

# MENSANA news



Mental Health Ireland Volume 13 No. 1



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## Launch of Directory for Young People in Kerry

Kerry Mental Health Association (KMHA) has published a Directory of Services and Supports for Young People in the county. The directory, which was officially launched by Kerry footballer Liam Hassett contains information on mental health, self-esteem, coping with stress, the interaction between mental and physical health and a list of support groups and phone numbers which young people can contact for help.

Previously KMHA conducted two surveys on young people and stress which showed that an increasing number of young people are suffering from stress and have difficulty in coping. In particular, the 2003 study of 992 first-year students in 13 Kerry schools highlighted that 62 students were under extreme stress and 43 (4.4%) students said that they could not cope.

As a follow up to the survey, the KMHA consulted with representatives from various disciplines, professions and organisations throughout the county, who are involved with young people. The object of the exercise was to try and determine what strategies could be put in place to assist young people in times of difficulty or stress. One of the strategies identified was to compile a directory of services and supports available to young people in times of need.

KMHA hopes that this directory will prove to be a valuable resource for young people throughout the county. Copies of the directory are available from:

Dan O'Connor, Development Officer, KMHA  
Tel: 064 31022.



*Pictured at the launch of the Directory of Services and Supports for Young People are left to right: Dan Hourigan, Treasurer KMHA; Fr. Gearóid O'Donnchadha; Phil Hilliard, Vice-Chairman KMHA; Bernard Collins, Chairman KMHA; Dan O'Connor, Development Officer KMHA; Kerry footballer Liam Hassett, Brian Howard, CEO MHI and Billy Ryle, Guidance Counsellor.*

## Family Well-being Seminar in Castlerea

Castlerea Mental Health Association recently held a one day seminar on the subject of 'Family Well-being' which was conducted by Dr. Tony Humphreys, Consultant Clinical Psychologist, author and speaker.

According to Dr. Humphreys, what determines family well-being is the quality of the relationships, the level of self-esteem of each parent and the extent to which conflicts are resolved within families.



*Members of Castlerea MHA who organised a one day seminar on the subject of 'Family Well-being'.*

# Editorial

## REFORM OF HEALTH SERVICES

Major reform of the structure and delivery of health services is currently in a period of evolution. The Health Act 2004 was passed in December 2004. It provides for the dissolution of the health boards and the establishment of the Health Service Executive (HSE) as the national agency for the delivery of health and personal social services and sets out its objectives and powers. The HSE was established on a statutory basis on 1st January 2005 and is now responsible for the delivery of health and personal social services. It has taken over the functions of the health boards and a number of other health agencies. It is proposed that a total of 27 agencies and bodies will eventually be included under the HSE. The Department of Health and Children will be charged solely with policy formulation and evaluation with no responsibility for the delivery of health services.

The HSE has nine directorates – including **Population Health** which will focus on the promotion and protection of the country's population. The **National Hospitals Office** is responsible for the operation of acute public hospitals. In relation to mental health services, the **Primary, Continuing and Community Care Directorate** will be responsible for primary care and community based health and personal social services which includes mental health services. These services will be delivered largely through 32 Local Health Offices. Local Health Offices will be based in the existing 32 Community Care Areas and they will be the

main delivery point for community health and personal social services. The managers of the Offices will make decisions on services within an overall service framework set out by the HSE.

In accordance with the Health Act 2004, the HSE is "to use the resources available to it in the most beneficial, effective and efficient manner to improve, promote and protect the health and welfare of the public". The HSE is obliged to integrate the delivery of health and personal social services and must have regard to services provided by voluntary and other bodies that are similar or ancillary to the services it is authorised to provide.

From a mental health perspective, this period of transition is accentuated by current policy on the development of mental health services being reviewed by the Expert Group on Mental Health Policy which was established in 2003. It is expected that the Expert Group will report to Government by the end of 2005.

Of most concern to Mental Health Ireland is that the current concentration on structures and functions of the health services will not deflect attention from addressing major deficiencies and inequities in the mental health sector. Mental Health Ireland notes that one of the main tenets of the HSE is – "better quality services to patients/clients/service users". Will the emergence of the HSE mark real change for mental health services? We await with interest.

# Matters that concern us

## MHI'S SUBMISSION TO REVIEW OF THE GOVERNMENT'S HOMELESS STRATEGY

The Government's Homeless Strategy is derived from two policy documents - 'Homelessness - An Integrated Strategy' published in 2000 and 'Homelessness - A Preventative Strategy' published in 2002.

