

# The Laois/Offaly Leader



*A monthly newsletter issued by Offaly Centre for  
Independent Living Ltd/Offaly Personal Assistant  
Services Ltd*

*This newsletter is available online and in large font*

## Merry Christmas from all staff at OCIL Ltd & OPAS Ltd

### Offaly Leader Forum Fashion Show A Resounding Success!

The event of the year, the Offaly Leader Forum Fashion Show, took place in the Tullamore Court Hotel on the 21st November last. Members of the Leader Forum had been promoting the show since September and a staggering 600 spectators came to an event which would normally only attract 150 people.

The Fashion Show was one of the biggest achievements by our Leaders. Never before in the history of Independent Living in Offaly have Leaders fully organised, coordinated and successfully executed such a large event. Although OCIL Ltd staff were involved in the organisation of the event, their



*Paul Hickey modelling for Carroll's Menswear*

role was to support the Forum and they took instructions from Forum members and helped out as they were needed.

In the run up to the show itself, the Leaders promoted the Fashion Show via Facebook, in the local papers, and in the Bridge Centre Tullamore. Midlands Radio 103 interviewed Sharon Tracey, Tina Kelly and Mick Nestor on 11th November 2013, which gave the Offaly Leader Forum the opportunity to promote both the Fashion Show and the services that OCIL Ltd and OPAS Ltd provides. Paul Hickey (PRO Offaly Leader Forum) ensured that the Fashion Show was well advertised in the local papers.

The key theme of the Fashion Show, which came across very strongly on the night, was community, belonging and equality. This theme was further reinforced by the number of local shops and businesses who fully supported the Fashion Show. The message was that each and every person, regardless of whether or not they have disabilities, deserve to enjoy membership of their local communities.

The Fashion Show not only highlighted the outer beauty of the models and their clothes, but also of the inner beauty of each individual modelling on the catwalk. The models were Leaders,



*Janet Gill and Emmet Grogan catch up during the Fashion Show*



*Fiona Flynn strutting her stuff*

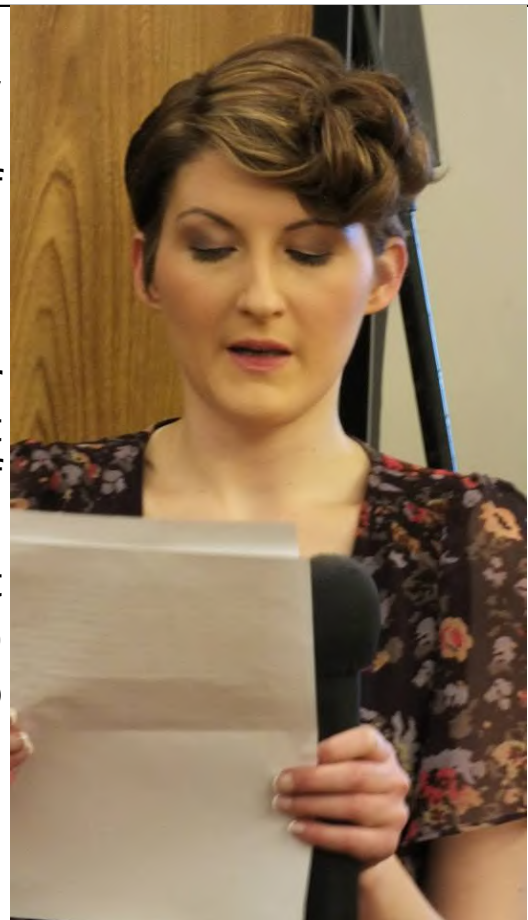
Personal Assistants, their family and friends and very few of them had modelled before. Although there were a lot of nerves backstage, most of the models really enjoyed the experience, with some even volunteering their

Chairperson of the Offaly Leader Forum, Catherine Molloy, opened the evening by welcoming the audience to the Fashion Show and by reinforcing the importance of inclusion and equality in our community. She thanked the models and local businesses for supporting the show and commended OCIL Ltd and OPAS Ltd for providing a Personal Assistant Service that enables Leaders to be independent of their families.

As well as observing some of the finest fashions that the town of Tullamore has to offer, the audience were also entertained by Jive Inferno, who are a husband and wife dancing duo (Lekan and Peggy Akinyemi). The audience also had a laugh with the comedian Paul Keating, who lured unsuspecting audience members into his act.



*Comedian Paul Keating has the audience in stitches!*



*Catherine Molloy, Chairperson Offaly Leader Forum, gives her Opening Speech*

The music was provided by Martin Goulding and Brendan Darcy who played a variety of music to suit each stage of the Fashion Show.

Before the interval, the winner of the door prizes was announced and consequently, the raffle tickets sold extremely quickly. The door prize was a €400 voucher from My Fair Lady. There were over fifty other raffle prizes up for grabs, all of which had been generously sponsored by local shops and businesses.

For many people, the highlight of the evening was the surprise wedding finale. The wedding party walked up in a procession in the middle of the audience, just like a real wedding. The models involved were dressed by My Fair Lady, Galvins for Men and Guy Clothing. The bride (Catherine Molloy) walked up the aisle to 'Chapel of Love', and sources have revealed that there were actually some tears shed by audience members on the night!

