

Power of Friends

NEWSLETTER SPRING/SUMMER 2024

Friends of
the
cancer centre



YEARS
of care and support

A new service for head and neck cancer patients

How our new funded
member of staff is
supporting patients at
Antrim Area Hospital



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A helping hand

How our financial grants
can help people through a
difficult time

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Our fantastic fundraisers

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

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A spotlight on nuclear medicine

Find out about the vital
role nuclear medicine plays
in cancer diagnosis and
treatment



Sharon Morrison from Belfast, who benefited from Friends of the Cancer Centre's financial support during her treatment for breast cancer.

Worried about money?

Cancer can have a significant impact on many aspects of a person's life, including their financial security. At a time when people should be focused on getting through treatment and getting well, many are worried about money. That's why every year, Friends of the Cancer Centre provides £145,000 in financial grants to people across Northern Ireland who are attending the Northern Ireland Cancer Centre in Belfast or the North West Cancer Centre in Derry/Londonderry for treatment.

This can help with:

Heating costs | Travel costs to and from hospital | Household bills

How to access financial support:

- Financial support is available to cancer patients currently undergoing treatment who are attending the Northern Ireland Cancer Centre in Belfast or the North West Cancer Centre in Derry/Londonderry
- Grants are not means tested, but are administered through the social work teams at both hospitals
- If you would like to avail of a grant, please ask your treatment team to refer you to the hospital's social work department. A social worker will then be assigned to you and they will be on hand to advise on the charity's grants, as well as other support which might be beneficial
- The social worker will then apply for a grant on your behalf



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

In our first newsletter of 2024, I want to start by saying a really big thank you to everyone who supports the charity. Everything we do relies on you and last year, Friends of the Cancer Centre invested over £1.14 million into local cancer services to support patients and their families when they need it most. This has allowed us to fund a range of projects, including staff, research, financial grants and much, much more.

As well as enabling us to continue to fund our extensive work, your support has allowed the charity to move forward and extend our reach to other cancer units and health trusts. In this edition of the newsletter, I'm delighted to introduce you to one of the latest members of staff funded by the charity, Soraya. Soraya is the new Head and Neck Cancer Clinical Nurse Specialist at Antrim Area Hospital. By funding Soraya's post, the charity has helped establish a new head and neck cancer service in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust, allowing people to access vital support closer to home. You can find out more about the difference Soraya is making on pages four and five. In this edition, you can also find out how we are supporting the nuclear medicine team and the vital role volunteers play in the day-to-day life of the charity.

At this time of year we are also looking ahead to a host of amazing fundraising events which you can get involved in. Check out the back page to find out how you can take part in our Take on the Tower Abseil, Slieve Donard Challenge and more. We are also giving you the chance to win some amazing prizes in our online raffle, so head to page 15 to find out how to enter.

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

Ana Wilkinson

Chief Executive

Your support in action

In addition to funding Soraya's vital work, the charity has also recently funded a number of new staff, including:



A new Clinical Nurse Specialist for cancers of unknown primary.



A second Physical Activity Coach



A Research Nurse at the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children



"I'm proud to be here for head and neck cancer patients"

At the heart of everything we do are the staff we fund and we can see the impact they have on local people affected by cancer every day. The charity very proudly supports a team of 51 additional staff members throughout cancer services in the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust and the Western Health and Social Care Trust. Thanks to your support, the charity has recently been able to extend its support to the Northern Health and Social Care Trust, by funding its first and only Clinical Nurse Specialist for Head and Neck Cancer patients. This funding has enabled the trust to provide a new patient service to those with head and neck cancer, allowing people with this complex diagnosis to receive care close to their home.

Soraya Manoucheri, who is based at Antrim Area Hospital, provides dedicated care and support for those with this complex group of cancers, including thyroid cancer and disease of the mouth, throat, voice box and nose. In Northern Ireland, there are over 300 cases of head and neck cancer each year, with 81 of those diagnosed in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust. Prior to Friends of the Cancer Centre funding this new post, patients would not have received the support of a clinical nurse specialist until they went to Belfast for treatment. Thanks to the charity's funding, Soraya's role will be based at Antrim Area Hospital, which will enhance the care experience patients have and provide access to specialist

nursing support in their local trust and closer to home.

Soraya joins a team of 22 specialist nurses supported by Friends of the Cancer Centre who provide vital care across 16 different cancer sites. Talking about the difference her post will make, Soraya explained:

"I am incredibly proud to be appointed Clinical Nurse Specialist for Head & Neck Cancer and my role will focus on supporting patients from the time they are diagnosed, through their treatment and into their recovery.