The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government recently invited submissions from homeless organisations as part of the independent review of the Government's Homeless Strategy being undertaken by consultants.

MHI made a submission with recommendations set out below which are informed by the work of Mental Health Ireland in providing housing and social supports to people with a mental illness. At present 544 people live in housing which is owned and/or managed by local Mental Health Associations. The submission was based on three main sections, namely

- Identifying the homeless mentally ill
- Housing needs of those with a mental illness
- Providing mental health services to the homeless mentally ill.

In each case a brief note on the experience of Mental Health Ireland followed by specific recommendations are included.

### Identifying the Homeless Mentally Ill

The precise number of people with a mental illness currently homeless or at risk of homelessness is not known. Many may be invisible to the system because they are not registered with the local authority and the nature of their illness may mean that some people are reluctant or unable to contact the local authority about their housing needs. It is Mental Health Ireland's experience that the needs of these groups are often inadequately addressed in strategies to address homelessness. Notably the Action Plans on Housing developed by local authorities fail to take account of the

specific needs of mentally ill persons who are homeless or are at risk of homelessness.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- That a targeted and specific action be undertaken in cooperation with mental health services, local voluntary groups and people using the mental health services to identify those persons with a mental illness who are homeless, at risk of homelessness or at present living in accommodation inappropriate to their needs.
- Action should also be taken to identify the number of prisoners with mental illness who will be in need of housing on release from prison.
- Undertake an audit of existing housing specifically provided to people with a mental illness. There are likely to be three sources of such housing namely;
  - Voluntary Agencies
  - Health Services
  - Local Authorities
- This audit should also identify the degree of support, if any, currently being provided to residents.

### Housing Needs of those with a Mental Illness

Local Mental Health Associations affiliated to Mental Health Ireland, as well as other voluntary organisations provide a range of social housing to people with a mental illness. There remain, however, significant challenges for voluntary agencies in meeting this need, due to limited funding and delays in accessing that funding. Local Mental Health Association social housing provision is funded through the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government Capital Assistance Scheme. Funding is available towards 95% of the cost of the project, subject to maximum rates payable per unit of accommodation. Presently the maximum rates applicable for a single unit in Dublin is €120,700. This amount is totally inadequate in purchasing any accommodation units in any of the main urban centres in the country.

Difficulties also emerge in providing access to appropriate on-site support where necessary. There is no

funding mechanism to facilitate direct employment of support staff by housing agencies, and health services are often unable to offer the appropriate on-site support required. This can lead to unnecessary delays in available housing being occupied.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Review existing level of grant aid available to voluntary agencies providing social housing, in particular in the larger urban areas.
- Establish a mechanism to allow speedier access to funding. At present, it is difficult for voluntary housing bodies to acquire housing on the open market where delays in funding applications mean sales are often lost to other bidders.
- Establish a mechanism to allow access to 'deposit' funds to secure the purchase of a site or property.
- Explore the possibility with health services of establishing a standardised service agreement for providing on-site support, where necessary. A mechanism for funding welfare related supports when required should also be put in place.
- Review the current rate of rent allowance payable in particular in the larger urban areas. This may include establishing a discretionary additional payment to those who by medical necessity need to live alone or cannot find suitable accommodation within the existing level of rent supplement payable.

### Providing Mental Health Services to the Homeless Mentally Ill

In addition to the inadequacy of outreach services to the homeless mentally ill, little attention has been given to the impact of inadequate existing mental health services, particularly community based services in contributing to the homeless status of those with a mental illness. Current Government spending on mental health remains at less than 7% of total health expenditure with significant disparity in spending across health service areas. Local Mental Health Associations work at a local level within their communities providing social supports to people with a mental illness. On a day to day basis, they witness the impact of social isolation, lack of adequate services and living in accommodation inappropriate to their needs on the lives of people with a mental illness. Homelessness is increasingly a risk for those unable to access adequate services within the community.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Health Services should, as a matter of priority, establish the 'Regional Advisory Panels/Coordinating Committees' promised in the National Health Strategy - 'Quality and Fairness', to advise on the planning and prioritisation of services, the quality of services and the promotion of positive mental health initiatives. Appropriate representation from local authorities and homeless agencies should be included on these advisory panels.
- Ensure that properly funded specialist primary care and mental health services are available to the homeless mentally ill.
- Review the need for specialist services for those with co-existing mental health and substance abuse problems.

