

Friends of the
Elderly Ireland



Annual Report 2015-2016

"... because above all we need love"



LETTER FROM OUR AMBASSADOR

Dear Friends

“Once again it is my pleasure as Ambassador for **Friends of the Elderly Ireland** to thank you our volunteers, supporters and donors for enabling us to reach out this year to a greater number of elderly who are alone and isolated.

The number of elderly in our communities is increasing each year. More and more are referred to us by health professionals, neighbours and family members living away from home. Thanks to your support we can continue to bring the precious gift of social engagement and friendship to those most in need.

I really appreciate you being a good friend of the elderly.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Ronnie Delaney,
Hon. Ambassador



An Irish Charity

**Friends of the
Elderly Ireland**

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

We face a great challenge. People are now living much longer; so much so that the numbers reaching a great old age would astonish our grandparents.

The April 2011 Census of Population shows that there were 136,126 persons aged over 65 living alone in Ireland – of these 35,549 were living alone in county Dublin.



In today's world many of our elderly must live with the fact that their children and grandchildren are scattered across the country and the world. At the same time they see old friends pass away and caring lifetime neighbours replaced by young families in which both parents are working long days – with their young children in crèche care almost from dawn to dusk. In such sad circumstances – days, sometimes even a whole week – can pass without a single human encounter or even a friendly voice on the phone. It is little wonder then that loneliness becomes a burden, a cause of great distress, of lessening mobility and ultimately of failing health. Friends of the Elderly Ireland works to bring one-to-one friendship and social engagement to isolated elderly men and women.

This is our sole purpose.

With the support of our loyal volunteers and our generous donors we are able to bring the joy of human togetherness back into hundreds of elderly lives.

On behalf of the Board of Directors and our devoted staff and on my own behalf I extend sincerest thanks to each dedicated volunteer each and every corporate and private donor. Your support confers a great privilege on us by enabling us to bring light and warmth into the lives of so many elderly friends.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. O'Brien'.

Dr. Jim O'Brien
Hon President

ABOUT US

Since 1980, **Friends of the Elderly Ireland**, a non-profit, volunteer-based organisation, has been committed to alleviating isolation and loneliness among older people while promoting their independence and well-being. We offer older members the opportunity to make new friendships with our compassionate volunteers.

Older adults are a precious gift and represent the fastest-growing segment of our population, but no one should grow old alone. Companionship is a key component in a healthy ageing process. There are many reports and studies which outline the effects loneliness and social isolation can have on an older person's health and wellbeing.

National and international research shows loneliness and social isolation are now a major public health issue which is twice as devastating to health than obesity. Older people, particularly those over seventy-five, are more at risk from social isolation than many other groups.

Friends of the Elderly Ireland provide services free-of-charge to over 550 older people annually; making a significant social impact on the communities we serve.

We reach out to as many lonely older people as we can and strive and develop a personalized response to meet their needs. **Friends of the Elderly** acts as an advocate for our older members and helps them to access appropriate local services.

We repeatedly hear "It is no fun growing old". **Friends of the Elderly**, want to change this.



**Friends of the
Elderly Ireland**

OUR WAY OF CARING

Our community-based programmes are preventative in nature. They aim to make it easier for our older members to remain in their homes with dignity. Our approach is flexible and the needs of the individual older person are taken into account. A coordinated approach is vital particularly in times of funding crisis and cut-backs. We therefore co-operate with other volunteer and statutory agencies for the benefit of our older members.

- **Visiting Programme**

Open to mainly over 70s in the Greater Dublin Region. Each of our volunteers visits their older friends with whom they are matched in their homes. The older members are so happy to see a friendly face and do not feel alone. Many of our volunteers provide more than a social visit. They help our older members with other issues such as shopping, going to hospital appointments or writing letters.

- **Friendly Call Service**

Open Nationally to those over 60. Many of our older people get a weekly or twice weekly call which gives them the feeling that someone cares. Some older people may be afraid to welcome a volunteer into their home so they really appreciate these calls.

