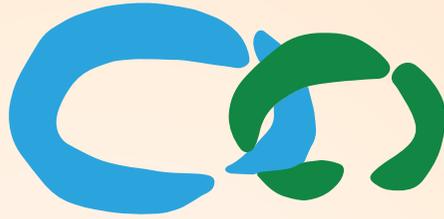


Friends  
of the  
Elderly  
Ireland



An Irish Charity



# Annual Report 2017-2018

“. . . because above all we need love"

## A MESSAGE FROM OUR AMBASSADOR



Dear Friends

I write once again as Ambassador for **Friends of the Elderly Ireland** to express my sincere gratitude to all our benefactors – corporate and private donors, volunteers and supporters - for their continued generosity and cooperation. With your financial, material and personal assistance we bring our friendship to hundreds of isolated and lonely elderly men and women.

Loneliness is a widespread reality in almost every adult population cohort in our fast changing society. It is particularly acute among the elderly who live alone – often living through days without a single face-to-face encounter with another.

Many of our younger following generation have had to move far from home to other parts of Ireland or to distant lands in search of a livelihood - and this has made life so much more challenging for older family members who remain at home.

Through your on-going support we continue to bring friendship, togetherness and love to hundreds of our Elderly Friends who so richly deserve and so greatly appreciate all that you enable us to do for them.

With their heartfelt thanks and mine.

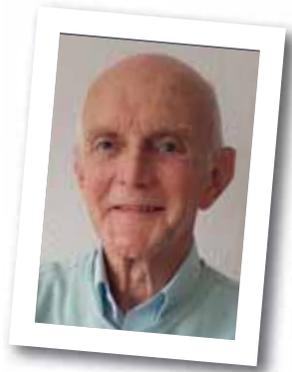
Yours sincerely,

Dr. Ronnie Delany,  
Hon. Ambassador

## A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRPERSON

Loneliness is fast becoming a major public health challenge in almost all age groups in today's society.

**Friends of the Elderly** focus exclusively on the alleviation of loneliness among the elderly who live alone in isolation – for they are the persons who feel loneliness most acutely and are least able to cope with it or escape from it. We bring friendship and social engagement to them in their autumn years.



As the number of elderly persons who live alone increases loneliness and social isolation are becoming more widespread among them. The April 2016 Census showed that 157,000 persons aged *over 65* were living alone in Ireland - an increase of 15% since 2011. The total number living alone and aged *over 85* was 23,102 (an increase of 21%). Nationally, elderly women living alone out-number elderly men by over two to one.

Elderly family members have seen the pace of change accelerate at an alarming rate in the past couple of decades. Economic turbulence has driven migration in search of work - leaving many elderly parents behind to cope without their sons' and daughters' support. Social upheaval has seen close local communities of life-long good neighbours being replaced by a younger generation for whom the relentless pressures of modern life leaves less and less time to share with elderly neighbours.

Almost inevitably elderly persons living alone – especially as their mobility diminishes - face days on end without a single human encounter. Their loneliness can then become a distressing burden which affects their physical and psychological well-being.

Our work can only continue with the generous support of our corporate and personal donors and of our dedicated volunteers. Thanks to them **Friends of the Elderly** can continue to bring one-to-one friendship and social engagement to older men and women trapped in such grim circumstances.

On behalf of the Board of Directors and our staff and on my own behalf I extend sincerest thanks all our donors and volunteers.

Each can be assured of the heartfelt gratitude of all our Elderly Friends.

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

Dr. Jim O'Brien  
Hon President



**Friends of the  
Elderly Ireland**

## ABOUT US

Since 1980, **Friends of the Elderly Ireland**, a non-profit, non-denominational, volunteer-based organisation, has been committed to alleviating isolation and loneliness among older people. We aim to promote independence and well-being. We offer older members the opportunity to make new friendships with each other and 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 detrimental effects loneliness and social isolation can have on an older person's health and well-being.

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

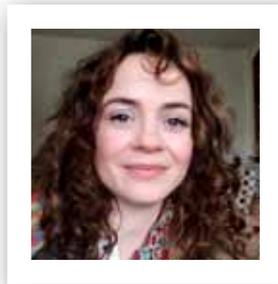
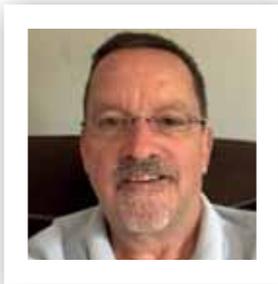
**Friends of the Elderly Ireland** provide services free-of-charge to up to 450 older people annually; making a significant social impact on the communities we serve.