## New DO for Dublin North

George Brogan was appointed Development Officer for Dublin North in January.



George commenced his Psychiatric Nurse training in 1980 in St. Brendan's Hospital, Dublin, joining the community mental health services in 1988 and working in various areas in North Dublin since.

George is no stranger to MHI as he spent some years as a volunteer with Dublin 15 MHA both as Honorary Secretary and Chairman and he has also been involved in the National Public Speaking Project as an adjudicator. Bereavement support has been of special interest to George and he was co-founder of Turas Le Chéile, a bereavement support service for North Kildare. He remains involved in the project as a supervisor.

George is married to Catherine (a previous MHI Development Officer - they're keeping it in the family!) and has three 'almost grown-up' children. His hobbies include gardening, cycling, DIY and he owns a set of golf clubs.

## 'Design a Cover' Project

'Design a Cover' is a national Art Project which invites students in Post Primary Schools to design the cover of the next Public Speaking Project promotional material on the theme 'Positive Mental Health'. The purpose of the Project is to stimulate a greater level of awareness of mental health and to allow young people to explore through the medium of art their own personal interpretations of mental health.

Out of 750 entries received from students around the country, fourteen entries were selected for exhibition at the National Final. Aeda Cantillon, Causeway Comprehensive School, Co. Kerry was declared the National Winner of 'Design a Cover' in the Edmund Burke Theatre, Trinity College, Dublin.

Aeda's artwork will now be printed on the cover of the promotional material for the Public Speaking Project. A selection of artwork entered in the Project will also be reproduced in a range of MHI promotional material, such as, the MHI calendar and Christmas card.



*Dr. Geraldine Lyster, Chairperson, MHI presenting Aeda with her winning trophy.*

## ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training)

In 2004, twenty-four people from the health services and voluntary organisations were invited to train as trainers for the ASIST programme. The training was organised by the National Suicide Review Group and provided by the Livingworks Corporation, Canada. Three MHI Development Officers completed this training programme and are now involved in delivering ASIST training around the country.

The emphasis of the ASIST workshop is on suicide first-aid, that is, on helping a person at risk stay safe and seek further help. Evaluations have shown that the workshop increases caregivers' knowledge and confidence to respond to a person at risk of suicide, that intervention skills are retained over time and that they are put to use to save lives.

Many people considering suicide share their distress and their intent. Training can help caregivers to identify and

respond to these invitations to help. It can give an individual the confidence to ask about suicide if they are concerned about someone's safety. It can provide the tools to help prevent the immediate risk of suicide.

Working mostly in small groups of one trainer to no more than 15 participants, ASIST uses many different teaching processes to create a practice-oriented and interactive learning process.

Training workshops are being provided around the country and demand continues to increase from both professional and voluntary bodies. Further information and details on upcoming workshops are available from the Suicide Resource Officer based in each Health Service Executive region.

# NEW DISABILITY ALLOWANCE EXPENSES PAYMENT

Disability Allowance is a long term social welfare payment for those aged 16 – 65 with a disability (expected to last at least one year). At present some people with a mental illness in hospital or residential care are in receipt of a Disability Allowance payment while others are not, despite having the same medical and financial circumstances. This situation is blatantly unfair and is the result of historical conditions attached to the former Disabled Persons Maintenance Allowance (DPMA) scheme which dictated that people who were in residential care or in hospital were not eligible for the payment. While this condition has been progressively relaxed since 1996, there remains a significant number of patients who are not in receipt of any social welfare payment.

However, from June 2005 a new Disability Allowance Expenses payment of €35 will be introduced for people in full-time hospital or residential care who are not presently in receipt of a Disability Allowance payment and who meet the qualifying conditions. The payment will replace the discretionary pocket money allowance system which has been in place for those in institutional care for many years. The introduction of the new Disability Allowance Expenses payment is to be welcomed as the first step towards ensuring eligibility for full Disability Allowance regardless of where a person is living or receiving care.

One of the challenges in introducing the new payment is in identifying the total number of patients currently not in receipt of any social welfare payment and who may qualify for the Disability Allowance Expenses payment. To this

end the Department of Social and Family Affairs has consulted widely with all health services in the country. All of the information provided by health services has been cross-referenced with Department of Social and Family Affairs records to identify those who do not have a current payment.

