

# The Laois/Offaly Leader

A Monthly Newsletter Published by Offaly Centre for Independent Living Ltd/Offaly Personal Assistant Services Ltd,  
Clonminch Road, Tullamore, Co. Offaly.

Phone 057 9322832, Fax 057 93 60341, Web: [www.offalycil.ie](http://www.offalycil.ie)

*This newsletter is available online and in large font*

*Issue 1, Jan/Feb 2013*



## **Launch of 'My Life with Me in It' and Paying Tribute to Ailish Dunne**

OCIL Ltd had good cause to celebrate on Thursday 24th January last, when their promotional DVD, 'My Life With Me in It' was formally launched by Minister Jimmy Deenihan, Minister for Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht Affairs in the Tullamore Court Hotel. A presentation was also made to Ailish Dunne, who represented Ireland in the London



**Minister Jimmy Deenihan and Paddy Slattery**



2012 Paralympics.

'My Life with Me in It', a thirty-eight minute feature, was produced and directed by Leader and filmmaker Paddy Slattery, who has recently released his own latest film, a paranormal drama called 'Runner.'

The evening was opened by Mary Grogan, Chairperson of OCIL Ltd. Mary welcomed the Minister to the launch, and

then spoke of the many activities that OCIL and OPAS Ltd have engaged in over the years, including the provision of Care Plans for Leaders and the acquisition of Clochan House.

Mary then introduced Paddy who gave a very short but memorable speech about his aspirations and how, following his accident in 1996, he has endeavoured to live life to the full. Paddy paid tribute to Mick Nestor and explained that it was Mick's no-nonsense approach that inspired him to start living again after his accident and to follow his dreams.

Minister Deenihan was then invited to speak and to officially launch the DVD. In his speech, the Minister congratulated Ailish Dunne for her achievements in the Paralympic game London last summer, and stressed the privilege of representing her country in the stadium in London. Ailish had been filmed as part of the DVD three years ago when representing her country in the London Paralympics 2012 was merely a dream. Now, she is hoping to be part of the 2016 Paralympics which will take place in Rio.

Finally, Minister Deenihan presented Paddy with a piece of Bog Oak as a token of appreciation for all his hard work in making the documentary. Ailish was also presented with a piece of Bog Oak for her great achievement in representing Ireland in the Shot Put and Discus events at the London Paralympics 2012.

Overall, the evening was a resounding success, with many Leaders, P.As and local politicians coming together to watch the DVD and to pay tribute to Ailish. We would like to say thank you to the Tullamore Court Hotel, who sponsored the room on the night. We would also like to once again congratulate Ailish Dunne and Paddy Slattery on their remarkable achievements over the last couple of years.



*Photographed are Jim Buckley, Adrian Cuneen, Joanne Darcy, Maura Morgan, Minister Jimmy Deenihan, Mary Grogan, Marcella Corcoran-Kennedy TD and Michael Nestor.*



*Michael Nestor & Minister Jimmy Deenihan*

## **Note from the Editor:**

Welcome to the first newsletter of the New Year! January has been a very busy month for OCIL Ltd/OPAS Ltd. We have been meeting with Leaders and Personal Assistants to gain an insight into what they expect from our Strategic Plan. The feedback from these meetings has been very interesting, in particular in relation to Clochan House and activities for Leaders. Your feedback will help us to provide a high quality service that has been specifically tailored for your needs.

In addition to these meetings, January saw the official launch of 'My Life With Me in It' a short documentary which details the growth of OCIL Ltd as an organisation.

In this edition of 'The Laois/Offaly Leader', there is a guide to accessible places to eat in Tullamore, as well as information about how popular technology such as iPads and iPhones are becoming increasingly user-friendly for people with various impairments. In addition, Marie Duffy shares her experience of staying in Clochan House. There is another competition on the back page, and I would encourage you to enter, as there is a prize to be won!

Don't forget to join our Facebook page (search for 'Offaly CIL OCIL') and log into [www.offalycil.ie](http://www.offalycil.ie) for updates on what's happening within the organisation.

