Altnagelvin Hospital and my consultant told me that my treatment would also include 37 sessions of radiotherapy over five and a half weeks. I had been doing some research into treatments available, so I enquired about brachytherapy, which is an internal form of radiotherapy. The consultant advised me that Altnagelvin did not offer that treatment, but I could be referred to the Northern Ireland Cancer Centre in Belfast. It was during my consultation in Belfast that I first learned of the SPORT trial.

"I was really interested in the clinical trial as it would only involve five radiotherapy sessions over five days. One day per week would result in less travelling and I was also of the mind-set that without trials and research things are never going to progress. Fiducial markers (pieces of gold) were injected directly into the prostate and a gel spacer injected into the area between the bowel and prostate, which would protect the bowel from radiation. For me the trial was 100% successful and I had few adverse effects.

"I sincerely hope that the trial will influence how treatment will be carried out in the future. I'm incredibly grateful to all those involved in the trial and to Friends of the Cancer Centre, as their vital work and support is making a difference to so many."

£100 COULD HELP US CONTINUE TO FUND LOCAL RESEARCH WHICH IS HELPING TO FIND NEW AND IMPROVED WAYS TO TREAT CANCER

Thank you for being a friend

Colleen Shaw has been Chief Executive of Friends of the Cancer Centre since 2006 and in that time, she has witnessed the charity grow into one of Northern Ireland's leading cancer charities. Before Colleen stepped down from her role as Chief Executive, she reflected on her time with the charity and the impact its work has had on families across Northern Ireland.



"As my time with Friends of the Cancer Centre comes to an end, I have been reflecting on how far the charity has come and the progress we have made in recent years.

"When I first took up the role as Chief Executive, the charity was called Friends of Montgomery House and based at Belvoir Park Hospital. At the time, the charity was run by a team of dedicated volunteers and had an income of around £100,000, which was an incredible achievement. One of my first milestones was overseeing the charity move to the new Northern Ireland Cancer Centre at Belfast City Hospital in 2007 and rebranding the charity to Friends of the Cancer Centre. Since then, the charity has grown into a professional organisation investing over £1 million a year into local cancer services. More importantly, I've been able to witness the incredible difference the charity makes to thousands of people across Northern Ireland.

"I feel honoured to be part of a charity that has truly made a difference to the lives of thousands of people. I am really proud of every aspect of the charity's work, particularly the staff we fund as I have been able to witness first-hand the difference they make to the patient experience. When the charity funded its first Clinical Nurse Specialist in

2011, I could never have dreamt that today we would now be supporting a team of 50 additional staff including nurses, social workers, radiographers and more.

"The charity's work is powered by the generosity and kindness of the public. Throughout my time with Friends of the Cancer Centre I have always been humbled by the ways in which people support the charity. At times when people are facing incredible challenges and often loss, they find the strength to think of others and give back.

"I would like to give my heartfelt thanks to everyone who has supported the charity over the years and to everyone who continues to fundraise and donate to support our work. Friends of the Cancer Centre will always be a cause very close to my heart and I am extremely proud to have played a role in the charity's work. I know the charity will continue to go from strength to strength and continue to support families when they need it most. As I step down as Chief Executive I look forward to becoming a proud supporter and I hope that you too will continue to support the charity in the years ahead.

"Thank you for being a friend."

Charity milestones



2007

Cancer services and the charity move to the new Northern Ireland Cancer Centre at Belfast City Hospital.



2011

We fund our first specialist cancer nurse, Elaine Shaw. Elaine, who is our Breast Oncology Clinical Nurse Specialist, is still supported by the charity today.



2017

The charity funds the first tea and coffee dock in the Bridgewater Suite to provide patients with free refreshments.



2020

The charity funds Northern Ireland's first and only Secondary Breast Cancer Nurse, Gemma Potter.

1985

Friends of Montgomery House was established when cancer services were based at the old Belvoir Park Hospital in South Belfast.

2008

First major fundraising event-an abseil of the Europa Hotel in Belfast-which launched the charity's new name and vision for the future.



2012

The charity funds its first doctor, Dr Suneil Jain, who specialises in prostate cancer.

2019

Friends of the Cancer Centre reaches an incredible milestone by raising £2 million. A first for the charity.



2022

The charity agrees funding for staff posts in the North West Cancer Centre at Altnagelvin Hospital and Antrim Area Hospital.

Thank You to Our Fantastic Friends

A **BIG** thank you to all our wonderful friends who have been raising money for us over the last six months. We simply could not continue our vital work without you.