Application forms have been sent to all health services to complete with patients who may be eligible for the payment. Importantly, the €35 euro which will be payable weekly from June 2005 is a personal payment to the patient. While the payment will be made to the institution in which a person resides under a Service Level Agreement with the Department of Social and Family Affairs, a condition of the payment being made is that the patient gets his or her allowance every week. This is particularly important given the concern regarding the variable rate and means of payment of "pocket money allowances" across health board regions in the past.

While the illegal charging of those with medical cards in certain public health services has rightly received significant attention recently, it is remarkable to note the relative silence regarding the continued injustice of denying access to any social welfare payments for certain individuals in long-term institutional care. The introduction of €35 Disability Allowance Expense payment will go some way to rectifying this situation by ensuring that each individual has an entitlement to a minimum income for personal use. The only fair way forward however, is to reform the eligibility criteria for Disability Allowance so that all those in hospital and residential care are treated equally.

# Gort School Win National Public Speaking Final

The team from Gort Community School, Gort, Co. Galway was declared National Winners at the 2005 National Public Speaking Final. Along with teams from Castleknock Community College, Dublin 15 and St. Columba's Comprehensive School, Glenties, Co. Donegal the teams spoke on the topic – *The cushion of consumerism is no substitute for the comfort of community*. The source of this thought-provoking quote was President Mary McAleese's 2004 inauguration speech.

Guest Assessor, Tom Savage of Carr Communications commented on the quality of the presentations from the three teams. He congratulated the young people on their skill and confidence in delivering such informative and interesting presentations in front of a large audience in the Edmund Burke Theatre, Trinity College, Dublin.



To conclude the event, a speaker from each team took the opportunity to thank their teachers, friends and family for all the support that they received in the run-up to the event. The support and assistance of MHI Development Officers was also acknowledged. The students emphasised the value of their participation in the Project and thanked Mental Health Ireland for providing the opportunity to participate in this learning experience.

The National Public Speaking Trophy was presented by Dr. Geraldine Lyster, Chairperson, MHI. The winning team and tutor will travel to Belgium as guests of the Flemish MHA, where they will visit education and health facilities.



Pictured above at the National Public Speaking Final in Trinity College, back row left to right: Ned Cusack, Tony O'Connor and Denis O'Brien. Front row: Michael McCormack, Pauline Piggott, Nola Farrell, Aidan Fahy and Michael Cummins.

Pictured above are the National Public Speaking winners, Gort Community School team with Dr. Geraldine Lyster, Chairperson, MHI and Tom Savage, Guest Assessor, Carr Communications.



Pictured above are Castleknock Community College team with tutor Anne Brooks.



Pictured right are St. Columba's Comprehensive School team with tutor Tommy O'Loughlin.

# Christmas Day Swim

A function was recently held to present the proceeds of the Michael Power 2004 Memorial Swim to the Waterford Mental Health Association. Local volunteers worked hard over many months in advance of the Swim to raise funds. The sum raised was matched by the Michael Power 2004 Memorial Swim with

250 people swimming in Kilmurrin Cove on Christmas morning. In total, a record breaking €30,670 was raised which will be of huge benefit to the work of Waterford MHA.

Right: Hannah Power, Treasurer, Swim Committee, presenting a cheque for €30,670 to George Heaslip, Chairman, Waterford MHA.



Below: Swimmers braving the cold on Christmas Day for the Michael Power Memorial Swim.



# Official Opening of Snozelen Room

The Official Opening of the Snozelen Room at the Psychiatric Unit of Tallaght Hospital took place recently and was performed by Catherine Brogan, Acting Director of Mental Health and Addiction Services, Health Service Executive (South Western Area). The Snozelen Room was funded by a National Lottery Grant to Tallaght Mental Health Association.

The 'Snozelen' concept is a philosophy of care originating in Holland in the 1970s. 'Snozelen' is the Dutch word to describe the environment that provides pleasant sounds and music, fascinating light displays, appealing aromas and contrasting textures to stimulate the senses. The room provides a calm oasis, free from the activity of the ward with a relaxing stress-free environment which provides an opportunity to enjoy and control a variety of sensory experiences.



Pictured at the official opening of the Snozelen room at the Psychiatric Unit of Tallaght Hospital.

# Public Seminar on Suicide



The Organising Committee pictured at the 'Facing up to Suicide' seminar in Roscommon recently with guest speakers (front row, left to right) Rev. Dr. Tony Byrne, Mary McEvoy, Mary O'Sullivan and Sr. Kathleen Maguire.