- **Social Engagement Clubs**

The range of activities offered to our members in Bolton Street has been expanding. They range from Crafts, a Choir and a chance to learn basic computer skills. Meanwhile our Wednesday Club at which they sing and dance is so popular there is a waiting list. These clubs offer not just learning opportunities, they also offer a warm and welcoming sanctuary in North Inner City Dublin.

- **Outings & Parties**

Friends of the Elderly tries to bring some excitement back into the lives of our older members by organising events, outing and parties at various times though out the year. We try to have one or two such events each month.

- **Advocacy and signposting to various public and community resources and services**

Our staff and volunteers are in close contact with public health and social care professionals and work with them to ensure that our older friends get the support and guidance to which they are entitled.

OUR OLDER FRIENDS

Helping our older members make new friendships is at the core of what we do. No one should be without someone to support and love them as they grow old.

Gerry played in a band when he was younger, he loves music but hadn't played for 30 years. One day a friend brought him along to **Friends of the Elderly** Wednesday Club and now he plays in the band every week.



“I love the club, it's like the good old days playing in the band and singing and dancing, meeting new friends. My life had changed and my love of music is stronger than ever.”

Mary-Ann's husband passed away and shortly afterwards she suffered a stroke. Most of her children lived abroad and because of her stroke she rarely got out of the house. She felt so down that her son in America got in touch with **Friends of the Elderly** and she was introduced to a lovely volunteer who calls at least once a week sometimes more.

“I love Geraldine calling, she sometimes paints my nails which I love and she introduced me to adult coloring books. It's like a mini art studio in my kitchen now. Without Geraldine being there to listen to me I don't know what I would do.”

Joan lives alone in Cork and she rarely sees anyone from one week to the next. She now receives a “Friendly Call” each week from one of our volunteers. She loves to hear the friendly American accent from **Friends of the Elderly** volunteer.



“Just to know someone cares, the calls give me a reason to get up in the morning and I actually put on my make even though I know it's only a phone call.”

A friendly call volunteer



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OUR VOLUNTEERS

Friends of the Elderly is a volunteer-based organisation. Without our volunteers there would be no **Friends of the Elderly** and much fewer Elderly with Friends. We are proud of the dedication our volunteers give to our older members and the organisation. Their companionship and friendship change lives.

*"It's funny because Nora is always thanking me for coming each week but I have gained much more from her. We are from different eras but we are more alike than you might think. I tell my friends if they are looking for something new and rewarding and want to make a positive impact in someone's life they should volunteer with **Friends of the Elderly.**"*

Karen

"I volunteer occasionally at parties or events which is lovely because I work long hours and still I can contribute a little". It great to see some familiar faces again and everyone enjoys a good party."

Elaine

"I volunteer as a Friendly Caller and each week I phone a number of older people in their homes for a friendly chat. Each week Jane surprises me with a new poem she has penned and Arthur brings me up to date with Sport. I am so use to talking through technology that I had forgotten how enjoyable it was to speak on the phone and I think I am making a difference to those I call."

Margaret



INTERGENERATIONAL PROGRAMME European Voluntary Services (EVS)

EVS - European Voluntary Service is funded by the European Commission and it offers young people under 30 the opportunity to volunteer for up to one year internationally on approved projects. This programme promotes informal learning and personal development and working in **Friends of the Elderly** volunteers gain valuable practical experience.

*"Starting a choir here with **Friends of the Elderly** was a great experience for me. It all began with the Christmas Choir where I got to know typical Irish Christmas songs the elderly told me about. In addition, I taught them some German songs which are well known in my home country (Germany) during Christmas. This was great fun and the little concert we gave around Christmas was something special for the elderly and for me. I was so happy to be able to continue my little choir in the new year and to see them all enjoying our music sessions. I decided to focus on old and new songs which are well known from shows, theatre plays, musicals and movies. I'm so thankful for all the members in my choir who come down every week to enjoy the two hours of music and song we spent together. I'm really proud of all of them!"*

Nadine EVS



Our three EVS Volunteers



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COLLEGE INTERN PROGRAMME

Friends of the Elderly offers students from Ireland and around the world opportunities of a placement to gain experience in the Older Persons Sector and Fundraising Management.