We are service-user led and reach out to many older people in their communities, tailoring our services to meet their needs. **Friends of the Elderly** acts as an advocate for our older members and helps them to access appropriate local services.



## OUR WAY OF CARING

Our community-based programmes aim to make it easier and more enjoyable for older members to remain in their homes and continue to enjoy life, after many have experienced great change. These changes can include widowhood, and bereavement through loss of friends and siblings, emigration and relocation of their children, and health changes. Our approach is flexible and the needs of the individual older person are at the core of what we do. We take a coordinated approach working with statutory and voluntary agencies to achieve our goals of eliminating loneliness and social isolation. We also engage corporates, education centres and the wider community to work with us to achieve our vision.



### Friendly Call Service

Open nationally to those over sixty, this service has more than doubled in the last year going from 6,202 calls in 2016 to 13,520 calls in 2017. Our seven volunteers call each member at least once a week, sometimes just for a chat or sometimes to just listen. Our calls often throw up issues that our older members need help with and we can then refer them to other services or assist with issues they may be struggling with. Older members may prefer this to opening up their homes to a visiting volunteer. Some go on to access our visitation programme after trust has been built, as they understand our matching processes for volunteers in their own community.

### Visitation Programme

This is open to the over 60s in the greater Dublin region and is also now established in Dunboyne. Each of our volunteers visits one of our older members in their own home or nursing home at least once a week. Prior to this there is a careful selection, vetting, training and matching process and an introduction phase in which the volunteer and the older person are supported by staff. They will then agree a time and day for visitation, which can be more than just a social call and can involve outings for coffee, walks or shopping. Sometimes if our older members avail of outings or events our volunteers may be called upon to assist and this is a great alternative to the social visitation in the home.

## Social Engagement Clubs

The range of social activities we offer to our members is varied and diverse. Each week we operate a social club where 80 members come together to sing, dance and share refreshments. There is a huge musical aspect to the Wednesday club with an MC and a resident band and our members are usually the stars of the show – with them singing and line dancing. There are agility classes, a movie club and some educational programmes such as I.T. upskilling, which aims to narrow the digital divide for older people. These clubs offer a warm and welcoming space to meet, learn and enjoy good company.

## Outings, Daytrips and Parties

**Friends of the Elderly** has an extensive outings and parties programme which operates both onsite and off, at various festive times throughout the year and through the summer period. We operate four national trips to places of interest outside of Dublin annually, for up to fifty members each time. We also have at least four trips in Dublin for smaller groups and usually aim to bring the less mobile or more isolated people on these trips, providing transport for those who are in need. In addition, we travel out to afternoon teas and Sunday lunches at various times and attend events together - art exhibitions, music, theatre and film.

Onsite we have three Christmas parties with a four course dinner and also celebrate the other festive periods with themed parties. Our corporate partners provide tickets to shows which we raffle and the main aim being to enable a social life with others who have similar interests. We also try to involve our older members in our volunteer recognition evening, this celebration is to recognize their work and commitment to our growing organization.

## Advocacy and Signposting

Our staff team and volunteers work continuously with all our members but also with our referrals agents, many of whom are GPs and social care professionals. We work with these partners and also family members (who may be living some distance away) to ensure that our older members get support and guidance and can access good quality services. We ensure our older members know their entitlements, get the assistance they need and signpost services they can call on when they have issues. Our volunteers will inform staff when an older member is experiencing difficulty and may need assistance and this is then taken up by staff or referred to other services which may be able to help.

## OUR OLDER FRIENDS

Ageing can be a positive process but for many it can be a turbulent time in one's life, with major changes to both body and mind, which can throw up many difficulties for our members. We are here to support people in this phase of their life and ensure they continue to live life to the fullest.

**Martin misses his old friends with whom he has lost touch** – One-day Martin was passing No. 25 Bolton Street when he heard music and laughter. He didn't go in that day but a few days later he called to see if he could join the Wednesday Club. He used to meet people every day in his job and was in a band but now that he had retired he found it difficult to meet people with similar interests and of a similar age. His big love was always music and he had a number of friends he used to play with. He was finding it difficult to cope alone with his new situation

*“The Wednesday Club has made such a difference to me, I have made new friends who care about me and at the same time I get to laugh, and enjoy my music again. I love meeting all the new volunteers and students who help out at the club and I now give a hand myself playing in the band and the odd day helping in the charity shop. It has given me a new purpose”*

**Rita was recently widowed**, she misses her husband greatly and had been struggling to cope with the loss. She spends a lot of time at home alone and felt she could no longer go to social events on her own. Her children have long since left the family home and have families of their own living some distance from where they grew up. With lots of encouragement from the volunteers of the friendly call service she has started to attend our social programmes, she has made new friends and is slowly beginning to adapt to her new situation, and her new friends help her through some difficult days.