A public seminar, 'Facing up to Suicide' was recently held in the Abbey Hotel, Roscommon. Roscommon Mental Health Association hosted the event in conjunction with Roscommon Partnership Company and Roscommon Citizen Information Service. The event is a follow-up to a successful seminar on the topic of suicide held in Roscommon in 2003.

Well-known actress Mary McEvoy chaired the seminar and speakers on the night included Rev. Dr. Tony Byrne, Sr. Kathleen Maguire and Mary O'Sullivan, Resource Officer for Suicide Prevention in the Health Service Executive Western Area. Topics discussed during the evening included the causes of suicide, early warning signs, suicide and grief and principles for prevention.



## Tribute to Prof. Tom Lynch

Prof. Tom Lynch, a founding member of Mental Health Ireland died January 6th, 2005.

A co-founder of Mental Health Ireland in 1966, he held various Officer positions over the years and served as Chairman from 1976-78. He remained a Board member until his retirement in 2002.

We extend our deepest sympathies to his wife Sheila, daughters Mairead, Sally-Ann and Fionnuala and his sons Niall and Timothy.

## [www.mentalhealthireland.ie](http://www.mentalhealthireland.ie)

The MHI website contains relevant, up-to-date and accurate information on a range of mental health topics. Information on stress, mental health in the workplace and how to access mental health services are just a few of the items which can be found on the website. Information is regularly updated and the "What's New" section provides details of upcoming events of relevance to mental health. A comprehensive database of agencies providing mental health support services is also available on the site including a brief description of their work as well as contact details for the national and local offices where relevant.

# New Web Magazine will Give Voice to Teenage Views

**eVOX.ie** is a new monthly web magazine for 16-18 year olds, written by seven young journalists of a similar age group. Developed by Mental Health Ireland, the on-line newspaper is unique in Ireland, providing teenagers with a forum in which they can give their perspective on issues of the day.

Having the opportunity of communicating your frustrations, fears and achievements is an important part of being mentally healthy. Unfortunately, many teenagers complain that “adults just don’t listen,” and feel marginalised and frustrated as a result. **eVOX.ie** is providing young people with a forum on issues relevant in their lives and the opportunity to express their views on those issues. **eVOX** will have links to other websites which will give teenagers access to information on health matters if they wish to visit them.

The first issue was launched by RTE Presenter Ryan Tubridy and three issues have been published on-line to date. Readers have the opportunity to submit their views and comments for posting on the website.

The editorial team have the freedom to choose and write on a range of topics which they judge to be of particular

interest for their own age cohort. Regular topics will include sport, health, education, politics, the environment, fashion, social and international affairs and entertainment. The team includes its own animator/cartoonist and photographer.

The seven-person editorial team were chosen following a campaign carried out through national and local media. The young journalists and their specialist topics are: **Mark Cullinane** (17) Drogheda, Co. Louth - Social & International Youth Affairs;

**Stephen McNeice** (17) Bray, Co. Wicklow - Entertainment;

**Sinead Walsh**. (17), Mountrath, Co. Laois - Sports;

**Claire Ryan**. (19), Tipperary, studying journalism in Dublin - Health;

**Noel Fitzpatrick** (18) Sligo, attending college in Galway - Photographer;

**Cristina Duffy** (17) Glasnevin, Dublin - Education and the Environment;

**Niall O'Brien**. (18) Wicklow, studying animation in Dublin - **eVOX** cartoonist and creator of the character ‘Bobert’.

The website is designed and managed for Mental Health Ireland by Esras.



RTE Presenter Ryan Tubridy pictured at the launch of eVOX.ie with the young journalists.

## Regional Perspectives - Focus on Clare and North Tipperary

By Chris Monahan, Development Officer for Clare and North Tipperary

As a Development Officer for Mental Health Ireland, I work in the Mid-Western region covering the counties of Clare and North Tipperary. In total there are eight Mental Health Associations in Clare and North Tipperary, namely Ennis MHA, Shannon MHA, North Clare MHA, West Clare MHA, East Clare MHA, Thurles MHA, Roscrea MHA and Nenagh MHA. What follows is a flavour of the work of the Associations in the region. The work of each Association reflects the needs of the community, the existing mental health services and the experience and interests of volunteers.