Following the Fashion Show, photographs of the wedding scene have been circulated on Facebook, and Paul and Catherine have both been contacted by family and friends and asked whether they really did get married!



*The Bridal Party. Back Row Breda Daly, Mary Grogan, Sara O'Malley and Melissa Bracken. Flowergirl is Maya Chalouche and pageboy is Oisín Moran*

In fact it was revealed at a forum meeting lately that Paul has not corrected anyone who has congratulated him and his new bride!

Finally, Chairperson of OCIL Ltd Mary Grogan closed the evening. In her speech she commended the Leader Forum in organising one of the most enjoyable and successful events that OCIL Ltd has ever organised. She thanked all of the local businesses and organisations who had supported the Fashion Show and acknowledged the role played by OCIL Ltd staff in supporting the agenda of the Offaly Leader Forum.



*Here comes the Bride Catherine Molloy walks down the aisle with her 'father' Fergus Byrne.*

Mary also congratulated the Leader Forum for succeeding to get the message across very clearly: Each and every one of us are important and valued members of our community. Mary was particularly impressed by how the Fashion Show had created such an awareness of Independent Living in the wider community.

Overall, the Offaly Leader Forum's 'Fashion Show with a Difference' was a resounding success, with people already asking about next year's event! The show has boosted the confidence of our Leaders and Personal Assistants who modelled on the night, and has brought Leaders and Personal Assistants closer together.

On behalf of OCIL Ltd, I would like to thank each and every model, business and clothes shop for supporting our Fashion Show so generously and giving their time to this project. I also want to thank each Offaly Leader Forum Member for their commitment and conscientiousness for the last six months. It is truly amazing what can be achieved with teamwork. The only problem now is deciding what event to organise next year!

**Sarah Fitzgerald**



*The happy couple: Catherine Molloy and Paul Hickey 'get hitched' at the Offaly Leader Forum Fashion Show. Also pictured are Fergus Byrne, Offaly Leader Forum Treasurer Tom Milne and Jesus Montes.*

# **2013 In Review**

*What were the highlights of 2013? Let's find out...*

## **Launch of Documentary, 'My Life With Me In It':**

On 24th January 2013, OCIL Ltd's first video documentary, 'My Life With Me In It' was launched by Minister Jimmy Deenihan in the Tullamore Court Hotel. The documentary, which details the history of OCIL Ltd as an organisation, as well as giving an insight into the lives of three very different Leaders, was produced and directed by Leader and international film making star Paddy Slattery and SAD Mantra Productions and researched by Sarah Fitzgerald.



Minister Deenihan & Paddy Slattery

## **Training Days and Talks:**

Personal Assistants received training in Healthcare Support which is FETAC accredited. There has also been a number of Health and Safety at Work and Occupational First Aid courses held over the last few months.



A suicide awareness course called safeTALK was also facilitated which taught participants how to recognise suicidal intentions and where to get support. At present a more comprehensive suicide

awareness course is being offered by the HSE called A.S.I.S.T. (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training) Programme which is a two-day intensive, interactive and practice dominated workshop designed to help caregivers recognise the immediate risk of suicide and learn how to intervene to prevent the tragic consequences of suicide.

Some of the training lined up for 2014 includes Advanced Electrical Defibrillation (AED) which will train all office staff how to use the defibrillator.

we start the new year on 15th Jan with the module of Infection control and prevention for our final group of PAs who are undertaking the FETAC level full award in Healthcare support. Places have also been offered to some PAs who have achieved their full award already.

## **Formation of the Offaly Leader Forum:**

The Offaly Leader Forum was officially formed in April 2013, with the aim of increasing awareness of and participation in the Independent Living Movement in Offaly. Apart from organising a 'Fashion Show with a Difference', the Offaly Leader Forum held coffee mornings, and discussed issues that affect all Leaders such as employment and the lack of accessible transport.



## **Coffee Mornings:**

The Offaly Leader Forum held two coffee mornings in the OCIL Ltd offices throughout the year. Although attendance at the coffee mornings was disappointing, it gave the Leaders who attended the opportunity to meet up and share experiences and ideas. They also inspired the Offaly Leader Forum to aim higher and reach out to the wider community.



Tom Milne and Catherine Molloy at the Offaly Leader Forum coffee morning in May

## **Clochan House:**

Clochan House continues to be an invaluable resource for many of our Leaders across Laois and Offaly, with many of our Leaders enjoying respite there throughout the year.



*Support your local economy this Christmas*

*And buy Irish made gifts*

*For your family and friends*



## **Christmas Closures:**

The Offaly Centre for Independent Living Ltd Offices will close for Christmas on Friday, 20th December 2013 and will reopen on Thursday 2nd January 2014. The staff of OCIL Ltd and OPAS Ltd would like to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and look forward to working with you all in the New Year.



**“The greatest glory in living  
lies not in never falling,  
but in rising every time we fall.”**

**- Nelson Mandela, 1918-2013**

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