Belinda O'Neill



Killinchy Silver Band



Roslea Shamrocks GAA with the Fermanagh Fundraising Group



Drumgooland Parish Church



Paragon Gym



Killough & Ardglass Bowling Club



McDaid Family with Nursing Team



Peter Liddell & friends



Braid Sheddings Sheep Association

VISIT OUR WEBSITE TO FIND OUT HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED



Monkstown Jubilee Centre



Cappagh 350 Masonic Lodge



Ballysillan Community Initiatives



Ian McDonald 'Gig for D.O.'



Molloy Engineering



Lorriane McKinty



J Mcs Journey - Cycle 4 John



Glens Drama Group



Portstewart Golf Club



Dominican College

If you are interested in taking part in your own challenge or holding an event, please contact Sarah, our Community Fundraising Officer, on **028 9069 9393** or **07810 271148** or email sarahwilson@friendsofthecancercentre.com

VISIT OUR WEBSITE TO FIND OUT HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED

"I'd rather be sitting here with 1 testicle than not sitting here at all."



Daniel and his wife Aisleen

On the 15th March 2021, Daniel McDonald should have been celebrating his 34th birthday. Instead, he was given the news that he had testicular cancer. Now 36, Daniel is doing well and is keen to support the charity's Talking Balls campaign in the hope that it will encourage more men across Northern Ireland to start checking their testicles regularly. This is Daniel's story.

"I was diagnosed the very day of my 34th birthday.

"I'm a keen hiker and love to spend time in the Mourne's with friends, family, my wife and my dog. We had been hiking Slieve Doan a few days before my initial diagnosis and on the way down the mountain, I noticed a dull but heavy sensation in my groin. I chalked it up to a pulled muscle and didn't think much of it at the time. As the pain became more acute I could tell it was coming from my right testicle. I thought I had twisted it, or pulled something when hiking, so I had a quick check like I would normally do in the shower or bath. Instantly I could feel two, small, hard, pea sized lumps on the side of my testicle. To touch, it was quite painful and my first thought immediately went to cancer, but I knew I had to see my GP to get it checked out properly.

"I don't remember much about the exact moment of being diagnosed. All I remember was the sonographer, who was carrying out the ultrasound of my testicle, tapping me and saying 'Are you OK? You can sit for a few minutes, this is a lot to take in.'

"When I told my family and friends they were shocked, but also hugely supportive and inquisitive. Particularly my male friends who asked about the symptoms and how the

diagnosis came about. I dare say it encouraged a few to check their own testicles that same day. I made a point of telling everyone I knew of my diagnosis that day. Cancer was not something I was going to hide from the world.

"Whilst I was very public with the news, I was worried about telling my mum. Many years previously, her own mother (my granny) was diagnosed with cancer and it was a very tough time for everyone involved. Thankfully she responded very well, but I had this weight of guilt that I would be throwing my mum back into another cancer battle.

"On 5th April 2021 I underwent surgery to remove my right testicle. Due to discovering the cancer so quickly, I was lucky enough that only one preventative course of chemotherapy would be needed over a three week period.

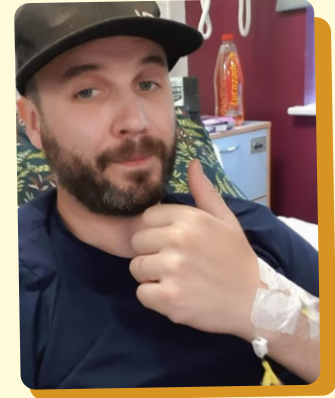
"Treatment was difficult, but throughout it all I was supported by Melanie McNally, Friends of the Cancer Centre's Urology Clinical Nurse Specialist. From my first meeting with Mel I felt like I was in safe and friendly hands. Nothing was sugar coated, but everything was explained in a truthful, respectful and easy to understand manner which really helped us face what was ahead. Mel became a point of contact that I could get in touch with regularly, be it for blood work, or for the odd reassuring

READ MORE ABOUT MEL'S VITAL WORK ON OUR WEBSITE

text when I felt the odd pain here or there after surgery. Mel was there to reassure and help plan out my recovery, both physically and mentally.

"After treatment, I was really keen to show my thanks to Friends of the Cancer Centre and the people who supported me. Prior to my cancer diagnosis, my friend Karen was always highlighting the excellent work of Friends of the Cancer Centre and how people can raise money through events like a Santa Skydive. I had always jokingly threatened to sign up and I guess a few years later, getting cancer finally gave me a proper reason to do it. As well as funding Mel's post, I was able to see first-hand the services, facilities and comfort that the charity offers to patients. I knew this was a perfect opportunity to give back to a charity that would reinvest the funds in vital staff, local research and providing comfort and facilities for patients and families.