### Social Clubs

Clare Mental Health Associations have a particular focus on the provision of social and recreational support for people with mental health difficulties. This work is undertaken in the context of a developing community mental health service following the closure of Our Lady's Hospital in Ennis in recent years. Two social clubs operate in Ennis providing various recreational supports at least three evenings per week. West Clare MHA has also established a social club and Shannon MHA and North Clare MHA are finalising plans for similar initiatives in their local areas. In all instances, people are encouraged to take part in local events and activities. Activities have expanded recently in a number of the clubs with activities such as music and jewellery-making introduced, thanks to the support of the local arts initiative EMBRACE.

Similar social clubs are being developed in North Tipperary. Thurles MHA is looking forward to the opening of their new drop-in centre shortly thanks to a collaborative effort with other local organisations. The vision and support of local volunteers and mental health service staff are behind both the establishment and continued support for the groups. All of these social initiatives are seen as playing a vital role in the well being of those who participate while also fostering social inclusion, acceptance and understanding in the wider community.

### Training and Employment

North Tipperary has a very limited community based mental health service and this is reflected in some of the projects undertaken by local Associations, where the emphasis is placed on advocating for enhanced community services and trying to provide supports in the absence of adequate services. The training and education of people with mental health problems has been one of

the primary aims of local Associations and they have worked in partnership with various adult education schemes to deliver programmes locally.

Thurles MHA operate a FAS scheme providing employment, training and education opportunities to its employees. Roscrea MHA also identified a need for training and education and set up the 'Time on Your Hands' project which provides education and skills-based training to people with mental health difficulties in conjunction with the local community development organisation. The importance of working in collaboration with other voluntary and statutory agencies is a central feature of much of the work that Mental Health Associations are involved in. This partnership approach allows for mainstreaming in the delivery of programmes which minimises prejudices and stigma.

### Social Housing

Housing is an urgent need to be addressed in both counties. Shannon MHA and East Clare MHA recently formed voluntary housing bodies and West Clare MHA has been involved in joint purchase arrangements with the local health services. Nenagh MHA own four apartments for independent living and Thurles MHA is making plans to provide supported accommodation in conjunction with local health services.

### Education

Public education is a central part of the work of local Associations with particular areas of interest being adolescent mental health issues and suicide. The local Associations are also actively involved in promoting the National Public Speaking Project in second level schools.

All of this work is supported by a dedicated team of volunteers willing to give of their time for the benefit of others. The work is also supported by the local mental health services. In addition, a significant number of people assist with particular projects or lend a hand to fund-raise. Much has been achieved with the support and dedication of members and the year ahead will see further developments in promoting positive mental health and supporting those experiencing mental illness in the region.

For further information on any of the activities above contact Chris Monahan, MHI Development Officer, Tel: 067 37071 or 086 2426876.

# “A Cemetery exists because every life is worth loving and remembering – always”

Mullingar Mental Health Association recently organised a Ceremony of Remembrance which was held in St. Loman's Hospital Chapel for people buried in St. Loman's Hospital Cemetery between August 1907 and October 1970. The Ceremony was held on the feast day of St. Loman to remember the lives of the 1,304 people from different faith traditions buried in the cemetery on the grounds of the hospital. The large congregation included relatives and friends of the deceased, retired staff, MHA representatives, public representatives and patients and staff from St. Loman's Hospital.



*Pictured are Mullingar MHA members and helpers who organised the Ceremony of Remembrance.*

Over the years much work had been done under various Employment Schemes to renovate the cemetery. The most recent work was undertaken by Mullingar MHA in partnership with the Health Service Executive Midland Area and commenced in 2003. The first stage was major upgrading work undertaken with the aid of funding from the National Lottery and the HSE Midland Area. Subsequently the maintenance of the cemetery was guided by Des Gavin, Head Gardener, and his team who undertook to confirm the plots and ensure that the small white crosses that mark each grave were restored to their

rightful positions within the cemetery. This work was enhanced by the signs made by people attending the Ashbrook Day Centre in Mullingar which were placed in the cemetery to indicate the plot and grave numbers. It is the intention of both Mullingar MHA and the HSE Midland Area to continue the improvement works in the cemetery over the next two years.

Mullingar MHA organised a public Ecumenical Ceremony to acknowledge the work undertaken and in particular to mark and reflect on the lives of the people buried there. To honour this occasion members of the Association designed a commemorative plaque which was produced by Mullingar Pewter. The commemorative plaque was unveiled at the Ceremony and is now on permanent display in St. Loman's Hospital Chapel.

