

# Power of Friends

NEWSLETTER AUTUMN/WINTER 2023



## Our new colleague in the North West

Find out how Stacey's work will impact on radiotherapy treatments at the North West Cancer Centre.



### Page 3

#### Meet our new Chief Executive

Ana Wilkinson shares how your support is helping the charity expand its vital work

### Pages 8 & 9

#### Our fantastic fundraisers

Thank you to the amazing people who have raised money to support local families

### Page 14

#### A helping hand

How our complementary therapy is helping people through their cancer treatment



Friends of the Cancer Centre's Teenage and Young Adult (TYA) Team Laurena Kane, Teenage and Young Adult Social Worker with Rachael Anderson, Teenage and Young Adult Clinical Nurse Specialist.

## Marking special days in special ways for young people with cancer

Friends of the Cancer Centre very proudly supports the Teenage and Young Adult (TYA) team at the Northern Ireland Cancer Centre through our funding of two clinical nurse specialists and a social worker who provide dedicated care for young people.

As well as providing care and support, Rachael and Laurena are there to celebrate special days and milestones. Thanks to your donations, they are able to purchase gifts to mark a young person's 18th or 21st birthday, or a wedding, and all young patients receive a Christmas gift from the TYA team.

Knowing their specialist team is on hand to help them mark special occasions makes a huge difference to young people with cancer and their families.



*A warm welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter, Power of Friends.*

Although this newsletter marks my first as Chief Executive of Friends of the Cancer Centre, I am honoured to know many of you already through my previous roles with the charity. Over the last seven years, I have been privileged to see first-hand the incredible ways your support makes a difference to thousands of local people with cancer, and in my new role this admiration has grown.

In recent months, thanks to your support, Friends of the Cancer Centre has been able to extend our work to support more patients and families than ever before. We are delighted to fund our first members of staff in the North West Cancer Centre at Altnagelvin Hospital. As we welcome Aisling McGarvey, Upper GI Nurse and Stacey Leonard, Research and Development Radiographer, you can read how their roles are making a difference on pages 4 and 5.

On pages 12 and 13, you can read how our support of breast cancer patients continues to grow with our new Breast Cancer Clinical Nurse Specialist. Annette Quinn joins our breast cancer team, which includes our Breast Oncology Clinical Nurse Specialist, Elaine Shaw, and Northern Ireland's only Secondary Breast Cancer Nurse, Gemma Potter.

Our support for vital posts is only made possible thanks to everyone who donates, fundraises and helps us to raise awareness of the charity. There are so many ways you can support the charity in the coming months, including our Festive Fundraising events and our Christmas raffle.

I look forward to getting to know more of you in my new role but for now, I would like to say a heartfelt thank you for your ongoing friendship and support. Everything we do simply would not be possible without you.

Thank you for being a friend.

**Ana Wilkinson**

**Chief Executive**



50

staff funded and supported by the charity, including new staff in the North West Cancer Centre and the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children.



90,000

hours of care and support provided by our funded staff to patients and families when they need it most.



523

financial grants given to families from across Northern Ireland in the last year, totalling £141,625.





## Our new Therapeutic Radiographer at the North West Cancer Centre

At the heart of the charity's work are the staff we fund, as we can see the vital difference they make to patients and families every day. We are incredibly proud to now fund 50 additional staff across cancer services and in recent years we have been determined to expand this area of our work to other cancer units in Northern Ireland.

As the charity has grown, thanks to your support, we have been able to realise this goal and we are delighted to introduce Friends of the Cancer Centre's Research and Development and Clinical Trials Radiographer at the North West Cancer Centre, Stacey Leonard.

Radiotherapy treatments have been delivered at Altnagelvin Hospital since the opening of a state-of-the-art cancer centre in 2016. During this time, the service has had to expand and innovate, offering treatment to a catchment area of over 500,000 patients in the North West and patients from Donegal. With radiotherapy treatments now established for people affected by breast, prostate, bladder, head and neck, rectal and haematological cancers, Stacey's new role will lead the team in the introduction of radiotherapy clinical trials, in on-going modernisation, and in continuing improvements in radiotherapy techniques.

Stacey works with the wider multi-disciplinary team in the radiotherapy department to facilitate advanced, specialised radiotherapy equipment and techniques. Her role is vital in ensuring that all patients have access to best practice for radiotherapy treatments. Stacey will also work to introduce radiotherapy clinical trials at the North West Cancer Centre. This will mean more patients can access the most innovative trials at a facility close to them, rather than having to travel to Belfast or long distances in the Republic of Ireland to avail of these new trials.