*“My experience as an intern with **Friends of the Elderly** has reminded me every day and especially every Wednesday, of how fortunate I am to be where I am and to have seen the things I have seen. I met many older people who have become very good friends. More importantly, I have learned to have a greater love for everything and anything no matter how big or small that gives me even the slightest bit of happiness or hope, because that is what I was able to give to them.”*

Emerald EUSA Intern Programme



COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS

Rachel, a Social Care intern, organised an Arts project for **Friends of the Elderly** and the Granby Centre. New friends were made and many hidden talents were discovered.

Due to the high demands on our services we have started collaborating with other befriending services in Dublin in order to maximise our resources and deliver a more extensive and effective programme

SCHOOLS PROGRAMME

Friends of the Elderly run a schools programme to increase young people's knowledge of ageing and the challenges older people may face and how these challenges may lead to social isolation. Through our schools programme we hope to dispel some myths about ageing and older people – especially through student participation in activities with older people in our Social Club or with older adults living near their school. In this way students discover the great benefits of intergenerational friendship for younger and older people alike.

We have an in-house schools programme which is very popular with students. It gives them the opportunity to share their skills with our older members while learning about life in years gone by. Social clubs, especially inter-generational clubs like ours, have been found to be one of the most effective ways of combating loneliness among older people. **Friends of the Elderly** are always glad to speak at schools and colleges about the issues relating to social isolation.

*“I was very nervous going to **Friends of the Elderly** for my community placement but in fact it was a wonderful experience and there was nothing to be scared of. I helped in the Technology club showing older people how to use their tablets and mobile phones. I honestly thought that older people would not be able to understand anything about technology but I was wrong. I found that there was little difference between them and me and chatting to them made me realise that I was actually learning a lot from them. This placement was one of the best things I did in my Transition year and I intend to continue volunteering with **Friends of the Elderly**.”*

Amy - Transition Year



Friendship cards designed by one of the students



Friends of the Elderly Ireland

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY PROJECTS

DIT Students ran a St. Patrick's Day Party; the older people were delighted to be invited to an event in the college in Kevin Street. Many may never have finished school and loved the idea of going to college for the afternoon. The students put on a lovely spread and fabulous entertainment with hip hop dancing being a big hit.

Investec and **M&S** sponsored and assisted at our Christmas Parties. Volunteers and older people got into the festive spirit and greatly enjoyed these events. Thanks to our sponsors everyone had a great time and each guest received a lovely Christmas present from M&S. The volunteers enjoyed dancing with our older people who showed them that you are never too old for Santa.

Unilever kindly donated pallets of food and household goods which we distribute to our older members throughout the year. This yearly donation allows us offer our older members a lifeline when it is most needed as many of them depend entirely on their state pension.



Salesforce volunteers helped our members get more familiar with technology. You are never too old to learn new skills and many of our older members are embracing new technology.



BEING ACCOUNTABLE.....

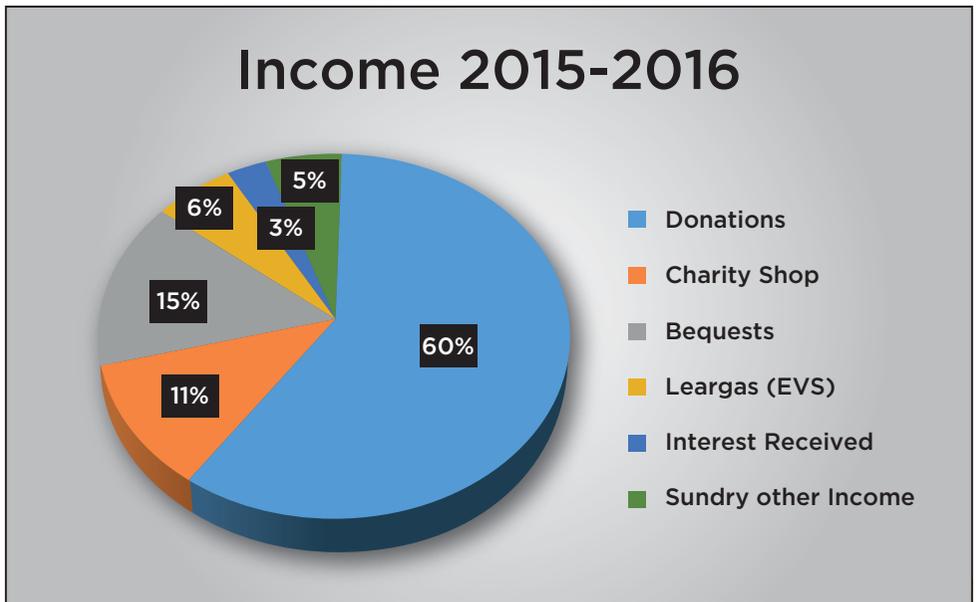
FINANCIAL OUTTURN FOR YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2016