"An important part of my role will be to act as a key link between the different hospitals

and teams involved in a patient's care. We understand that this can be a very apprehensive time for those affected by head and neck cancer and their loved ones. By guiding them through it, I hope to alleviate some of that stress and anxiety. For example, for those head and neck cancer patients who require further surgery or oncology treatment, I will help prepare them for this by coordinating with the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust and the Western Health and Social Care Trust. I will also provide support post-treatment when a patient returns to the Northern Health and Social Care Trust. This is really significant as it means a patient has continuity of care across different hospitals, which can really help alleviate some of their worry.

"Head and neck cancers can be complex and treatment can have many challenging side effects which can impact on quality of life, cause distress and affect recovery. My role will also be really beneficial in supporting patients, by being on hand as their key worker and as a point of contact for them to ask questions about their treatment and wellbeing. I will also be able to refer and signpost to services which will help them navigate these challenges.

"This is a brand new role and with it comes many opportunities to enhance the care offered to people affected by head and neck cancers. I would like to thank everyone who supports Friends of the Cancer Centre as your donations and fundraising have helped make this role possible."



Ana Wilkinson, Chief Executive of Friends of the Cancer Centre and Soraya Manoucheri, Head & Neck Cancer Clinical Nurse Specialist

Commenting on Friends of the Cancer Centre's investment in Soraya's new role, Dora O'Loan, Clinical Services Manager for Cancer Services in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust, said:

"We are very grateful to Friends of the Cancer Centre for funding this brand new post, as we know it will make a real difference to those affected by head and neck cancer. We are delighted that Soraya's role is the first funded by the charity in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust, expanding the reach of the charity's work in patient care.

"We know that this role will have a hugely positive impact on this patient group, who often need additional support given the complex nature of their diagnosis. This new role will provide them with continuity of care at all stages of their diagnosis, treatment and into survivorship. Soraya will make a real difference to her patients and we look forward to seeing how the role develops and progresses."

Friends Together Project

Could you play a vital role in supporting people with cancer in Northern Ireland?

We are calling on companies, groups and individuals to join our Friends Together project and help raise £100,000 to fund vital nursing hours provided by the charity's team of 22 specialist nurses.

Working together, Friends of the Cancer Centre's nurses, alongside the 29 additional members of staff funded by the charity, provide 100,000 hours of care for local people, every year.

Here are just some of the ways our team work together to support patients from diagnosis, through treatment and recovery, into life after cancer.



Our specialist nurses are a vital source of support, overseeing medical treatment, as well as supporting emotional and psychological health



Coping with cancer can be difficult. That's why our complementary therapists can help alleviate stress through massage, reflexology and aromatherapy.



Getting back on your feet through physical activity can be really beneficial and our Physical Activity Coach can help support patients before, during and after their treatment.

You can support this amazing work by being part of the cancer journey for thousands of local people.

People like Alastair Mackay, who is living with kidney cancer and is supported by Melanie McNally, Friends of the Cancer Centre's Urology Clinical Nurse Specialist.



“ There is a long list of people whom I need to thank, but outstanding amongst them is Mel McNally, Friends of the Cancer Centre's Urology Clinical Nurse Specialist. She coordinates all my care, has encouraged me through darker days and laughed with me through brighter ones. ”

By joining together, your support will go further

It costs just £25 to provide one hour of nursing care from one of the 22 specialist nurses funded by Friends of the Cancer Centre.

So we are calling on local companies and groups to pledge their support and each fund a minimum of 40 hours of vital nursing care. Thanks to the generosity of local charitable trusts, we are able to offer matched funding for the first 30 gifts of £1,000, making your donations go even further together.

How to get involved

If you would like to find out more or join Friends of the Cancer Centre's Friends Together project, please contact:

 Ana Wilkinson

 together@friendsofthecancercentre.com

 07775688291



Thank You to Our Fantastic Friends

A **HUGE** thank you to all our wonderful friends who have been busy fundraising. Our heartfelt thanks to everyone who has supported the charity over the last six months.