*Sarah Fitzgerald, Researcher/PRO OCIL Ltd.*



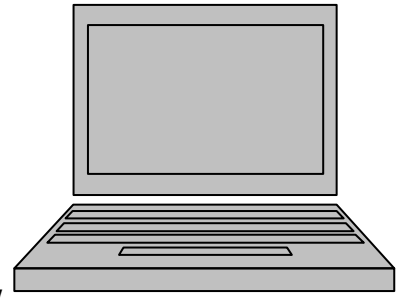
*Matt Connor, Minister Deenihan and Brendan Lowry*



*Leaders and Personal Assistants enjoying themselves at the launch. Also pictured are Minister Deenihan and Martin Naughton.*

## **Modern technology and accessibility:**

**With an increasing number of Leaders doing their day-to-day business online, I pondered on the abundance of new and emerging technologies available and how they could be used to enable Leaders to communicate with us and with other.**



Nowadays, nearly every one of us has a mobile phone, from which the internet can be accessed. The iPhone is becoming increasingly popular and have many useful functions such as text-to-speech, large text, white text on a black background, hearing aid mode and assisted touch. Many functions are also available on Android/touchscreen phones, and the makers of Android phones are quickly coming round to the importance

of making their phones accessible to people with various disabilities.

Twenty years ago, very few people had computers in their homes. Now laptops, iPads and Notebooks are very popular because of their portability. An iPad comprises of simply a screen with an integrated camera on the back so that you can take photos and check emails on the go. There are many accessibility features such as a voiceover facility, inverting colours e.g. white-on-black background, Braille displays, reading online Books aloud (iBooks is free to download). The iPad can also tell the user what time of day it is and how much battery power is left.

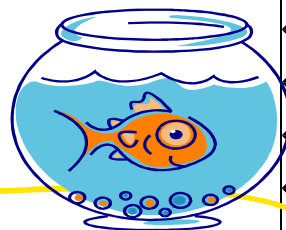


***If you have any information about the accessibility features on phones, tablets or laptops, or if you would like to share your opinion or experiences, please email Sarah at [sarah@ocil.ie](mailto:sarah@ocil.ie)***

## **Marie Duffy's Experience of Clochan House**

**In 2012, Offaly Centre for Independent Living Ltd took over the day-to-day running of Clochan House, a respite centre which is located behind the Health Centre in Tullamore. One of our Leaders, Marie Duffy stayed there recently and really enjoyed her time there.**

'I have four breaks at Clochan House and would have to say each time has been a very enjoyable experience. The slogan "A home away from home" says it all. My family can come to visit me and its like they are coming to my home, they can make a cup of tea or coffee, sit down and have a chat. My little grandchild Sophia loves visiting; she has such freedom. She is mad about the fish pond, and the staff let her feed the fish when she visits. As a result of this, she now has a fish tank at home with two goldfish called Nemo and Goldie.



'Each one of the staff are brilliant and the standard of care is wonderful. They go beyond to help the guests; nothing is too much for them. They are there if you want to moan about your lot, they will listen to your problems and will help in every way they can.



'When my husband Andy had his 2nd leg amputated in December, I was in Clochan House during this time, and the staff were there to listen to me, to help me and to give advice. It was great to be there, I was able to go up to visit Andy every day. The joke during my stay was that I'd go up to Andy and all I'd see would be the back of the paper. Andy gets the paper every day and reads every inch of print on it, so some days we had no conversation only 'hello' and 'I'm off now see you later'. That's what comes after 40 years of marriage.

'I would like to say thank you to OCIL for affording me the opportunity to go to Clochan House and please God I will have more visits in 2013.'

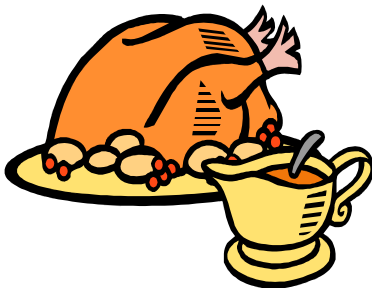
***For more information on Clochan House, please contact Angela Feery on 05793 59607.***

# **Accessible Places To Eat in Offaly**

***Choosing somewhere to grab a bite can be a tricky business, even more so if you are a wheelchair user. However, there are some places which offer good wheelchair access– and really tasty food too! Here is a snippet of some accessible restaurants in Tullamore.***

## **The Tullamore Court Hotel:**

The Tullamore Court Hotel is a five minute walk from the centre of town, and provides ample parking spaces including accessible parking spaces, two of which are to the front of the hotel. There is level access and although there are two revolving doors, they can be slowed down or access is available via emergency exits beside these doors. In the bar area, the tables are at a suitable height for a wheelchair user and there is an accessible toilet with baby changing facilities available. A wide range of dinners and snacks are available.