Speaking about her new role, Stacey said:

"I am delighted to be Friends of the Cancer Centre's new Research and Development and Clinical Trials Radiographer and thrilled to help increase the reach of the charity's work at the North West Cancer Centre.

"When someone is diagnosed with cancer, it

can be a really frightening and unsettling time for them and their family. It will be reassuring for them to know that in my role, I am working to ensure that best practice is followed in the radiotherapy department and that they will have access to the most innovative radiotherapy treatments and techniques possible.

"My role will ensure that the department stays at the forefront of modernisation in radiotherapy, providing a vital service to patients in the North West. This means they can avoid long hours travelling to and from the Cancer Centre in Belfast, or further distances for patients from Donegal, for their radiotherapy treatment.

Speaking about Stacey's new role, Pat Shiels, Service Manager for Radiotherapy at the North West Cancer Centre, said:

"We are delighted to have Stacey in post, helping the wider radiotherapy team to deliver on developments in radiotherapy treatment. Many patients present with complex and advanced cancers, meaning the treatment pathway can be intense and complicated. The expansion of our team to include Stacey's role as Research and Development and Clinical Trials Radiographer equips us to deliver the



Pat Shiels, Service Manager for Radiotherapy; Ana Wilkinson, Chief Executive of Friends of the Cancer Centre; Stacey Leonard, Friends of the Cancer Centre's Research and Development Radiographer and Malcolm Wilkinson, Lead Clinical Specialist Radiographer.

most innovative treatments, to carefully and successfully integrate new trials into the department and offer an enhanced patient experience in the North West.

"It is fantastic to now have our first staff member funded by the charity at the North West Cancer Centre and we look forward to what Stacey will achieve in this role. It is a great addition to the wide range of patient focused projects that Friends of the Cancer Centre support across Northern Ireland."



Aisling McGarvey, Friends of the Cancer Centre's Upper GI Nurse

## Meet Aisling

In addition to funding Stacey's role, we are also delighted to fund a new Upper GI Nurse at the North West Cancer Centre. Aisling McGarvey is the first nurse funded by the charity to support Upper GI (gastro-intestinal) cancers, which can include cancers of the oesophagus, stomach, duodenum, liver, pancreas, ampulla, gall bladder and bile duct. Aisling will often be the first point of contact for people affected by Upper GI cancers, supporting them throughout their treatment and beyond.

Find out more about how Aisling will be supporting patients with gastro-intestinal cancers in the next edition of our newsletter.

## Meet the Board

Our Trustee Board play a key role in the strategic vision of the charity, making the decisions on where the vital funds raised by our wonderful supporters will be spent.

We know how important it is that the work of the charity puts the money you have raised to the best possible use. That's why our Trustee Board is drawn from professionals in all walks of life, ensuring there is a range of expertise and knowledge in order to make these important decisions.



### Richard Donnan

Former Regional Managing Director, Corporate and Commercial Northern Ireland and Head of Northern Ireland Ulster Bank.

"I am honoured to be a Trustee and I hope that my knowledge and experience positively contributes to the charity's projects. Throughout my career I have always believed that it is important to give back and contribute to charitable causes that help people across Northern Ireland. I am delighted that my involvement with Friends of the Cancer Centre will ensure that ethos continues.

"Like so many others, I also have personal motivation as I sadly lost both of my parents to cancer. This has made me even more motivated to contribute to the vital work of the charity and the positive impact its work is making to people at a particularly vulnerable time in their lives."



### Dr Paula Scullin

Consultant Oncologist and Deputy Medical Director for Belfast Health & Social Care Trust.

"I am proud to have served on the board of the charity for seven years and to see first-hand the difference the charity's work makes to not only my own patients, but all those impacted by cancer locally.

"As my tenure as Trustee comes to an end, I have been able to reflect on my time with the charity and how it is now an integral part of cancer services in Northern Ireland. It has been an honour to play a small role in this and I would like to thank everyone who supports this great cause. The charity has come a long way in recent years and with your continued support I know we can continue to offer the very best treatment, care and surroundings for our patients."

## Working together to support people with cancer

The support we receive from local businesses is a vital part of the work of the charity. In the last year, corporate donations and colleague fundraising raised £246,942.

We are incredibly grateful to those businesses who have helped raise vital funds and awareness as our charity partner. If you would like to follow in their footsteps, the great news is there are lots of ways your place of work can get involved.



