

## NEWS

## South Tipperary Hospice Movement

# A remarkable story of compassion and phenomenal generosity

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**The twenty seven years South Tipperary Hospice Movement has operated in the homes of families of terminally ill people represents a remarkable story of courage, compassion, dignity and a phenomenal level of generosity.**

The delivery of a specialist palliative care service twenty four hours a day on every day of the year is an incredible achievement and the fact that it is undertaken almost entirely funded by the public makes it all the more remarkable.

A combination of the dedication of the STHM team, which is made up of specialist nurses, office staff, a steering group committee of volunteers and support groups who organise fund raising events and the response of the public has ensured its survival for the last twenty seven years.

South Tipperary Hospice, which operates out of an office in Clonmel, reaches out

to the massive area of South Tipperary and West Waterford which has a population of almost 95,000 with demands on its ability to deliver quality care of patients with complex and demanding care needs in their own homes increasing all of the time.

Those involved in the magnificent team unit behind STHM have been overwhelmed by the heartfelt acts of generosity shown by so many communities for so long. Every act of kindness is so much appreciated.

The spontaneous act of a seven year old schoolgirl who decides to contribute her communion money to the countless groups who come together to raise huge sums of money through tractor runs, vintage car displays, table quizzes, golf classics, shaveathons and all sorts of activities are all crucial to the survival of the service. The hospice annual lunch, crucial to their fundraising efforts, will be held at Hotel Minella on June 14th.

The growing number of charities combined with the recent controversies concerning national charitable



**Members of the South Tipperary Hospice team - Trish Phelan, Anne Grace, Susanne Collins, Aisling Fanning, Mary Connolly, Mags Fitzgerald, Sinaida Jansen, Marie Harold Barry, Nora Lyne, Mary McNamara with the CMG Irish Healthcare Centre Awards 2017**

groups have had a ripple effect on donations and South Tipperary Hospice Movement has noticed a drop off in donations.

STHM will benefit from an annual summer lunch event in Clonmel next month and are encouraging the people living in their catchment area to continue to support the important work they do in the community.

“Without the support of the public there would be no hospice movement. It all began in response to the real

need in the community for such a service. To have nurses going out to homes to provide relief from symptoms and to provide care to the patient surrounded by their family is a priceless infrastructure” said Dr. Sam Kingston, Chairperson of the STHM steering group.

STHM has a clinical lead, Dr. Emmet Walls, consultant in palliative medicine. He attends the STHM weekly meetings, sees patients in both South Tipperary General and University Hospital

Waterford as outpatients as well as seeing inpatients in both these locations.

An out of hours consultant specialist palliative medical conferral advice is available to STHM on a twenty four hour basis.

The movement currently has seven (two full time) nurse specialists and there is a designated occupational therapist who works closely with STHM and attends weekly meetings.

Initially only patients with cancer and Motor Neurone disease were seen but now the service has been expanded to include all who require specialist palliative care including, since 2014, patients with non malignant conditions at end of life.

The STHM home care team made 4,636 visits to patients in 2016.

The total number of deaths that occurred of patients referred to the services in 2016 was 221. 36% of the deaths occurred at home, and the remaining 64% occurred in various locations from nursing homes to district hospitals non specialist beds to the acute hospital set-

ting.

In all of these venues, apart from the acute hospital setting, the nursing staff of STHM continued to attend to the patients.

The night nursing service continues to be an integral part of the care of the dying patient at home. STHM continue to get great support from both the Irish Cancer Society who fund the night nurses for those patients with a malignant diagnosis and the Irish Hospice Foundation who fund those patients with a non malignant diagnosis. 90% of all of the home deaths that STHM was involved in had a night nurse at end of life.

Sinaida Jansen, manager of the hospice office at 3 Mandeville House on the Quay in Clonmel, said the quality of work being carried out in the homes of the patient and in nursing homes and district hospitals was only possible because of the continued support of the people in every community throughout South Tipperary and West Waterford.

## National award for dedicated hospice team

**Earlier this year the South Tipperary Hospice Movement was given national recognition for the initiative it showed in taking measures to enable its home care team to deliver the best possible service in homes in all parts of South Tipperary and West Waterford.**

The voluntary organisation was awarded the Irish Health Care 2017 award for the introduction of a computerised management system.

Integral to ensuring the best possible service is delivered in those homes is ensuring that the home care team is fully equipped with all of the information they require and a transformation of the office record system was required.

South Tipperary Hospice secured the prestigious award for successfully implementing a transfer of information to digital allowing

personnel in the field to use laptops which guaranteed access to vital information remotely.

The use of traditional hand written notes with copies of OPD letters, scan reports and blood results kept in the office in Clonmel was no longer deemed fit for purpose. It was cumbersome and time consuming and did not lend itself to allow ready access to all notes by all staff particularly when on call out of hours.

Because of this time was taken from direct patient contact as a lot of time was spent traveling to and from the office collecting notes and getting information on new referrals.

In a massive area of over 2,500 square kilometers with a population almost 95,000 the dated system was a drain on one of the most valuable components of the delivery of a good service - time.



**Anne Grace and Mary Connolly of the South Tipperary Hospice accepting the Irish Healthcare Centre Award 2017 from Marty Whelan.**

The purpose of the planned transformation of records was to reduce traveling to and from the office daily to update charts and read up on new patients, and ultimately create more direct time with patients and families.

The new system allowed for better decision making as all patients visits and records are up to date and accessible by all members of the team

24/7. Notes are now typed and the likelihood of errors from indecipherable writing was reduced.

The laptops to be used by the specialist home care team were sponsored by a local company and the office collaborated with the HSE to ensure the laptops were encrypted to safeguard confidentiality as well as to secure the information collated.

## A cancer diagnosis changes everything

**Anne Grace is one of the home care specialist nurses who sees at first hand just how much the South Tipperary Hospice Movement team means to the families and their loved ones.**

Anne and her nursing colleagues are backed up by a powerful team unit that consists of a dedicated office staff, a passionate volunteer steering group, a support fundraising committee and so many groups and individuals throughout South Tipperary and West Waterford who year in year out organise fundraising events to ensure that the service is kept on the road. She said they worked very closely with the GPs and paid tribute to the incredible work being done in the three district hospitals of Carrick, Clogheen and Tipperary.

Every day Anne observes just how much those coping in their homes with a terminally ill loved one rely on the

hospice team.

Just how important that service is evident to Anne and her colleagues every day.

“When somebody is diagnosed with cancer it changes everything in the house. The lives of the patient and the family is turned upside down, employment is affected and everything centres on hospital appointments for surgery, treatment, meetings. It changes things for everybody in the house and it means everything to all of us to be able to support these families in any way possible on this journey,” said Anne.

Anne believes that if somebody is able to remain in their own home surrounded by their loved ones the presence of the hospice nurse was an important medical, psychological and spiritual comfort to all involved in looking after all of their needs.

“To be able to give this service in the home with people surrounded by their loving family makes it all worthwhile” said Anne.