*‘Life is better when you have someone to share the good and the bad days with’*



**Friends of the  
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**Patrick is a young 68-year-old**, he dropped by to seek some information and chatted to the staff about his life. He was retired and had never married. He told the staff he only got out to go to the shop for groceries and did not have any real social life other than phone calls to his brother and nephew in England. He wanted to try his hand at the new technologies which his nephew was encouraging him to do. He was invited to the tech club to learn about skype and social media. He didn't realize there was so much going on at **Friends of the Elderly** and now he comes to the Wednesday Club each week and goes on the various trips offsite. He has now made many friends.

*"I get calls from my new friends. Just to know that people care about me and think about me is a great comfort. I look forward to the club each week"*

**Bridget is in her 80s** she has had some health issues and had recently moved to a supported housing project, where there is on-site assistance and better equipment to aid her mobility. She was referred to us by a PHN when she complained that she was feeling isolated in her new surroundings and had great difficulty getting out and about in the locality. She was accepted on our friendly call service and soon after went on to the visitation programme and the social club. Her life is fuller now and **FOTE** send a car each week to take her to the social gatherings.

*"I have a new lease of life at this stage, which I never thought could happen. It's incredible to see all my new friends enjoying their time and celebrating each birthday with a little present, and a card and a welcome smile at the club each week. It's what growing older is all about, especially in our retirement" relaxing and enjoying life."*

## OUR VOLUNTEERS

**Friends of the Elderly** is a volunteer-based organisation. Volunteers are invaluable to our organization and are the very foundation from which we operate. We are proud of the time, commitment and dedication our volunteers give to the organization to deliver quality services to our older members. Their companionship and friendships change lives. Many of our older friends are also volunteers, giving many hours to assist in the clubs, work at our charity shop and to make calls and visits to our other members. They bring a richness to the experience for all involved and share their life stories of volunteering with the younger students and new volunteers on their arrival.

*"I started volunteering with **Friends of the Elderly** a few months ago when I experienced a few changes in my own life and I needed to get motivated again. I volunteered in the Wednesday Club and on various trips on the summer programme. It really lifted my spirits and I was glad I had chosen a charity that was so focused, caring and took a hands-on approach. It's uplifting to be able to support the older people each week and so rewarding"* **Maria**



*"I've been volunteering now with **Friends of the Elderly** for 18 years, originally it was meant to be a one-year placement in the charity shop but I enjoyed it so much I stayed on and moved on to the social club. It's really a special place here on Wednesdays, so much talent and the place is buzzing"* **Tom**

*"I have been a volunteer for over 10 years now working on both the friendly call service and the visitation programme in my local area, it's great to be part of these valuable programmes checking in with older people at home, by phone and in person. I really love the visits, and our friends really appreciate the calls"* **Margaret**



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## DUNBOYNE BRANCH

In **May 2016 Friends of the Elderly** launched a small volunteer-based group in **Dunboyne Co. Meath**. Most of the focus continues to be on creating awareness and trust amongst the older people within the community. We have organised and raised funds via various local initiatives including the successful annual Pub Quiz. Currently we have fourteen vetted Volunteers within this group – seven of whom form the Committee. Visitations continue to be carried out on a weekly basis to residents within two local nursing homes and over the year we have been visiting eleven of these residents. We also visit three Elderly people in their own homes with another three receiving regular phone calls. We have continued with our regular ‘themed’ coffee mornings holding them every 6 weeks during the year. This has proved to be very popular with the local elderly people as it provides a much needed social outlet where they can meet up with their friends in the area. Entertainment is provided which also aims to showcase the local talents. Thanks to the management of the OAK Centre for the permission to use the local parish hall, to ATN Transport who support transportation and to Avoca who provide some of the refreshments.

The Dunboyne Transition Year students continue to provide welcome support in assisting the majority of the coffee mornings as well as providing some of the entertainment. New ideas from the T Y students regarding projects involving the elderly are warmly welcomed and encouraged by the committee. Certificates were presented at their end of year ceremony. This is something that we are going to continue to develop and ensure that it becomes embedded as part of their TY curriculum.