"Lads, we spend our lives making fun of and joking about our balls. Don't hide them away when it really matters. Spend a few seconds every time you get into a shower or bath to check them. Any lumps, bumps, pains or aches need to be checked out by a medical professional. Do not be afraid, do not be embarrassed. Being proactive might very well save your life. Chances are, if you find something, it will be nothing serious. But take it from me, I'd rather be sitting here with one testicle than not sitting here at all."



Are you Talking Balls?

We are calling on men across Northern Ireland to start Talking Balls and get checking their testicles every month. Our Talking Balls self-check card has a handy guide on how you can check yourself and you can order yours for free from our website.



We also want to raise awareness of the signs and symptoms of testicular cancer, so here's what to look out for when checking yourself:

- A swelling or lump in one of your testicles
- An increase in the firmness of a testicle
- A difference in appearance between 1 testicle and the other
- A dull ache or sharp pain in your testicles or scrotum, which may come and go
- A feeling of heaviness in your scrotum

If you notice anything unusual for you, make an appointment with your GP and get it checked out.

GET YOUR FREE TALKING BALLS SELF-CHECK CARD AND STRESS BALL FROM OUR WEBSITE NOW



EY Northern Ireland join Team Friends

The support we receive from local businesses is a vital part of the work of the charity. We are incredibly proud to partner with some of the leading businesses in Northern Ireland and we are really grateful that they and their employees choose to raise money and awareness of the charity. This support is vital and we are delighted to introduce one of our new charity partners, EY Northern Ireland.

Friends of the Cancer Centre was voted as EY Northern Ireland's Charity of the Year by employees. EY staff will support the charity over the next 12 months by organising fundraising events and activities. Over the last few months, the teams across the two Belfast offices hosted a Big Pink Bake Sale in aid of Breast Cancer Awareness Month and are getting ready to take part in the Belfast City Marathon.

Lindsay Russell, Partner and CSR lead at EY Northern Ireland, commented:

"As a firm, both locally and globally, we are always looking for ways to support our people, our clients and our communities. I am delighted that we have collectively chosen Friends of the Cancer Centre as our Charity of the Year. It is an incredible organisation that has significantly invested in local cancer services across NI since its establishment. It provides support to staff, patients and their families at a time when they need it most. At EY, we believe in partnering with like-minded organisations who strive to make an impact on our society. We are delighted to be supporting Friends of the Cancer Centre to help fundraise as much as we can for a cause that has such a positive impact on the lives of so many."

How your company can get involved

We are incredibly grateful to the team at EY Northern Ireland for their support. If you would like to find out how your company or colleagues could support Friends of the Cancer Centre, please get in touch with the team by emailing info@friendsofthecancercentre.com



Thank you for being our Forever Friend

Every year, gifts in Wills make an enormous difference to the charity's ability to fund future projects and last year, over £98,000 was received from our Forever Friends.

As a charity, we know that when we receive a gift in a Will, it means that someone has lost a loved one. We would like to take this opportunity to say a special thank you to those families whose loved ones left a gift in their Will to the charity this year. We hope it brings some small comfort to know that every gift makes a lasting difference to local families whose lives have been impacted by a cancer diagnosis.

Gifts in Wills help us



Fund clinical trials and research into new and improved ways to treat cancer.



Fund specialist staff, trained to support patients throughout their cancer journey.



Support patients in a range of practical ways, from cups of tea and coffee to financial grants.

We understand that when making a Will, your family and friends are your first priority. When your loved ones are provided for, perhaps you will consider leaving a gift in your Will to Friends of the Cancer Centre.

No matter how big or small your gift, you will be doing something amazing and helping us fund vital projects, including local cancer research, to help future generations to live healthier, happier, longer lives.

If you would like to find out more about becoming a Forever Friend please visit our website for more information. Here, you will find details of our free online Will making service, as well as information on how leaving a gift in your Will could reduce your inheritance tax bill.

Little things making a big difference

As a charity, we often say small things can make a big difference to the lives of people with cancer. Some of the smaller projects funded by the charity have a real and meaningful impact on people's quality of life, such as the pressure reducing cushions purchased by the charity for the Cancer Centre's occupational therapy department which are making a real difference to the lives of people with rectal cancer.



Patients with rectal cancer often experience significant side effects as a result of their diagnosis and treatment. With the high dosage of radiotherapy delivered and the sensitive areas receiving treatment, patients are prone to bowel and urinary issues, skin reactions and pain. They can experience significant pain on sitting due to tumour and treatment side effects, which can impact on their ability to take part in normal day-to-day activities such as sitting for a meal or travelling in a car. Pain can be so severe that it affects their ability to tolerate and maintain attendance for cancer treatment.

