

Spring / Summer 2025

Issue 9

# HOSPICE CONNECTION

Your link to us and the care that you support

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St. Francis Hospice

# Community Connections



I am delighted to share good news with our wonderful community. This spring, we will break ground at our Raheny site as we begin building a new 24 single-bed in-patient unit. The new facility, expected to open in late 2026, will replace the 19-bed unit with shared wards that has served our community of North

Dublin and the surrounding counties so well for the past 30 years.

During the build, all our hospice services, including the current in-patient unit, will continue to operate as normal and provide high-quality specialist palliative care. We look forward to the completion of the new facility and the re-purposing of the original in-patient unit to help care for the growing number of people who attend as outpatients.

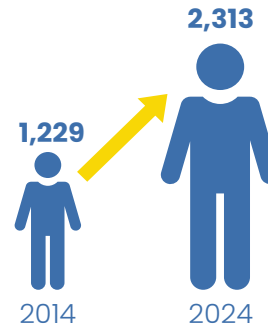


We were honoured to welcome Jack Chambers, TD, who was then serving as Finance Minister, last October to perform a ceremonial turning of the sod. Our Capuchin chaplain, Br Des McNaboe, gave a blessing for the site, the construction project, and all who will avail of care there in the future.

The new in-patient unit will be funded through government HSE support, philanthropic and corporate partnerships with our Living Today, Building for Tomorrow programme, and of course the generous support of you, the individuals and families who make up our

community. Later this spring, we will launch a Buy a Brick campaign, and we look forward to telling you more about that soon.

Patient Numbers 2014-2024  
88% Growth in Patient Numbers



This graphic illustrates the growth in St Francis Hospice services over the past decade. Our 88% growth in patient numbers illustrates how our services grow to meet the needs of our rising and aging population in North Dublin.

The launch of our Outpatient and Day Service (OPDS) three years ago tells the story of how, as people's care needs become more complex, we introduce innovative programmes and approaches to help. You can read more about the impact of OPDS on pages 4 & 5.

I also invite you to find out more on page 3 about our Spring Memorial Walk and this year's ambassadors, our two volunteer therapy dogs and their human companions who also volunteer their time and kindness to bring joy and companionship to our patients, their visitors, and our hospice team.

On page 6 you can find out more about our newest bereavement support initiative, the monthly Grief Café and Walk and Talk groups. This issue is full of positive stories of care given by St Francis Hospice, which is firmly embedded in the heart of this community. Thank you, as ever, for your support and your help in sharing Hospice Connection with your family, friends, and neighbours.

Fintan Fagan  
Chief Executive Officer,  
St Francis Hospice Dublin

# Spring Memorial Walk



The Spring Memorial Walk is back, and we are delighted to introduce our two “fur-tastic” ambassadors: volunteer therapy dogs Vixy and Bo! Both dogs bring great joy to patients, their visitors, and the entire hospice team during their weekly visits.

Vixy and Bo will be sporting their hospice bandanas with pride as they complete a 5K walk with their humans, Anna and Cathy, in memory of all the patients they have visited in St Francis Hospice Raheny and Blanchardstown.

We invite you to join in the Spring Memorial Walk with family friends, and pets, as you remember your loved ones in a special way while raising vital funds for St Francis Hospice. You can walk anywhere, any time during March and April.

All funds raised go to support further development of our St Francis Hospice services, including new buildings, innovative patient care programmes, and extra comforts for patients and their families.

**Register on [www.sfh.ie](http://www.sfh.ie) or phone (01) 832 7535 to get your T-shirts, dog bandanas, and sponsorship cards**



## Anna & Vixy's Story

Vixy is the therapy dog for the St. Francis Hospice in Raheny. She is a labrador/retriever mix and is a retired guide dog from the *Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind*. Vixy worked very hard for her deaf and blind human for years but sadly due to an injury she had to retire earlier than planned. Her human kindly decided to gift Vixy to me.