Become our charity partner like Allen & Overy, Belfast.



Organise a fundraising challenge like the team from Applegreen, who climbed Cullcagh Mountain in Fermanagh.



Support our cancer awareness campaigns, like John Mulholland Motors.



## Want to get involved? We would love to hear from you.

If you would like to find out how your company or colleagues could support Friends of the Cancer Centre, you can get in touch with our new Corporate and Events Fundraising Officer, Ciara Bainbridge.

We are delighted to welcome Ciara to the team and she will be working closely with our Fundraising Manager to foster relationships with local businesses. This includes supporting them to build awareness of the charity amongst their employees and undertake fundraising events to support our vital work.

Ciara's role also includes running the charity's headline events, such as the Take on the Tower Abseil and Slieve Donard Challenge, as well as supporting people taking part in the Belfast City Marathon and Half Marathon and our Route 66 Challenge. Ciara said:

"I am delighted to have joined the team at Friends of the Cancer Centre. It is fantastic to see partnerships already established with so many fantastic companies across Northern Ireland, helping us to raise vital awareness and funds. I will be working to enhance these partnerships and foster ones with new companies, working to achieve the best for your business and the charity."

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO GET INVOLVED, PLEASE GET IN TOUCH WITH CIARA BY EMAILING [CIARA@FRIENDSOFTHECANCERCENTRE.COM](mailto:CIARA@FRIENDSOFTHECANCERCENTRE.COM) OR CALL US ON 028 9069 9393.



# Thank You to Our Fantastic Friends

A **HUGE** thank you to all our wonderful friends who have been raising money for us over the last six months. So far this year, 115 individuals and groups have raised an **incredible £209,274** for the charity. Every penny you raise makes a real difference and we simply could not continue our vital work without you.



The Carrigart Camino, the Burns Family



Alison Norney, South Belfast Open Championships



The Dwayne Bratton Memorial Cruise, Fermanagh



The Capri Club, Northern Ireland



Michelle & JP O'Hagan



Rasharkin GB



Barrel & Bean supporting our Dromore Fundraising Group



Chris Agnew, Mo's for Bros.



Castle Park Walk, Bangor organised by our North Down Fundraising Group



Anna Hughes' Family



Curragh Young Farmers Club



Remembering Patricia Turley



Dundonald Football Club



Minto Miniss Memory Walk, Dromore



Ice Legends Sarah Mahood and Katie Tener



Vincent Corrigan, Enniskillen Golf Club



Seamus Scullion and Charlies, Ballymena



Sharon Morrison, Charity Champion at Tesco Lisburn Road with Debi Mitchell, Friends of the Cancer Centre volunteer

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**





## Patrick goes the extra mile

We are always incredibly humbled by the extraordinary things people do to raise money for the charity, often in the face of their own challenges. People like Patrick Grant from Dromore, who recently undertook a mammoth challenge that saw him cycle a 3,000km lap of Ireland and climb three of Ireland's highest mountain peaks in just three weeks.

Patrick, 31, set out on his epic 333 Challenge from the Northern Ireland Cancer Centre at Belfast City Hospital, before making his way along the North Coast to kick off his cycle around the entire coastline of Ireland. Along the way he stopped to hike Croke Patrick in County Mayo, Carrauntoohil in County Kerry and Slieve Donard in County Down, the highest peak in the Mourne Mountains. To date, Patrick has raised a phenomenal £31,000 for the charity.

Patrick had very personal motivation for taking on the challenge, following his own cancer diagnosis last year. Patrick says:

"In November 2022, I was diagnosed with grade 3 glioma, which is a type of brain cancer. The diagnosis came as a complete shock and the last few months have been a whirlwind. From the birth of our daughter just weeks prior to my diagnosis, to losing my job, hospital appointments, surgery, radiotherapy and chemotherapy. Initially, I felt hopelessly lost.

"Thankfully I had the full love and support of my family and friends and I could not have managed without them. My journey has made me realise the devastating impact cancer can have on people and their families. Not only physically but mentally, financially and socially too. Thankfully Friends of the Cancer Centre is here to support people like me through it all. They provided a wealth of information and services and were able to point me in the right direction when I needed it most.

"When I was in receiving radiotherapy, Friends of the Cancer Centre funded some of the nursing staff, the Physical Activity Coach, speech and language services and they couldn't do enough for me. Even when times got tough financially, they were able to offer me a grant. The charity also does a lot of work behind the scenes like supporting research and they are very far-reaching in their support.