The Allen Family, at the North West Cancer Centre



Paul & Stephen Lennon, who completed the Camino de Santiago



Spa Accordion Band



Michael Doran, Armagh



Enniskillen Airport with Fermanagh Fundraising Group



Ruth Dickson who held a Cuppa With Friends



International Hospitality at Ulster University who held a comedy night



Garvagh Clydesdale & Vintage Vehicles Club



Anita McCanny who took part in the Dublin Marathon

VISIT OUR WEBSITE TO FIND OUT HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED



The Maghera Inn, Newcastle.
Photo courtesy of The Mourne Observer



Leslie Lewis, Doagh



Alpha Gym with our Dromore Fundraising Group



Our North Down & Ards Fundraising Group at a recent street collection



St Mary's Christian Brothers School, Belfast



The McCloy Family, Ballymoney



Lagan Valley Cycle Club



Garrison Quiz Night with our Fermanagh Fundraising Group



Danny Magee who took part in The Four Musketeers Cycle Challenge around Ireland



Catherine Dynes who took part in our skydive



Jean & Owen Caulfield from Castlerock, who raised money for the charity instead of receiving gifts to mark their diamond wedding anniversary

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



Mark with his family.

"I would encourage all men to check themselves regularly."

In 2019, 40 year old Mark Black from Ahoghill was diagnosed with testicular cancer. Mark has been under the care of Friends of the Cancer Centre's Urology Clinical Nurse Specialist, who has supported him since his diagnosis. Today, Mark is doing well and he has joined forces with the charity's Talking Balls campaign, which is encouraging men across Northern Ireland to check their testicles regularly.

Looking back at his diagnosis, Mark said:

"I had pain in my testicle for some time, but like many of us do, I kept putting off going to the doctor. Eventually the pain became so bad and my testicle had swollen so much, that I was starting to find work difficult. I did eventually go to my GP and they referred me straight to A&E at Antrim Area Hospital. I was diagnosed the next day with testicular cancer.

"I had surgery soon after and thankfully this was sufficient treatment, so I did not have to have radiotherapy or chemotherapy. I am under the care of Dr Oladipo and Dr Carsar at the Northern Ireland Cancer Centre, who are looking after me really well. Mel, my

specialist nurse, is also on hand should I have any questions or queries, and that has been so reassuring at times when I've been worried. I have check-ups every month to ensure that everything is still ok following my surgery."

Mel McNally, Friends of the Cancer Centre's Urology Clinical Nurse Specialist, supports men diagnosed with testicular cancer and their loved ones. Recognising that for many of her patients a cancer diagnosis might be difficult to come to terms with, Mel is on hand to guide them through their treatment and beyond. Mel provides psychosocial support, helping them to cope with treatment, any side effects and other financial, social or emotional difficulties they might face.

READ MORE ABOUT MEL'S VITAL WORK ON OUR WEBSITE

Speaking about how Mel supported him, Mark said:

"The support that Friends of the Cancer Centre provides for posts like Mel's is absolutely vital for those affected by cancer in Northern Ireland. Having a knowledgeable voice at the end of the phone or an email, who can reassure, even when you feel like you might be asking a silly question, is such wonderful support to have. Mel's care and guidance has been so important during my experience of cancer treatment.

"I love to play golf in my spare time, and once I felt well enough, I was determined that I would help raise awareness and funds for Friends of the Cancer Centre to support posts like Mel's. Earlier this year, along with three friends, I completed a 72 hole golf challenge, four rounds in one day, raising £1,660 for the charity. I am delighted that the money we have raised will go towards supporting people when they need it most, just as Mel has done for me. I saw this as a way to give back to the staff who have supported me so well, through doing something I really enjoy. We are hoping to make this a yearly challenge to support the charity, and hopefully it will be even bigger and better next year!



Mel McNally, Friends of the Cancer Centre's Urology Clinical Nurse Specialist

"It is thanks to the wonderful care I received that I am able to enjoy playing golf. I would encourage all men to check themselves regularly, to get to know what is normal for you, pick up quickly on any changes, and get the care you need if you find anything you're worried about. Don't leave it too late, there is fantastic care and support available if you need it."

Are you Talking Balls?

Ahead of Testicular Cancer Awareness Month in April, Friends of the Cancer Centre is renewing its call for men across Northern Ireland to start Talking Balls.



Mark & Peter supporting Talking Balls

The charity has expanded our Talking Balls campaign over recent years, helping more men across Northern Ireland be testicular cancer aware by carrying out a monthly self-check. The charity's self-check card has a step by step guide on how to carry out the check, and what you need to look out for. You can get your hands on a free self-check card and stress ball by visiting www.friendsofthecancercentre.com/talking-balls

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

Meet the Board

Volunteers make a fantastic contribution to Friends of the Cancer Centre, and we are incredibly grateful to each and every one of you who volunteer your time to help make a difference to local families.