In 2022, I spent a few months in hospital and during that time I experienced first-hand the joy a weekly doggy visit can bring. I made a promise that when I got out of hospital I would try bring that joy to others. Vixy's retirement coincided with me getting out of hospital so I signed us up as hospice volunteers.

Vixy spreads her love (and hairs!) to anyone she meets in the hospice. The effect a dog can have on someone's mood, even on the darkest of days, will never fail to amaze me.



## Cathy & Bo's Story

My dog Bo is the therapy dog for St Francis Hospice Blanchardstown. It is such an honour to be involved with the hospice in this way.

Bo is a Bichon Frisé, grossly overweight but full of life, a bundle of love, licks and fun. She loves getting rubs and cuddles.

For those who love dogs she truly brightens up their day when she arrives in the hospice. That includes patients and all the staff working in the hospice, relatives and visitors and friends.

Bo brings a smile to everyone's face – what more can you ask for in this often challenging life we live in!



# Revitalised by Hospice Care



***“This has been the most positive experience of my life,”***

**Declan Moore, 65, says on the day of his discharge from St Francis Hospice Outpatient and Day Service. “I’m still amazed at what I’ve achieved in the past year, with the help of all the people around here.”**

**Declan, who is living with two chronic conditions, was referred by his oncologist who recognised the unique role that palliative care can play in helping people with the physical and mental effects of both their illness and the treatments they undergo.**

**A year ago, Declan was in a very dark place mentally, and struggling physically with the symptoms of his two conditions and the side effects of a new radiation treatment for his prostate cancer. “My whole mentality changed. Within two or three weeks of coming to the hospice, I was feeling more positive about things. It’s a fantastic facility here, for people like me who have been given a diagnosis which might have caused them to get a fright or feel negative about themselves.”**



The care he received from the team of St Francis Hospice brought him “from a very regressive mental state to a very positive mental state” as well as improving his pain management and mobility. With the help of the physiotherapy team, he says, “I’m back to an average speed for walking, I had retracted back to a crawl, so that’s one example of how the hospice has helped me.”

The Outpatient and Day Service (OPDS) opened in May 2022 and is designed to be responsive to patients’ changing needs. The nursing, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, and medical staff assess new patients and work with them to identify the care best suited to their needs. There are both individual and group programmes and when a patient completes a programme, the team meets with them to reassess their needs. Another programme may be recommended, or, if the palliative care needs of the patient have been met for now, a discharge can be arranged. Patients can return if new symptoms or challenges arise.

People attending OPDS may also interact with social workers, chaplains, complementary therapists, administration staff, and volunteer drivers who bring them to and from their appointments. Declan describes the hospice as a community, saying, “It’s down to the staff and volunteers here, their approach, their professionalism, and their dedication to the job. To be involved here, you really have to like people, it’s a real people job. The people here in all disciplines are brilliant at that, there’s no stone unturned here.”

During his time with the OPDS, Declan has attended groups such as the Empower occupational therapy programme to help manage stress and anxiety and the Energise physiotherapy programme for physical rehabilitation of strength, balance and cardio fitness. He has also benefited from pain management with the nursing staff and complementary therapies to help with relaxation and other symptom management.

He says that meeting other people with chronic illnesses is another benefit to attending the OPDS. “There’s one gentleman on the course I did recently, he’s 89 years of age, and he had the mentality of a 40 year old. He said he got that from coming out here, you know, feeling good about himself. So you learn from other patients as well.”

This January, Declan was delighted to return to his IT job within the HSE’s Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. The hospice’s occupational therapists helped with an assessment to ensure that Declan’s seating at work was appropriate. They also advised on special equipment at home to maximise Declan’s independence and mobility.

“One thing that pleases me is that my colleagues gave me a lot of compliments about how I’m looking. I had gaunt features, and my whole complexion has improved. And that’s coming from within. I’ve learned all that from here in the hospice.”

Declan continues his physiotherapy exercises daily at home to help with physical symptoms, sleep, and mood. “The exercises, for me, were the biggest surprise. They definitely help you with endorphins, and they help you be positive, and you feel good after it.”

