

# The Laois/Offaly Leader



A Newsletter Published By Offaly Centre for Independent Living  
Ltd/ Offaly Personal Assistant Services Ltd

*This newsletter is available online and in large font*

*Merry  
Christmas*

## **A Welcome Note From Mary Grogan, Chairperson OCIL Ltd.**

Welcome to the Christmas Edition of 'The Laois/Offaly Leader'. This edition of our newsletter is full of festive fun, and I would like to encourage you to enter our Christmas Quiz, as there are prizes to be won!

2012 has been a very busy year for OCIL Ltd.

Many changes have occurred within the organisation, in particular, the takeover of Clochan House. Although the implementation of these changes has been a steep learning curve, they have nonetheless been instrumental in strengthening the relationship between Board Members, Staff and Leaders.

Despite all the negativity in the media about cutbacks to vital services, we as an organisation must look forward positively and continue to address the ever-changing needs of our Leaders. With the development of a Strategic Plan for the OCIL Movement, we hope to ensure that these needs continue to be met and to improve written and verbal communication between all areas of the organisation. Our website, along with this newsletter and our new Facebook page, will be used to encourage communication between OCIL Ltd as an organisation and you, the Leader.

I sincerely hope that Christmas 2012 is a peaceful and happy one for you all, and that 2013 is a productive year for OCIL Ltd. I look forward to 2013 and to continuing the good work that has ensured such a high quality service for our Leaders to date.

Mary Grogan, Chairperson OCIL Ltd.

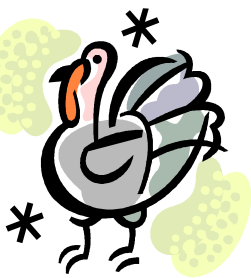


# I'm Dreaming of a 'Tight Christmas'...

Ireland has been in the grips of the worst economic recession since the 1980s. We all have to tighten our belts, even if that means that we have to trim the aul' Christmas Budget a little. But that doesn't mean that you still can't have a magical Christmas!



## Christmas dinner:



If you have a large family or if you are catering for eight people or more on Christmas Day, then a turkey with all the trimmings is a good idea. However, if you are not a big fan of turkey, or if there are only a few of you for dinner, you could cook some ham, chicken or pork instead—which is a fraction of the hassle, effort and price.

## Christmas presents:

It sounds like common sense, but mix some special offers and manic shoppers and common sense goes out the window! Make a list and a budget and stick to it. Don't spend any more than you can afford. If you have lots of family and friends to buy for, perhaps a 'Kris Kindle' arrangement would work well. This is when everyone involved picks a name out of a hat and buys a present for that person only—within a reasonable budget e.g. €20.



'Kris Kindle' has its origins in Germany, where many children believe that an angel of the Christ Child brings them their Christmas presents.

## Christmas Cards:

Christmas Cards can be expensive, so if you are going to buy them, why not see if your favourite charity are selling them, so that you can kill two birds with one stone? Alternatively you could send handmade sentiments or even online greetings if you spent a lot of time on the web.



## I.O.U.s:



Why do presents have to be material things? I.O.U.s are a great way of showing your love to your family and friends. For example, you could make I.O.U. coupons to bring the recipient for a nice lunch, to wash their car, to mind their kids, to do their shopping and so on, in the New Year when there sometimes is little else to look forward to.

## Christmas Traditions from Around The Globe

How will you be celebrating Christmas this year? Will you be having dinner with family and friends? Will you be waiting for Santa, or for a sneaky kiss under the mistletoe? However you spend Christmas, one thing's for certain—everybody in the world will be celebrating very differently.

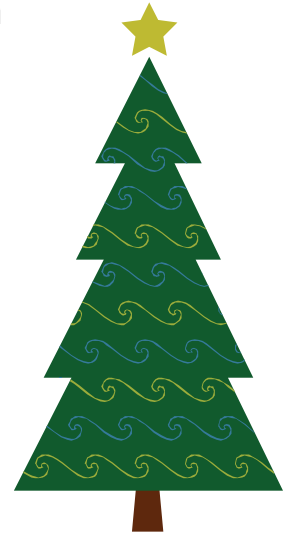
Santa comes to Ireland on the night of December 24th, but he arrives in Hungary on December 6th, and little Jesus leaves them some presents on Christmas Eve. Irish children might offer Santa cake or a whiskey, while in the US it is customary to offer milk and cookies.



Many children will also be hanging up stockings for Christmas. However, French children will be leaving out their shoe for 'Pere Noel' (Father Christmas) and Dutch children do the same—only they fill their shoes with hay and carrots for the reindeer.

Many of our Christmas traditions have originated in Germany, such as the concept of Kris Kingle, or 'Secret Santa'. On Christmas Eve, German children eagerly await the arrival of Kris Kingle, who is believed to be an angel of the Christ Child. The Germans have also been noted for introducing the tradition of Christmas trees, and it was Martin Luther who first added lighted candles to a Christmas tree.

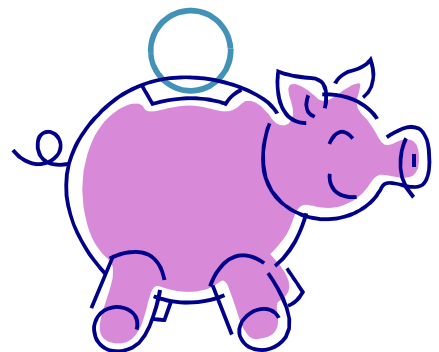
Today, we decorate our trees with many things including ornaments, baubles and lights, and we top the tree with either a star (to represent the star that the three wise men followed) or an angel (to represent Mary's visit by an angel).