The charity's Board of Trustees are all volunteers and their role is helping ensure that the charity's governance is of the highest level. This means there is clear oversight to ensure your donation is used in the best way possible to help people with cancer across Northern Ireland. We're delighted to introduce you to some of the newest members of the Board.



Professor Mark Durkin

Executive Dean of the Faculty of Business and Law at The Open University

"I'm delighted to join Friends of the Cancer Centre as a Trustee. The charity has become an integral part of cancer services in Northern Ireland and this is only made possible thanks to the support of the local community. I would like to thank everyone who supports this great cause and I'm looking forward to working with my fellow board members, and the charity's internal staff, to share my experience so that we can continue to raise awareness and support families when they need it most."



John Cubitt

Senior Investment Director at the Belfast Office of Rathbones Group

"I am delighted to have been invited to be a Trustee of Friends of the Cancer Centre and support the vital work it does. Having survived non-Hodgkin lymphoma and a bone marrow transplant over 20 years' ago, I know from first-hand experience the fantastic work the organisation does on a daily basis. In my day-to-day role I have over twenty-five years of experience in wealth management and as Rathbones' Head of Charities for Belfast, I have a particular interest in the charitable sector. I hope that my knowledge in this area will be of benefit to Friends of the Cancer Centre and the many people it supports."

Thank you to our amazing volunteers

Volunteers are vital to the work of the charity and we could not do what we do, without their support.

Our volunteers include our Ambassadors, who help promote our cancer awareness campaigns; office volunteers, who help with administrative support and our fabulous fundraising groups in North Down, Dromore and Fermanagh who highlight the charity's work locally as well as letting families know how to access support when they need it. If you would like to volunteer for the charity we would love to hear from you.

Get in touch with Sarah sarahwilson@friendsofthecancercentre.com or call 028 9069 9393.

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT OUR VOLUNTEERS AND THE VITAL ROLE THEY PLAY ON OUR SOCIAL MEDIA PAGES THIS VOLUNTEERS' WEEK 1ST - 7TH JUNE 2024

Vital support for people with blood cancer

Every year in Northern Ireland, over 800 people are diagnosed with a form of blood cancer.

Blood cancers develop in cells in the blood, which can affect the production of these cells and also how they work. There are three main groupings of blood cancer - leukaemia, lymphoma and myeloma. Each of these groups contain different types of cancer. To support those with blood cancer, Friends of the Cancer Centre is very proud to fund and support a Leukaemia Nurse Specialist, a Lymphoma Nurse Specialist and an Advanced Nurse Practitioner for Haematology. These vital nurses provide care and support to patients through the many different aspects of a blood cancer diagnosis and treatment.



Laura Croan

Advanced Nurse Practitioner for Haematology

Laura provides specialist care for haematology patients at Belfast City Hospital's Bridgewater Suite. Laura's role allows her to carry out many of the same tasks as a doctor including prescribing chemotherapy, performing bone marrow biopsies and reviewing haematology patients across all disease groups.



Lorraine McKenna

Leukaemia Nurse Specialist

Lorraine acts as a key worker for leukaemia patients, providing ongoing contact and continuity of care throughout diagnosis, treatment and post-treatment. Lorraine carries out clinics in the Bridgewater Suite and cares for inpatients on Ward 10 North at Belfast City Hospital.



Andrea Patterson

Lymphoma Nurse Specialist

Andrea provides care and support for outpatients and inpatients who are receiving treatment on the haematology wards at Belfast City Hospital. She acts as a lynchpin between the various teams involved in a patient's care, as well as being a regular point of contact patients can access with questions or worries about their treatment.

Show your support this World Blood Donor Day

14th June is World Blood Donor Day and we are calling on you to support cancer care in Northern Ireland by attending a blood donation session. Many people with blood cancer will need a blood or platelet transfusion as part of their treatment, and they rely on the public donating to make this possible. Our friends at the Northern Ireland Blood Transfusion Service will be happy to welcome you to donate at either their headquarters at Belfast City Hospital or at mobile sites across Northern Ireland.

Visit www.nibts.hscni.net for more information.

Stem cell transplants are also a vital part of many people's treatment pathway. A stem cell or bone marrow transplant replaces damaged blood cells with healthy ones. This is where you can make a difference. Check if you are able to join a stem cell register and potentially become a suitable donor for someone in need of a stem cell transplant at www.anthonynolan.org or www.dkms.org.uk



Spotlight On: Nuclear Medicine

Nuclear medicine might sound quite frightening, but it plays a vital role in the diagnosis and treatment of many different types of cancer.