We have expanded our Social Media presence via our Facebook page which now has c. 500 followers – this is a very useful means to create awareness of our presence within the community and informing when any relevant event is on which may be of interest to the elderly. It is also a very resourceful site packed with relevant stories and insight into various talents within the elderly community worldwide

## INTERGENERATIONAL PROGRAMME

Traditionally **FOTE** hosted two European volunteer service (EVS) volunteers on a one-year placement. However, in 2017 **FOTE** decided to review the programme and try something new. We undertook research and planning to roll out an equally valuable programme called Service Civique. This programme is funded by the French Government 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.

The new programme has been planned and the accommodation is ready now to receive two full-time French volunteers who will enhance our services and bring another culture and a new dynamic to our work in 2018. This will be a great addition to our intergenerational programmes.

## COLLEGE INTERN PROGRAMME



**Friends of the Elderly** offers students from Ireland and around the world opportunities to undertake placements to gain valuable experience in the social and community sector. They can work directly in our older persons' programmes or in administration, or in our Fundraising and Marketing department. Friends of the Elderly are developing their contacts with Third Level colleges in Ireland and are

currently working on projects with DIT, Trinity, UL and Maynooth. We work with many overseas students who come to Ireland to improve their English and gain a new perspective on how organizations such as ours work.

*"This summer I had the incredible opportunity to be an intern at **Friends of the Elderly**. During the two months I was here I worked up in the office learning about the business side of charity work, I helped out during the Wednesday clubs as well as the movie club, and I also worked in the charity shop. Through working with all these activities I learned so many valuable skills and knowledge I will take with me to further my career. From all the people in the club, to my co-workers, and even to the brief conversations I had with customers down in the shop, everyone gave me such a warm and kind welcome. This experience has been truly amazing and the memories I have made by working here at **Friends of the Elderly** will be ones I will cherish forever."* **Bailey Johnston, EUSA Programme.**

## SUMMER SCHOOLS PROGRAMME

**Friends of the Elderly** run a schools programme to increase young peoples' knowledge of ageing and the challenges older people face, and how these challenges may lead to social isolation. Through our schools programme we hope

to dispel myths about ageing and older people. We aim to do this through student participation in activities with older people both in our Social Club and 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.

We work with Gaisce Students, transition year students and summer volunteers, and also with other educational facilities who promote less traditional ways of learning, such as Youth Reach. We work with many diverse groups and like to be inclusive in our approach so as to enrich the experience for both young and old. We facilitate learning and work experience for people with disabilities. Placements can be for as little as one week or in some cases 24 weeks for the President's Award. They stay for as long as is needed to gain the confidence and experience they hope for or maybe just because they enjoy it so much. Either way they all receive the Young Friends Certificate of Recognition on completion of the placements.

*"I did a summer placement in **Friends of the Elderly** and found the experience challenging but enjoyable. I wasn't sure what to expect as I was in education and had not had the opportunity of being in a real work environment until then. It opened my eyes to a new world. I worked on the social engagement programme, tried my hand in the shop and some office work. The experience really changed my life and my view of older people. I also realized where my skills lay and gave me more confidence"* **Craig - Youth Reach**

*"I completed my TY placement at Bolton Street, it was good learning for me but also I had a great time with the staff, volunteers and service users. Everyone made me feel welcome and I was glad I had chosen **Friends of the Elderly**."* **Chloe TY Student**



*Our Ambassador, Dr. Ronnie Delany, with two of our past student volunteers.*

## CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY PROJECTS

**Phorest** – At **Friends of the Elderly** we are committed to improving our facilities to become more Age Friendly. Phorest’s involvement allowed us to complete Phase One of our renovation programme. We want to create an environment that will enable older people to feel safe and secure while also feeling socially included in our community.

**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. The students put on a lovely spread and fabulous entrainment and so did some of our older members.



**Homecare** sponsored our trip to Kilkenny. They loved the opportunity to be a part of another world. This trip was a great success. Their staff made fabulous gift bags and the volunteers joined in the fun.

**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.

## COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS

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. We are members of the following working groups; for example: **Central Area Dublin Age Friendly Alliance** and **Dublin 7 Senior Forum**.

## BEING ACCOUNTABLE.....

### OUR PRINCIPLES

We take great care to ensure that all donations and legacies received are used efficiently and effectively. All funds available over and above one year's current operating costs are used to improve and expand our services.

### OVERSIGHT AND REPORTING

Our budget is established before the start of the financial year by the Hon. Secretary, Hon. Treasurer and the Manager and is adopted by the Board. The Board receives a report from the Hon. Treasurer at each of its bi-monthly meetings and all significant trends and deviations from budget are reviewed.