Describing the impact of his hospice care for his wife Eileen, his sons Oisín, 23, Fergal, 21, and their dog Ava, Declan says, “This was all a big team effort, from my family, from the hospice ... my dog! What I learned is that there are no prizes for being in denial about what’s wrong with you. A problem shared is a problem halved. I certainly have benefited greatly from coming out here. It has revitalised me as a person, from a physical and a mental perspective. I feel I’m even better than I was before I got sick. I’ve learned so much about the value of life.”

Declan encourages anyone who is referred for hospice care to engage with the services. “I feel I’m in a much better place. If you had asked me 12 months ago if I would be like this, I would have laughed at you, because I was in the horrors then. I can empathise with people who have received a recent diagnosis. I would say just come up here to the hospice because you will learn how to cope. There are facilities here and excellent professionals who can bring you back to a relatively normal life. There’s things you can learn in the hospice about yourself that you won’t pick up anywhere else. You have nothing to fear by coming out here. In fact, you have everything to gain.”

**Summing up his own hospice experience, Declan says, “I was very lucky I was referred here. I’m a very lucky man.”**



# New Bereavement Support Groups



Listen to Niamh Finucane, Coordinator of Social Work and Bereavement Services, talking about the Grief Café and Walk and Talk bereavement support groups on Phoenix FM with Gráinne Uí Chaomhánaigh. (Forward to 1:23:30 on the timeline.)

We all know that grief can be an isolating experience. Our social activities may change after someone dies, and we can feel lonely and disconnected. Friends and family can be a good support to someone grieving, but sometimes, they are also grieving or we want to protect them or we simply need another form of support.

To help address this, the St Francis Hospice social work team, with the support of our bereavement volunteers, has set up two groups that give anyone in our community who is grieving the opportunity to meet other people who have also experienced the death of someone close.

of every month in St Francis Hospice Blanchardstown, from 10:00-11:30 a.m. People can chat over tea/coffee about the person who died and how they are coping.

The other group is our Walk and Talk, which takes place on the last Tuesday of every month in St. Anne’s Park, Raheny. Attendees simply walk in the fresh air while connecting with people who know what it is like living with grief, perhaps sharing advice about what has helped them. After the gentle stroll, people continue their conversations over a cuppa in the park’s café, Olive’s Room.

This kind of peer support enables people to meet other bereaved people in the community. It also creates a more informal space to engage with hospice social workers and bereavement volunteers, for those who feel one-to-one counselling is not for them or for those who are stepping down from one-to-one bereavement support within the hospice.

The groups provide an opportunity for members to meet other bereaved people, to share their feelings, thoughts and strategies around grief with each other. It is not only a place for people to learn, but to find comfort and maybe even friendship which can help to ease the loneliness and isolation that often comes with grief.

One group is our Grief Café which takes place on the first Friday



## To find out more or to register:

- Visit <https://www.sfh.ie/for-patients-families/bereavement-care/bereavement-support-groups/>
- Email [bereavement@sfh.ie](mailto:bereavement@sfh.ie)
- Ring the social work secretary on (01) 832 7535 or (01) 829 4000

# Your Finest Hour for Hospice



St. Francis Hospice is a proud member of the Together for Hospice movement. Together for Hospice, The National Hospice Movement, represents 24 hospices nationwide who have been fundraising together for more than 30 years. Since 1992, over €62million has been raised through their national events, such as Bewley's Big Coffee Morning and Sunflower Days.

The ethos at the heart of Together for Hospice is every euro raised locally stays locally so when you support a Together for Hospice initiative, you are supporting your local hospice.

On 17th February, Together for Hospice launched a brand new campaign, Your Finest Hour for Hospice. The concept of the campaign is an easy one: employees donate one hour of their salary to St. Francis Hospice and in return the employer gives one hour of time back to the employee.

How companies decide to participate is up to them. They can simply allow employees to finish an hour early, on a particular date, to spend time with family and friends or do an activity they enjoy. Or, your workplace may choose to host an event to gather everyone together, whether that be virtual or in person.