"Despite going through some really difficult times and quite intensive treatment, I was



Patrick setting off from the Cancer Centre.

determined that something good would come from it all. I decided to take on a challenge that would give me something positive to work towards, as well as help raise money for Friends of the Cancer Centre as a cause very close to my heart. Even though I am still receiving treatment and had chemotherapy the day before setting off on my challenge, I was determined to go ahead.

"The challenge was a little more difficult than I expected. Unfortunately the weather was against me the whole way, with relentless wind and rain making progress difficult. However, I was lucky to have support along the way with friends and family joining me for different stages of the challenge. When I reached Slieve Donard on the second last day of the challenge, I was surprised by a welcome party of family and friends and unbelievably, 75 of them joined me as I climbed to the summit. This final boost really spurred me on and gave me the motivation I needed to cross the finish line at the Cancer Centre. At the end of the three weeks, I had cycled nearly 3,000km and scaled a total of 27,800 ft.

"When I was planning the challenge, I set out to raise £10,000 and I was a little worried that I might not reach that target. However, as time went on each new fundraising target I set was met by the incredible generosity of my family and friends. To say I have been blown away by the final total, which is now £31,000, would be an understatement. I'm honoured and very humbled that people could be so generous with their time and their money.

"Most importantly, I'm delighted that this will go on to support the vital work of Friends of the Cancer Centre and make a difference to someone like me who needs a helping hand through their diagnosis and treatment. I also hope that by sharing my story, I might be able to give a little hope to someone living with cancer and show that despite the challenges we face, there is still so much that we can achieve."



Patrick with daughter Iris.

If you have been inspired by Patrick and would like to take on your own challenge for the charity, we would love to hear from you.

Email us [info@friendsofthecancercentre.com](mailto:info@friendsofthecancercentre.com) or call the team on 028 9069 9393.

## Supporting breast cancer patients

Every year in Northern Ireland, over 1,400 people are diagnosed with breast cancer. As a charity we have been dedicated to supporting those impacted by a breast cancer diagnosis for over a decade and are incredibly proud to now fund and support three specialist breast cancer nurses.

This vital area of our work started in 2011, when Friends of the Cancer Centre funded our very first nurse. Elaine Shaw joined our team as Breast Oncology Clinical Nurse Specialist and since then, she has supported over 400 patients every year. In 2019, we were proud to expand our support for people with breast cancer by funding Northern Ireland's only Secondary Breast Cancer Nurse, Gemma Potter. This year, we are incredibly proud that the charity's support for breast cancer care has increased further with the addition of Annette Quinn, Breast Cancer Clinical Nurse Specialist, to our funded staff team.

For patients receiving chemotherapy as part of their treatment plan, or for those who have been diagnosed with secondary breast cancer, many will be cared for by the team supported by Friends of the Cancer Centre. Working closely with Elaine and Gemma, Annette will act as a key worker for breast cancer patients, helping to guide them through their treatment pathway.



## Meet Annette

### Breast Cancer Clinical Nurse Specialist

"I am delighted to have started in post as Friends of the Cancer Centre's Breast Cancer Clinical Nurse Specialist.

"We know that a cancer diagnosis can have a huge impact on patients, their carers and families. The diagnosis itself, anxieties about treatment, and potential side effects can all lead to this being a very worrying time. Thanks to the support of Friends of the Cancer Centre, I am on hand to be by a patient's side from diagnosis, through treatment and beyond.

"As a former Deputy Sister in the Bridgewater Suite, I have worked closely with patients attending the hospital for chemotherapy treatment and understand the vital impact a specialist nurse can have on them and their family."



## Be your own Breast Bud

Checking your breasts and chest is a quick and proactive step you can take to be more cancer aware.

We are calling on everyone across Northern Ireland to be their own Breast Bud and get into the habit of checking your breasts and chest once a month. Our Breast Bud self-check hanger is on hand to help, with a simple step-by-step guide on how to carry out a monthly check. It also includes details of what you need to look out for.

Get your **FREE Breast Bud self-check hanger** from our website now [www.friendsofthecancercentre.com](http://www.friendsofthecancercentre.com)

If your workplace, school or community group would like to get involved with our Breast Bud campaign, additional information and resources are available from our website or by contacting [lauren@friendsofthecancercentre.com](mailto:lauren@friendsofthecancercentre.com)







*"The complementary therapy treatments are a godsend"*

As a charity we understand that a cancer diagnosis and treatment can have an impact on many aspects of your life, including coping with challenging physical side effects and your emotional wellbeing. To help, the charity proudly funds the complementary therapy service at the Macmillan Support and Information Centre in Belfast by funding four therapists and the oils used in treatments.