Also on that day, Mullingar MHA presented a new people carrier to the local Mental Health Services as well as presenting equipment to 'EALA' Day Centre at St. Loman's Hospital.



*Fionn Gallagher, Chairman of Mullingar MHA handing over the keys of the people carrier for use by the mental health services to Ann Masterson, Administrator, St. Loman's Hospital. Also in picture: Tom Jones, Breda Crehan-Roche and Finola Colgan, MHI Development Officer.*

## Unique Project Brings Information on Mental Health to Secondary Schools of Sligo and Leitrim

The Sligo Park Hotel was the venue for the launch of a unique initiative between local Mental Health Associations in Sligo and the secondary schools of the county. The initiative involved each secondary school being presented with an information stand and a range of information leaflets on mental health issues including 'Stress', 'Managing Your Mental Health' and 'Don't Let Your Tensions Take Over'. A similar initiative was also launched in County Leitrim.

The teenage years are a time of particular change and growth. Stress related to exams, choices for the future and simply coming to terms with growing-up are familiar to many young people. Access to information and strategies for promoting positive mental health are central to coping with stress.

The present initiative builds on a number of projects already in place in the region, with many schools participating in Mental Health Ireland's National Public Speaking Project and others using *Mental Health Matters*.



*Left to right: John McGoldrick, Development Officer; Anna Ryan, Chairperson, Easkey MHA; John McGetrick, MHI Board Member and Sligo MHA; Muriel Siberry, Chairperson, Sligo MHA; Michael Murphy, President, Summerhill College Sligo; Margaret Clarke, Chairperson, Ballymote MHA and Caroline McGrath, Deputy CEO, MHI at the launch of the project which will bring information on mental health to Sligo schools.*

It is hoped that the information stands will allow young people easy access to a range of information relating to mental health. The information stands are sponsored by local Associations.



## Life Membership Awards



At a recent MHI Board meeting Dr. Tom Gregg and Mr. Phil Hilliard were awarded life membership of Mental Health Ireland in recognition of their valuable contribution to the organisation over many years. Pictured are Dr. Geraldine Lyster, Chairperson, MHI with Mr. Phil Hilliard and Dr. Tom Gregg.



# MHI Annual Conference

Friday 20th May – Sunday 22nd May, 2005

Radisson Hotel, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal

## Theme: Equity in Mental Health

Speakers include:

**Maurice Manning**, Irish Human Rights Commission

**Owen Metcalfe**, Institute of Public Health in Ireland

**John Lonergan**, Governor, Mountjoy Prison

**Emily Logan**, Ombudsman for Children

A series of workshops will be held including:

Caring for a multi-culturally diverse society

Improving well-being – the Scottish Experience

Recent policy developments – tenants and social housing provision

Supporting access to employment

Minding young minds – child and adolescent mental health

## SUBSCRIPTION APPLICATION FORM

I wish to become a subscriber to Mensana News and to have my name placed on your mailing list to receive the magazine plus other MHI publications. I enclose a cheque / postal order for €7.00 made payable to the MHI.

Name:

(Please print)

Address:

Date:

Mensana News is published by Mental Health Ireland. MHI is a national voluntary organisation which aims to promote positive mental health and to actively support persons with a mental illness, their families and carers by identifying their needs and advocating their rights. Mental Health Ireland is made up of a network of local Mental Health Associations (MHAs) throughout the country who are affiliated to and share the same aims and objectives as the national body. Mental Health Ireland is affiliated to Mental Health Europe and the World Federation for Mental Health.

Further information is available on our website; [www.mentalhealthireland.ie](http://www.mentalhealthireland.ie)

## Mensana News Spring 2005 Production Team

Brian Howard  
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Caroline McGrath  
*Deputy CEO*

Jacinta Hastings  
*Senior Executive Officer*

Orla O'Sullivan  
*Information and Training Officer*

## Contributions:

Mensana News is your communication with local MHAs and other associations.

Why not put pen to paper and let us know what you are doing in your area to promote mental health. Are you involved

- in fund-raising?
- trying to educate the public?
- with young people?
- helping to run and organise community residences?

If you don't keep it to yourself – tell us about it. Articles, photographs, comments and suggestions are all welcome. They should be sent to the Information and Training Officer at the address below.

## Publication Dates

The next issue of Mensana News will be produced in November, 2005. Deadline for inclusion in the next issue is October 2005



### Mental Health Ireland

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