There are lots of ideas around how workplaces may like to get involved. Visit [www.finesthour.ie](http://www.finesthour.ie) to learn more and register.

## Hospice Annual Car Draw 2024/25

We were absolutely delighted with the success of the Annual Car Draw for 2024/25. Due to the enormous generosity of all ticket purchasers this year's Draw, held in the Blanchardstown Centre, achieved a massive total of €187,000. These funds will bring so much comfort, care, and additional supports to our patients and families. Hearty congratulations to all our winners!



We now turn our attention to planning next year's Annual Car Draw 2025/26 thanks to the dedication of staff and volunteers who work quietly behind the scenes making it all happen. It is a privilege to work with such a brilliant team. Onward to 2026!

### Winners

1st Prize

2nd Prize

3rd Prize

4th – 8th Prizes

**Toyota Yaris Cross Luna Hybrid** – J. McKenna

**€2,000** – B. O'Reilly

**€1,000** – B. O'Shaughnessy

**€200 Swirl Voucher** – D. McCoy, M. White, A. Taylor, P. Bell, A. McCardle

I want to make a donation to ensure St. Francis Hospice Dublin can always be there when it is needed

Enclosed is my gift of:  
 €25  €50  €100  Other: € \_\_\_\_\_

Gift Method:  
 Cash or cheque for € \_\_\_\_\_ enclosed

OR

Card Number:

Expiry Date:   /   CVV:

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

OR

Make your gift online at: [www.sfh.ie](http://www.sfh.ie) or call 01 832 7535

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Full Name:

Address:

Phone:

Email:

**St. Francis Hospice**  
 Charity Number: CHY10568  
 Charity Regulator Authority Number: 20027193



By giving monthly you safeguard our future, enabling us to plan and expand our care, knowing that we have the income to do so.

Please charge my credit / debit card the following amount EVERY MONTH:  
 €10  €21\*  €30\*  Other: €

Commencing with the first payment on:-  
 D  B  M  W  T  F  S

\* By donating €21 or more a month St. Francis Hospice can claim a tax refund on your donation

# Your Support Makes a Difference

Together we can ensure that St. Francis Hospice Dublin is here to provide specialist palliative care for the people of north Dublin and surrounding counties



## St. Francis Hospice

## How We Can Stay Connected



**MARCH/APRIL**  
Spring Memorial Walk

**APRIL**  
Your Finest Hour



**OCTOBER - JANUARY 2025**  
Annual Car Draw ticket sales

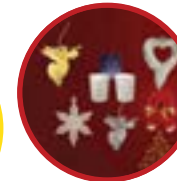


**1ST JUNE**  
Vhi Women's Mini Marathon

**27TH OCTOBER**  
Dublin City Marathon



**6TH/7TH JUNE**  
Sunflower Days Collection



**7TH/8TH NOVEMBER**  
Christmas Appeal Collection



**25TH SEPTEMBER**  
Bewley's Big Coffee Morning for Hospice

**4TH DECEMBER** BLANCHARDSTOWN  
**11TH DECEMBER** RAHENY  
Tree of Life Ceremonies



Donate to [www.sfh.ie](http://www.sfh.ie)

### Hospice Monthly Draw

<b>1st Prize</b> €1,400	Join the Hospice Monthly Draw
<b>2nd Prize</b> €700	€7 per month €84 per year
<b>3rd Prize</b> €500	Contact Pam 01 8327535
<b>4th Prize</b> €250	

### Corporates / Trusts

Please consider partnering with or donating to St Francis Hospice Dublin  
Contact Eimear  
01 8327535

### Hold an Event

Organise your own event and raise funds for St Francis Hospice.

Contact Bernadette or Corinna  
01 8294000

### Collection Boxes / Units

Please place a collection box in your home or business

Contact Karen  
01 8327535



Would you prefer to receive this newsletter by email? Contact [fundraising@sfh.ie](mailto:fundraising@sfh.ie).



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