The company accounts of **Friends of the Elderly Ireland Ltd** are audited by LHM Casey McGrath (Chartered Accountants) – see below. Management accounts prepared by our accountants between our bi-monthly Board meetings (Boggan Book-keeping) are reviewed by the Board.

### TIMING OF THE ANNUAL AUDIT

Our annual audit is carried out in the summer immediately following the end of the financial year. The Auditor's report is considered and adopted by the Board in the early Autumn and is presented to the AGM in October and is then lodged with the Companies Registration Office (CRO) by our Auditors. At the same time the Audit report is placed on our website (**friendsoftheelderly.ie**). The Audit report for 2017/18 will be downloaded as soon as it has been lodged with the Company Registration Office.

### AUDITED ACCOUNTS

The Audited Accounts are on our website **[www.friendsoftheelderly.ie](http://www.friendsoftheelderly.ie)**

## OUR BEAUTIFUL BOLTON STREET CHARITY SHOP

Ritzzy Rags has been in operation for over thirty years now and this year we have had the opportunity to give the shop a facelift. We have revamped the frontage and given the inside a new look. It's a real touch of Paris.



We continue to receive two large deliveries each year from France, which gives the shop a unique quality. The French labels are fabulous and prices are still to what you would expect in the charity shop sector.

We are grateful for your support for our shop. This helps us to fund some of our projects and adds to the social inclusion programme for our older members. Many of our recently retired members continue to volunteer alongside students, interns and young volunteers. It is a big part of our intergenerational programme and our open door to the community.

We cater for all styles and price ranges and for young and old. We have both modern and vintage sections and it's simply a lovely place to shop or browse.

Drop bye and say hello to our good friends.....



## 2017/2018 Activities



## OUR FUTURE PLANS

- Maintain current levels of members services and expand where possible
- Launch an additional programme: Service Civique in August 2018
- Develop new social inclusion projects with emphasis on local activities
- Provide transport to those who 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
- Improve service delivery and monitor quality standards
- Continue to operate according to our Values, Vision and Mission.

## Our activities in 2018 included the following:

<b>APRIL 2017</b>	<b>NOVEMBER</b>
2017 Volunteer recruitment programme begins	Cozy Corner Tech Club
2017 Student TY applications opens	Thai Chi and Agility Classes
Afternoon tea	Afternoon teas
<b>MAY</b>	<b>DECEMBER</b>
College of culinary arts dinner party	Christmas Party x 3
Low mobility day trips begin	<b>JANUARY 2018</b>
Safety talks programme	New recruitment of staff and Community Employment Scheme placements
<b>JUNE</b>	Maynooth University collaboration
Summer programme starts	Age Friendly Alliance meeting
Trip to the Dublin Zoo	Intergenerational programme starts for 2018
Afternoon Tea	Trinity V de P Film Club
<b>JULY</b>	<b>FEBRUARY</b>
Training day for volunteers	TY Programmes starts
Trip to Kilkenny	EUSA Internship programme starts
Bastille Day Celebrations	Members Tech Club commences
Safety Talks programme	14/02 – Valentine Party
<b>AUGUST</b>	17/02 - Volunteer recognition day
Trip to Carlingford Lough	<b>MARCH 2018</b>
Afternoon tea	Healthy living Programme with Dun Laoghaire College
<b>SEPTEMBER</b>	Agility classes commence
Gaisce Students recruitment and induction	06/03 - Volunteer Recruitment
Overseas internship programme commences	14/03 – St Patrick’s Day themed party
<b>OCTOBER</b>	15/03 – DIT College dinner party
Halloween Cabaret party	
International Day of the Older person celebrations	
TY Inductions	

# PHOTO ALBUM



*Being there for one another!*



*Laughter is the shortest distance between friends!*



*Sharing a breakfast!*



*Enjoying the Good Life!*



*Old Friends!*



*New Friends!*



*All the Girls!*



*All the Boys!*

*"... 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 Friends of the Elderly** and to the **Little Brothers of the Poor in France** (Paris) who supported us by providing a platform for shared learning and information exchange and encouraged us to keep going when times are challenging.

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.

### Our Honorary Ambassador

Dr Ronnie Delany

### Our Board

Dr. Jim O'Brien Chairman & Hon. Treasurer

Niamh Macken Operations

John Casey Hon. Secretary

Deirdre Devaney

Emma Colleary

Chris Carroll

Omega Goodwin

Tom Horan

## HOW TO GET IN TOUCH

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