When Patricia Stacey, 56, from Newtownards was diagnosed with acute myeloid leukaemia in February 2023, she benefitted from reflexology treatments whilst staying as an inpatient on Ward 10 North, Belfast City Hospital.

Talking about the benefits of her reflexology treatments, Patricia said:

"Complementary therapists Jacqueline and Julia came to visit me at my bedside in Ward 10 North and I really enjoyed my reflexology treatments. Being on the ward for weeks at a time due to my cancer treatment, it was really lovely to have something to look forward to.

"The treatments made me feel so relaxed and the therapists were happy to chat with me whilst I was having my treatment. They gave me some tips on dealing with side effects of treatment, how I can help myself and they just made me feel so much better. They also gave me an aroma stick and a moisturiser to keep, which both smell divine.

"The complementary therapy treatments are a godsend to hospital inpatients. The therapists are so good at what they do and so friendly.

"Thank you to Friends of the Cancer Centre for supporting this vital service. I am delighted that my son took part in the charity's Slieve Donard Challenge in September to give back to the charity who have supported me so well."

If you are receiving treatment at the Northern Ireland Cancer Centre, Belfast City Hospital or Royal Victoria Hospital, you can avail of the complementary therapies including adapted massage, reflexology and aromatherapy treatments. To find out more, please contact the Belfast Trust Cancer Support Service on 028 9615 0077. Alternatively you can register using the QR code to the right. Just scan with the camera on your phone and follow the steps on screen.



Scan me

# Festive Fundraising

Help us support local families this Christmas by getting involved in our Festive Fundraising activities.

You can get involved in lots of ways including taking part in a Wear Something Festive Day, supporting our Wish Upon a Star Appeal or purchasing our Christmas cards and virtual gifts.

Planning a Festive Fundraising event of your own? Get in touch with our fundraising team today to help plan your event.

Call 028 9069 9393 or email [info@friendsofthecancercentre.com](mailto:info@friendsofthecancercentre.com)





# WIN A WEEKEND IN MAJORCA

## HELP US RAISE £10,000 TO SUPPORT LOCAL FAMILIES

Our exciting Christmas Raffle gives you the chance to **WIN** some fabulous prizes while supporting the charity's vital work.

### **1st Prize**

Weekend break for 2 in the beautiful city of Palma, Majorca.

Kindly supported by Oasis Travel.

*\*Please visit our website for full terms and conditions*

### **2nd Prize**

Overnight stay for 2  
at the 4\* Ten Square  
Hotel, Belfast

### **3rd Prize**

Overnight stay for  
2 at the Ballymac  
Hotel, Lisburn

### **4th Prize**

£100 voucher  
for the Bull &  
Claw Restaurant,  
Donaghadee



Tickets cost £1 each. Please return your tickets in the freepost envelope provided and make cheques payable to 'Friends of the Cancer Centre'. We can also take card payments by telephone on (028) 9069 9393, or you can enter online by visiting our website. Please call our office if you require additional tickets or if you could help by selling them to your family and friends. Raffle draw takes place on Wednesday 13th December 2023.

Legal information: Each raffle entry is £1. The raffle will be drawn on Wednesday 13th December 2023 at 4pm. You must be 16 years or over to purchase or sell a raffle ticket. Underage gambling is an offence. Licensed and regulated by Belfast City Council. Website: [www.belfastcity.gov.uk](http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk). Promoter: Ana Wilkinson, Friends of the Cancer Centre, Northern Ireland Cancer Centre, Lisburn Road, Belfast BT9 7AB. Registered charity no. NIC101345. Full Terms & Conditions can be obtained from the Promoter at the charity address above.

Friends of the Cancer Centre, NI Cancer Centre, Belfast City Hospital, Lisburn Road, BT9 7AB  
T: 028 9069 9393 E: [info@friendsofthecancercentre.com](mailto:info@friendsofthecancercentre.com) W: [www.friendsofthecancercentre.com](http://www.friendsofthecancercentre.com)

Friends of the Cancer Centre is a registered company limited by guarantee in Northern Ireland. Company number NI616925.  
Registered with The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland NIC101345.

