

The Laois/Offaly Leader

A bimonthly newsletter published by Offaly Centre for Independent Living Ltd/Offaly Personal Assistant Services Ltd

This newsletter is available online and in large font

January-February 2015



Bake Party held in Aid of Concern Worldwide:

OCIL Ltd hosted a Bake Sale on Monday 2nd March last to mark International Women's Day, which officially took place on Sunday 8th March. The purpose of the Bake Sale was to raise funds for Concern's work with women and girls in some of the poorest countries of the world. The event raised €218.00 for this worthy cause, and OCIL Ltd has added €100, bringing the total



to €318.00. We would like to thank all Leaders and P.As who took part in this worthwhile fundraising effort.

Although women are becoming increasingly visible in Irish society, this is not the case in developing countries. Education for women is perceived as a privilege, not a right. The money raised from this venture can help to educate women in these countries and offer them a better future.

- For every €104 raised, Concern can provide four children with school kits (school bags and school books)
- For every €400 raised, Concern can provide training to five teachers for a full 6 months. Adequate teacher

training is vital for quality education, but few teachers in poor communities can access proper training.

- For every €1150 raised, Concern can provide a temporary learning space during an emergency, offering stability and the opportunity to continue their education during a crisis.

Thanks to all who attended.

Twenty Year Anniversary of Ed Roberts

In September, OCIL Ltd will be celebrating twenty years of providing Personal Assistance to Leaders in Offaly. However, Independent Living is not an Irish phenomenon; it took almost thirty years to travel across the Atlantic to Ireland. The Personal Assistant Service originated in the US, and the 20th anniversary of the death of one of the leading figures in the Independent Living Movement, Ed Roberts, takes place on 15 March 1995.



One of my first tasks following my appointment as Researcher in OCIL Ltd in 2008 was to research the life and work of Ed Roberts, who I'd never heard of before. Even after reading about his extraordinary life, it was impossible for me to predict the impact his story would have on how I perceived independent living. Roberts questioned the status quo during the 1960s, an era of great political change in the US. Despite being almost paralysed by polio, Roberts finished his education via telephone correspondence and decided to apply to the University of California, Berkeley.

Ed and his mother Zona soon learned that there were perceived physical and attitudinal barriers to Ed's participation in College. Ed could not do his driving test and was almost not awarded his High School Diploma. The pair challenged this, and soon Ed was on his way to uni. He had to fight for the support he needed in College, and as one University Dean famously

told him, 'We've tried cripples before and it didn't work'. Eventually he was granted accommodation in the medical wing of Campus, Cowell Hospital, which would accommodate his iron lung. Ed agreed to live there on the condition that the space was treated as a dormitory, not a hospital.

After his mother Zona helped him with his Personal Care needs for a week, Ed decided to take charge of his own care and hired an 'attendant', better known as a Personal Assistant. This prompted the formation of a group of people with disabilities, who named themselves 'The Rolling Quads' and who campaigned to exercise control over their own lives. They referred to this as 'cripple power'.

Roberts is to be commended not only for his role in establishing the first Center for Independent Living in California in 1972, but for highlighting inequality within his local community. For example, the Rolling Quads campaigned for kerb cuts (accessible footpaths) and equal access on public transport. He went on with another disability activist Judy Heumann to establish the World Institute on Disability.

Ed Roberts may have died on 15 March 1995, but his legacy lives on in OCIL Ltd. We must never forget the passion and energy behind the establishment of Offaly CIL Ltd and we must always recognise the true value of Independent Living in our local community.

Rest in Peace:

We extend our sympathies to the family of Mick Heffernan, who have passed away since our last newsletter. May he rest in peace.

Paddy Slattery Wins Award at Film Festival:

Heartiest congratulations to Paddy Slattery and his crew, who won a Royal Television Society award for Best Short Drama for their short film *Skunky Dog*. The awards were held in February in the RTE studios. Well done to all involved.

Update on the Offaly Leader Forum:

The Offaly Leader Forum has been in existence since March 2013. The group were initially brought together by OCIL Ltd staff members who identified the need for Leaders to come together and discuss issues affecting them in the wider community. It's hard to believe now, but some Leaders did not know each other and had never crossed paths before. I found this interesting because it's often assumed that people with disabilities all know each other!