### Update on Standard Bank Accounts:

In the Autumn edition of 'The Laois/Offaly Leader', there was an article about 'Standard Bank Accounts', which are being offered to people who do not have a current bank account. The Standard Bank Account is a simplified version of the traditional bank account and is designed to encourage people without current accounts to access banking services.

In an attempt to measure the impact of this scheme, I would like you, the Leader, to contact me with any feedback you may have. Feel free to contact me also if you would like to know more about this scheme at [sarah@ocil.ie](mailto:sarah@ocil.ie).





# Mulled Wine Recipe

A great way of ensuring that you are full of the Christmas Spirit  
this Winter!

## You will need:

- 2 clementines
- 1 lemon
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 1 (1 in) piece of ginger, peeled and sliced in two
- small handful of whole cloves
- 150g sugar
- 500ml water
- 2 bottles red wine



Get a large pot and add the zest of the two clementines. Peel one and add the slices to the pot. Stick about 15 cloves into the other and add. Zest the lemon into the pot, slice the body in two and add. Add your stick of cinnamon and ginger. Boil the 500ml water and dissolve the sugar in it. Add to the pot. Add the wine. Cover and put on a very low heat. Do not boil it, just heat it gently. To serve either sieve the whole lot into a fresh pot or sieve by the glass.

## Thank You!

We would like to extend a big thank you to all of our hard-working Personal Assistants who do Trojan work every day to ensure that Leaders can live independently and make their own choices.  
Thank you all so much!



# Pat Dwyer's Response to the recent Government U turn to proposed cuts of Personal Assistant hours.

The government's proposed cutbacks to Personal Assistant Services in October would have had a detrimental effect on the lives of people with disabilities around the country.



Pat Dwyer, a Leader from Thurles who lives in Portlaoise, uses the service to maximise his independence to lead a normal independent life and to facilitate his family to lead their own lives without him being dependent on them for every task.

Pat Dwyer lives in Portlaoise with his teacher wife Joan and they have three children (Martina 22, Paul 21 and Isabel 13). Pat worked all his life until his MS progressed to the stage he had to give up work in 2004.

Pat describes himself as 'smiling in the face of adversity', and it is this positivity that enabled him to publish his own book, 'Bright Clouds', which seamlessly intertwines factual information about MS with his own experiences of the condition. He also published a book of poetry called 'Above Ground and Breathing' and donated the proceeds from the sale of the book to the Offaly MS Society and a book of poetry 'From Thurles to Cuba with Love'.

In October 2012, Pat undertook to become a school ambassador for MS, which involved visiting schools in Laois to explain about MS and encourage pupils to take part in the Readathon, which raises vital funds for MS Ireland.

Pat cannot drive so his P.A. Georgina drives him to appointments like physio and doctor, and indeed anywhere else he needs to go. This means that Pat is not always housebound, and on days when he is not able to leave the house, Pat can ask Georgina to do messages for him. Cutbacks would mean that Leaders like Pat would be sitting at home, where he would be dependent on his wife and children for his every need.

Independent Living, and having access to services that help people with disabilities to achieve Independent Living, is not a luxury, it's a basic human right. These services enable people to take responsibility for their own lives and exercise choice. This service has the potential to bridge the gap between our communities and people with disabilities who are in danger of becoming increasingly isolated if cutbacks were made to their P.A. service.

Pat Dwyer is very grateful for the service, and says that it has 'given [him] wings'. Hopefully, thousands of Leaders will also find their wings, spread them wide and continue to protest against the cutbacks to our services.

# Christmas Competition!



Enter this Christmas quiz and win a prize!

1. What colours are the berries of the Mistletoe plant?
2. Peter Auty sang 'Walking in the Air' in what film?
3. In the song 'The Twelve Days of Christmas', how many swans were 'a-swimming?'
4. What is the star sign for somebody who was born on 25<sup>th</sup> December?
5. What was the name of Dorothy's Dog in 'The Wizard of Oz?'

Please send your answers to Offaly Centre for Independent Living Ltd, Clonminch Road, Tullamore, Co. Offaly or email your answers to [sarah@ocil.ie](mailto:sarah@ocil.ie). The closing date for entries is Wednesday, 12th December 2012, and the lucky winner will be selected in a draw which will take place on 14th December 2012.

## About Us:

Offaly Centre for Independent Living (OCIL) Ltd and Offaly Personal Assistant Services (OPAS) Ltd provide Personal Assistant Services to people with disabilities across Laois and Offaly. Our clients are known as 'Leaders' because they 'lead' their own service and decide how their hours are used.



OCIL Ltd and OPAS Ltd believe in delivering a high quality service to our Leaders. Leaders are encouraged to complete monthly 'care plans', which details each Leader's individual needs, thus enabling us to provide a service that caters for these needs. We also provide training for our Personal Assistants in Manual Handling, First Aid and Health and Safety, as well as FETAC Level 5 in Care Skills (having this qualification is now a requirement in order for PAs to be able to work with Leaders).

OCIL Ltd and OPAS Ltd are also undergoing a continually self-assessed quality audit called PQASSO (Practical Quality Assurance System for Small Organisations) to ensure that high standards are being met.

OCIL Ltd is funded by the HSE and OPAS Ltd is funded by FAS. Without this funding, many Leaders would not be able to live independently. For further information, please contact the numbers below, email us or visit our website.

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

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OCIL Ltd (company number: 330937, Charity Number CHY 13743) is  
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