Those patients who experience significant pain on sitting are often referred to the occupational therapy team, who aim to help improve skin integrity, enhance tolerance to disease and treatment, as well as improve patient experience and quality of life. Pressure reducing cushions are an important resource for the team. The cushions are made from high density foam and designed to alleviate pain and discomfort by dispersing pressure when sitting.

Nicola Evans, Lead Advanced Clinical Specialist Occupational Therapist at the Northern Ireland Cancer Centre, said:

"We have trialed a number of cushions to alleviate the symptoms experienced by rectal cancer patients and over the last year, we have had much success in the use of two cushions that are not only preferred by patients, but also demonstrate good economic value. However, these cushions are not available within the community district nursing teams and often patients experience significant delays in receiving one even when they are available. To help bridge this gap, we approached Friends of the Cancer Centre for funding which would allow the occupational therapy department to purchase a number of these cushions so that we could offer them to patients who are struggling with the side effects of their diagnosis and treatment.

"It might look like a simple cushion, but it has a significant impact on a person's quality of life. We have had incredible feedback from our patients, who tell us that they have been able to comfortably sit and watch television for the first time in months. Most importantly, the cushions help us keep the person well and stable enough so that that they can continue with their treatment."

READ MORE ABOUT THE SMALL BUT POWERFUL WAYS YOUR SUPPORT IS MAKING A DIFFERENCE ON OUR WEBSITE



Nicola Evans, Lead Advanced Clinical Specialist Occupational Therapist

Winter Ball raises £94,000 to support local families

On Saturday 12th November 2022, Friends of the Cancer Centre hosted a glittering Winter Ball in Titanic, Belfast to mark 37 years of supporting cancer patients and their families across Northern Ireland. Thanks to the generosity of sponsors and guests, the night raised an incredible £94,000.

Four hundred guests joined in the celebrations and enjoyed a fabulous evening, which featured live performances from Belfast Operatic Company and The Manouche Boys, as well as a raffle, silent auction and exclusive live auction. Thanks to support from Wilsons Auctions, the live auction was streamed online, giving people the opportunity to bid on eleven exclusive lots including an escape to a luxury Tuscan villa, a five-star cruise, a 9ct white gold diamond pendant necklace as well as an exclusive private dining experience with celebrity chef, Suzie Lee.

Brian Beattie, Head of Marketing and GB Sales for Warmflow, who were platinum sponsors of the event, said:

"As a family business, Warmflow has been supporting Friends of the Cancer Centre for many years and we were incredibly proud to be platinum sponsors for the Winter Ball last year. We are delighted that the event raised such a wonderful amount and we know it will make a very big difference to the lives of patients and their families right across Northern Ireland."



ABL Group



John Mulholland Motors



Gala Ball Committee



Ken and Liz Cousins



Stephen Whalley and Dawn Crothers



Applegreen



Julian and Laura Wilson with Oliver Cormican from Warmflow

Thank you to our amazing sponsors

Warmflow | Dr Maria Moloney and Dr Denis Moloney | ABL Group | John Mulholland Motors | Applegreen Northern Ireland | Belfast Harbour | ASM Chartered Accountants | Heron Bros | ASG & Partners

TAKE A LOOK AT MORE PHOTOS FROM THE GLITTERING NIGHT ON OUR WEBSITE

Get involved

We have lots of great fundraising events this year and we would love you to get involved! You can find out more and register to take part on our website.



Take On The Tower Superhero Abseil Saturday 2nd September 2023

Be a superhero for local families impacted by cancer and abseil 190ft down Belfast City Hospital's iconic yellow Tower Block.

Registration is £30 per person with minimum suggested sponsorship of £150

Proudly supported by  **WARMFLOW**



Slieve Donard Challenge Saturday 9th September 2023

Lace up your walking boots and climb 850m to the highest peak in Northern Ireland.

Registration is £20 per person with minimum suggested sponsorship of £75

Proudly supported by  **WARMFLOW**



Belfast Half Marathon Sunday 17th September 2023

Get your trainers on and take on the 13.1 mile challenge across Belfast. Visit our website for details of other runs in your area.



Route 66 Virtual Challenge

Walk, run or cycle one of the most famous roads in the United States from home. Take on the 2,278 mile challenge on your own or with friends and receive virtual postcards along the way. This virtual challenge can be completed at any time of year.

Or, if you would like to hold an event of your own, please get in touch with our fundraising team on **(028) 9069 9393** or by email info@friendsofthecancercentre.com. We would love to hear from you!

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