Personally, I am amazed by the diversity of personalities around the table and how well we all work together. Some of us are working, others are still in education, others still enjoy being active parts of our local community. My favourite thing about the Forum is that there is no hierarchy; everybody around the table is treated with equal amounts of respect and dignity. Although our meetings are structured, we gel well together as a group. As secretary I have a great excuse to catch up with each member individually and to exchange pleasantries via email and these often make my day.



The OLF Group have a busy year ahead. We are in the final stages of compiling an access audit of Tullamore with the help of the wonderful Naoise Cunningham, and we are planning self-development workshops which will be delivered in part by our fellow forum member, Sharon Tracey. In addition, we are planning an event for September, perhaps a Leader Achievement Awards, which will coincide with OCIL Ltd being twenty years in existence. I'm hopeful this goes ahead as it will remind people that Leaders, PAs, Independent Living and OCIL/OPAS Ltd play an important role in our community.

I feel that the OLF have the potential to influence how disability is perceived in our local community and would urge anyone with a disability in Offaly, even if they are not currently receiving a P.A. service, to come along and see for yourself what we do. We promise to make you feel welcome and not to pressure you into making commitments; after all, the Forum is there to support you and provide a safe place for you to air your views.

For further information, please contact Sarah at 057 93 22832 or email offalyleaderforum@hotmail.com.

Blue Tesco Tokens Being Collected for OCIL Ltd:

Blue goodwill tokens are currently being collected on behalf of OCIL Ltd in Tesco Tullamore, in the hope of raising money for the organisation. Here is how it works: The customers are given a good will token each time they shop. They select one of three charities. After six weeks Tesco will split 1000 between them with the one with the most tokens will get the most money.

Members of the Offaly Leader Forum Group promoted OCIL Ltd on Friday 27th and Saturday 28th February 2015. Well done to those who volunteered their time to promote the philosophy of Independent Living.



Our website: A Message from Emmet Grogan

Hi everybody! For anyone that doesn't know I am working with Offaly Centre for Independent Living Ltd. I am managing their website & keeping it up to date.



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If you as leaders & PAs would like to see anything on the site that isn't on it already or prefer not to see something that is on the site please let me know if you see me around. If you would prefer you can e-mail me your comments, suggestions or criticisms to

groganemmet@hotmail.com

Remember you are part of OCIL therefore you are part of deciding what goes on the website. My main aim in managing the website is bringing the information in that you as leaders & PAs want to see to you so it will hopefully benefit you in your daily lives.

Appointment of new manager:

The Board of Directors are pleased to announce that Mr. Enda Egan has been appointed as manager of OCIL Ltd and Clochan House. Enda will officially commence his role as manager on 23 March 2015. We extend a warm welcome to Enda and we look forward to working with him in the future.

Michael Nestor has assumed the role of Leader Development Officer and is looking forward to meeting all of our Leaders on a one-to-one basis in the near future. Michael was the driving force behind the founding of OCIL Ltd in 1995 and has given much of his time and energy to the promotion of the Independent Living Philosophy over the last twenty years. The staff of OCIL Ltd and OPAS Ltd would like to thank Mick for all of his hard work over the years.

Personal Effectiveness Workshop:

Members of the Offaly Leader Forum will be taking part in two Personal Effectiveness Workshops on Monday 16 March and Friday 27 March 2015. The quota for these workshops have been filled but if you are interested in taking part in future workshops, please contact Sarah on 057 93 22832 or email sarah@ocil.ie.

Research on the history of OCIL Ltd:

To mark the 20th anniversary of Offaly Centre for Independent Living Ltd, Sarah Fitzgerald will be compiling a history of OCIL Ltd in the coming months. If you would like to contribute your experiences, or if you have any photographs or articles at home that you would like to share, please contact Sarah Fitzgerald at 057 93 22832 or sarah@ocil.ie.

Reopening of Clochan House:

Clochan house will be opening around the end of April/May. We will be recruiting P.As for Clochan House shortly. More info to follow-watch this space!



Offaly Centre for Independent Living (OCIL) Ltd/Offaly Personal Assistant Services (OPAS) Ltd

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