



Cairde Strabane Republican Ex-prisoners Group

Unit 4 1a Melvin Road Strabane Co Tyrone BT82 9PP
Tel/Fax 028 71886824.

04th November 2015

A Chara Dolores

On behalf of the Volunteer Staff and Management Committee of Cairde Strabane Republican Ex-prisoners Group I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Ladies Ancient Order of Hibernians and the Ancient Order of Hibernians in America for their very kind help and support over the years.

This year, more than any other year the funding received from the LAOH and AOH in America has been invaluable to the development of our project as we had no other sources of funding available to us to support the running and office cost of our project. The main reason for the short fall in our office and running cost was that the Peace funded programmes from Europe for which the Political Ex-prisoners community in Ireland heavily rely upon for their support and programme development are being reviewed at present and will not be made available to our organisations to apply too for funding until very late in 2016.

So the funding received from the LAOH and AOH in America gave us the financial resources that allowed us to keep our **offices opened and fully functioning**. Simplify put, we would not have been able to develop the wide range of programmes which have impacted upon hundreds of individuals living in our community this year without the financial support that we received from the LAOH and AOH in America.

Fully Functioning Office

So with a fully function office and a very dedicated Volunteer Staff, Cairde was able to develop programmes and events that have helped the local Ex-prisoners community in a proactive and meaningful way. With our office resources Cairde was capable of developing new partnership programmes over the year with other local community groups, support organisations and government departments as we continued to develop new innovated programmes that would support the evolving needs of a ageing Ex-prisoners community and the wider community in the Strabane area.

Below is a brief overview of the programmes that have developed this year.

Community Engagement programmes.

This year Cairde has continued to develop our community engagement programmes. These programmes have allowed Cairde to play a full and active part in the development of community life in Strabane town. This year Cairde members were involved in a wide range of Community festivals and events such as our local St Patricks Day parade, which was one of the biggest held in the area for many years as well as local Community Fun Days and Community Sports days, these events have help our community to break-down barriers within our society and so build a more cohesive and inclusive community within the Strabane area.



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Youth engagement programme.

As part of our youth engagement programme this year Cairde hosted 50 young people from across Donegal and Strabane region over a three day period. This engagement was at the request of the Donegal Youth Service and allowed the young people to visit our local history museum and then engage with a panel of local Republican Ex-prisoners in an hour long question and answer session. Each of these sessions give the young people the opportunity to speak to representatives of the local Ex-prisoners on issues that confronted them as young men living in Strabane town during the conflict and the personal cost and impact that the conflict and imprisonment had on them and on their immediate families. The feedback from this youth engagement programme from the Donegal Youth Service has been very positive and we are now in the process of developing our next engagement youth programme.

Museum Visits.

With our main offices opened to the general public we were also able to keep our historical museum offices open to the public. And apart from the many visitors from the inland of Ireland who have visited our historical museum over the past year we had around 33 overseas visitors to the Museum from England, Germany, Scotland, Spain and the USA. These visits are important for us, as it allows us to engage with a far wider audience, so they can have a more balance view of Irish history over the past 40 years of our conflict.

Department Of Culture Arts Leisure Men's Shed & Women's DIY programmes.

This year for the first time we engaged with one of the Assembly Government departments, "the Department of Culture Arts and Leisure". This engagement allowed Cairde to drawdown some funding to purchase new equipment that has allowed us to develop a Men's Shed and Women's DIY Arts & craft programme. This programme will be launched shortly and will see individuals from across the Ex-prisoners Community engaging in a self help and an arts and craft programmes. These programmes will enhance their personal skills as individuals and also help to break down the many barriers of social isolation being faced many individuals who for a range of personal and health reasons are now finding themselves living on their own as they get older.

CLEAR programme.

CLEAR is a regional health organisation who has agreed to fund a small a self help health programme being developed by the Ex-prisoners community, which will see a localised sigh posting health service being offered to the local Ex-prisoners community. The programme will also support individuals suffering from mental health or substance abuse. The area of mental health and personal well-being is one of the areas that have been highlighted in a recent survey carried out by Cairde into the needs of the local Republican Ex-prisoners community in Strabane area. As with any armed conflict from around the word, we are now finding that many from our community are now suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder "PTSD" and it is an area of work, in which much work needs to be done. In developing these programmes we will also be aiming to enhance the health and well-being of the wider community of the Strabane area by engaging with the local statutory and government health agencies as part of this process.



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Horticultural and Cooking Training

Cairde in partnership with the Strabane Health Improvement project has also developed horticultural training classes, which has seen individuals involved in our Community garden and Allotment site enhance their skills and knowledge of fruit and vegetable growing over a three weeks period. This training was then followed by a four week innovated Cooking Classes that give the individuals the skills and knowledge of how to cook health receipts on a small budget. These programmes are aim at helping individuals and families who live on social welfare of working families tax credits

As we look back on this year, it has been a very difficult year for the Ex-prisoners community of Strabane. Our main sources of funding and support programmes from the European Union have now stopped and are being reviewed. These programmes will not be open for new funding applications until late 2016 and even then there is no guarantee that the Republican Ex-prisoners organisations will receive any support for our programmes. But as a section of society coming out of conflict the Ex-prisoners community still need these support services so we as a community can address their evolving needs, and as a organisation set up to address these needs Cairde will continue to strive to do our upmost to develop new programmes that will meet these needs.

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Jarlath Mc Nulty
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Cairde.