PRINCIPLES

Prudence is our watchword when it comes to the management and use of every donation and legacy we receive. To ensure stability and continuity we try to keep the equivalent of one year's operating expenditure in reserve. At the same time all funds available above this reserve are devoted to the development of our systems, the further training of our personnel (staff and volunteers) and to the improvement and expansion of our services to steadily increasing numbers of Elderly Friends.

OVERSIGHT AND REPORTING

As in previous years the **Friends of the Elderly** company accounts have been audited by **LHM Casey McGrath (Chartered Accountants)** and having, been presented to and approved by the Board, have been lodged with the CRO (Companies Registration Office). Management accounts prepared between Board Meetings by our accountants (Boggan Bookkeeping) are reviewed with them against our budget (established before the start of the financial year) by the Hon. Secretary, Hon. Treasurer and the Manager. The Board of Directors is informed at its bi-monthly meetings of all significant trends and deviations from budget.



EXPENDITURE

Expenditure for the year to 31 March 2016 came to €359,753. Payroll came to € 118,788 (three full-time (and one part-time) employees). Fund-raising, advertising and communications costs came to €90,023 while rent- €13,200 - remained unchanged. Our accredited accounts are on our website.

2015/2016 Activities



OUR NEW WEBSITE www.friendsoftheelderly.ie

In 2015-2016 we did a major overhaul and update of our website. It now includes a simple “[Donate](#)” option which explains how one can easily make a gift to **Friends of the Elderly**.

OUR FUTURE PLANS

- Continue to maintain current level of services
- Develop new social inclusion projects with emphasis on local activities
- Provide transport to those find it difficult to access our programmes
- Develop the role of volunteers within the organisation
- Raise awareness of the public health issues related to loneliness
- Advocate for more social inclusion opportunities for older people

Thank
you for
being a
Friend
of the
Elderly



DIT Adventure



UN International Day of Older People
outside GPO - Friendship flowers



Celebrating Bastille Day in honour
of Les petits frères des Pauvres

Photo Album



Chocolate is a girl's best friend!
Visit to Chocolate Gardens Carlow

"Dancing with
the Stars" in
Kilkenny



Strictly come Ceili
Dancing - Our
older members
teach new
European friends
how to dance



*"... because above all, we
need love"*



**Friends of the
Elderly Ireland**

THANK YOU FROM OUR BOARD

Your support is vital - **Friends of the Elderly**'s achievements are only made possible through the support of our volunteers and donors. As the demands on our services grow so does our need for your continuing support.

On behalf of our older friends, we would like to thank all our volunteers who have supported **Friends of the Elderly** throughout the year. It is you, our volunteers who enable us reach out to more older people each year.

A special thanks to the **International Federation of the Little Brothers of the Poor in France** who have support us by providing a platform for shared learning and information exchange and encouraged us to keep going when times are difficult.

To our Donors, we say a heartfelt thank you. Your support enables us provide a growing range of services to many older people who find themselves alone and isolated.

THANK YOU ALL FOR BEING A FRIEND OF THE ELDERLY

Our Honorary Ambassador

Dr Ronnie Delaney

Our Board

Dr. James O'Brien, Chairman & Hon. Treasurer
John Casey, Hon. Secretary
Niamh Macken
Lorraine Hanratty
Deirdre Devaney
Emma Colleary

How to get in touch

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www.friendsoftheelderly.ie