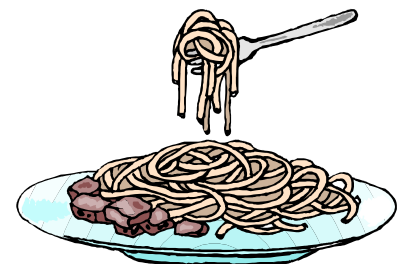


## **The Wolftrap:**

The Wolftrap, which is located on William Street in Tullamore, is also accessible. There are tables available and the entire premises is level access. A wide range of dinners and snacks are available, and there is an accessible toilet with baby changing facilities. Parking is available around the back of the Wolftrap 'the old Texas car park', and there is also an accessible space on the top of Harbour Street, near Annie Kelly's pub.

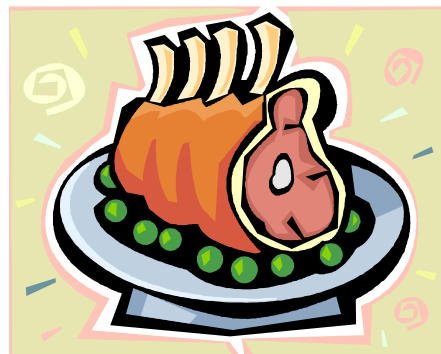
## **Sirocco's:**

Fancy some Italian? Then Sirocco's will not disappoint! Located on Patrick Street in Tullamore, where there is accessible parking on either side of the street, Sirocco's is a very popular restaurant. Although it is a little tight inside, reports indicate that staff make an enormous effort to accommodate wheelchair users. There is a small step outside the restaurant but it is manageable. The varied menu caters for all tastes, including vegetarians.



## **The Bridge House:**

For those who are native to Tullamore, it may seem hard to believe that the Bridge House is now accessible. The 'old part' has been renovated and ramped, and there is even an accessible toilet. Low tables are available. The 'new part' is accessible via a lift in the leisure centre. As well as the traditional fare that the Bridge House has offered for years, there is now an Italian restaurant open upstairs in the 'new part' of the hotel. Accessible parking is available outside the Bridge House Leisure Centre, in the Bridge Centre Car Park opposite the hotel, or in O'Connor Square.



*For more info on accessible pubs and restaurants, visit [www.smallerworld.ie](http://www.smallerworld.ie).*

## **Budget 2013: How will it affect you?**

The day every single person in the country had been dreading finally came on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2012: Budget Day. The real question, however, is how will the changes in the Budget impact on the lives of Leaders across Laois and Offaly?

The main points included:

- The annual Respite Care Grant has been reduced from a rate of €1,700 in 2012 to €1,375 in 2013. This will not only impact the clients of respite services but their families also, as many Leaders receive a high level of care from family members.
- The cuts in the Household Benefits Package may affect Leaders who have additional costs in the area of heating, electricity and telephone.
- The prescription charge for medical card holders has increased from 50c to €1.50 per item.



For more information, please visit [www.welfare.ie](http://www.welfare.ie) or [www.disability-federation.ie](http://www.disability-federation.ie)

## Competition Winner!

Well done to Sandra Robinson, who won our Christmas Competition, and thanks to all of you who entered! For those of you who missed out why not enter this month's competition and win yourself a nice prize?

Sandra's name was picked at random from a selection of correct answers. In case you don't believe us, we've provided photographic evidence!



## Staff and BOD of OCIL/OPAS Ltd:

### Staff:

Mick Nestor (Manager) OCIL Ltd, OPAS Ltd and Clochan House)  
Deirdre Fox (Assistant Manager, OCIL Ltd and Clochan House)  
Aoife Fox (Department of Social Protection Project Supervisor)  
Tina Kelly (Department of Social Protection Project Assistant Supervisor)  
Noirin Chalouche (HSE Supervisor, Offaly)  
Rita Dillane (Payroll Administrator)  
Gabriel Hayden (Financial Administrator)  
Sean Rickard (Leader Co-ordinator)  
Martina Bracken (Receptionist)  
Deirdre Martin (DSP FETAC Level 5 Facilitator/Care Plans)  
Sarah Fitzgerald (Researcher/PRO)  
Denise Donnellan (DSP Policy Document)

### Board of Directors:

Mary Grogan (Chairperson and Director)  
Michael Nestor (Company Secretary and Director)  
Frances Berry (Company Treasurer and Director)  
Garrett Culliton (Director)  
Mary Smyth (Director)  
Jim Buckley (director)  
Mary Culliton (Director)