Ana Wilkinson, Chief Executive of Friends of the Cancer Centre, with Leanne Martin & Mariana Pinto

Nuclear medicine scans can help doctors detect cancer or see how a patient is responding to treatment. To do this, a patient will be injected with radiopharmaceuticals, also known as radioactive tracers, and then scanned to show how various parts of the body are working.

For the team in the nuclear medicine department, one of their key priorities is to help patients feel more relaxed when they are in the department.

Leanne Martin, Chief Clinical Technologist at the Northern Ireland Cancer Centre, explains:

"We understand that many patients will be anxious if they need to attend the nuclear medicine department for treatment.

"Thanks to funding from Friends of the Cancer Centre, we have been able to refurbish our waiting area to offer people comfortable seating and some calming wall art.

"This has made the area a more comfortable environment for patients and families to wait on their procedure."

Patients will visit the nuclear medicine department for diagnosis, analysis and treatment of disease sites. Leanne continues:

"Patients are administered with a radioactive tracer, which needs to be given shortly after preparation as the radioactive materials have a short life span in which they can be used. For diagnostic procedures, once the radioactive tracers have reached the desired area of the body, the patient will be scanned, helping to detect cancer or other disease process, and also monitor disease progression or response to treatment. The patient may be scanned using a gamma camera or PET-CT scanner."

The nuclear medicine department now houses one of only two PET-CT scanners in Northern Ireland. Mariana Pinto, PET Chief Clinical Technologist, explains:

"A PET-CT scan produces a detailed 3D image of the inside of the body, focusing on processes and molecular activity. Unlike CT or MRI scans, PET-CT scans can show how well parts of the body are working, rather than solely images of what they look like. PET and CT scans are often combined to give the most detailed picture possible of a tissue or organ of interest."

Given the materials staff are working with and patients are exposed to, safety is of the utmost importance to the team in the department. The charity is currently working with the nuclear medicine team to purchase an automatic dose dispenser for the PET-CT scanner. This will safely prepare the correct dose of radioactive tracers, resulting in staff having to handle the radioactive dose less often when preparing it, helping reduce their radiation exposure.

WIN IN OUR SUMMER DRAW

Help us raise much needed funds to support local families affected by cancer.

By taking part in our Summer Draw, not only will you be in with a chance to WIN some fabulous prizes, but you will also help Friends of the Cancer Centre make a difference to local families.

1st PRIZE

Escape from it all at the Lough Erne Resort in Fermanagh with a luxury overnight stay for two

This experience includes a luxury overnight stay, five course dinner in The Catalina Restaurant, indulgent breakfast the next morning and complimentary use of the infinity pool at The Thai Spa



2nd PRIZE

Sparkling afternoon tea for two in the Titanic Hotel, Belfast



3rd PRIZE

£50 Marks and Spencer gift card



Entries cost £1 each and are available online via our website www.friendsofthecancercentre.com. We can also take card payments by telephone on (028) 9069 9393. The Summer Raffle draw takes place on Wednesday 3rd July 2024 at 12pm.

Legal information: Each raffle entry is £1. The raffle will be drawn on Wednesday 3rd July 2024 at 12pm. **Entries close at 12pm on Tuesday 2nd July 2024.** You must be 16 years or over to purchase a raffle ticket. Underage gambling is an offence. Licensed and regulated by Belfast City Council. Website: 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.

Get involved

We have lots of fantastic 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 Abseils Saturday 11th May & Saturday 7th September 2024

Be a superhero for local families affected by cancer and abseil 190ft down Belfast City Hospital's iconic tower block. Registration fee is £35 per person with minimum suggested sponsorship of £150.

Proudly supported by



Slieve Donard Challenge Saturday 14th September 2024

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

Registration is £25 per person with minimum suggested sponsorship of £75.

Proudly supported by



Belfast City Half Marathon Sunday 22nd September 2024

Pull on your trainers and take on the 13.1 mile challenge.
Or check out other local runs on our website.



Skydive Anytime – choose your own date!

Take to the sky for the ultimate adrenaline fuelled fundraising challenge, where you'll jump out of a plane at up to 15,000 ft.



Charity Golf Day at Holywood Golf Club 23rd August 2024

Join us for a fun-filled day at the magnificent Holywood Golf Course on Friday 23rd August 2024. Invite colleagues, clients or friends to join your fourball and enjoy a round of golf at one of the finest golf courses in Ireland, whilst supporting local families.

Full details, including your chance to have a local sports personality join your fourball, are available on our website.

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!

Friends of the Cancer Centre, NI Cancer Centre, Belfast City Hospital, Lisburn Road, BT9 7AB
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