

focus on



Cancer
Focus
NORTHERN IRELAND

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CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S FOREWORD



So, suddenly, it's almost Christmas. Maybe it was the long stretch of good autumn weather, but the festive season seems to have crept up on us quicker than an elf can wink.

Speaking of elves, we can help make your Christmas shopping a little less stressful when you visit the glittering Victoria Square in Belfast during December. Our volunteer elves will wrap your gifts in return for a small donation, so please come along.

Our excellent Sing for Life choir, which we run in partnership with the Crescent Arts Centre, will also be at Victoria Square on Sunday 21st December from 4.30 to 6pm - you're welcome to join us. The choir is also performing at Fisherwick Presbyterian Church in Belfast on Monday 22nd December at 7.30pm.

It's been a busy and exciting year. We're tremendously grateful to everyone who supported our important equal access to cancer drugs campaign. Over 26,000 of you signed a pledge asking Stormont to make the same cancer drugs available to patients in NI as in England. Jim Wells agreed to review the current system and that's now underway.

I hope you enjoy catching up on all our news. Remember to keep an eye on our Facebook page and Twitter for all our new events for 2015, and please share and like us whenever you can.

I wish you all the season's greetings and best wishes for the New Year.

Roisin Foster
CHIEF EXECUTIVE



Taking a Lidl spin

Malwina Lawicka, who works at Lidl's Antrim store, is pictured giving the new Cancer Focus NI coin spinner a whirl.

As our charity partner, Lidl has generously installed our charity spinners in all of its 36 stores to help raise even more funds for our much-needed services.

These include counselling, family support, bra-fitting for women who've had breast cancer, support groups, Beauty for Life, art therapy and much more.

Lidl is also running an amazing sports competition - entrants have the chance to go to events such as Wimbledon, European Cup final, Grand National and the FA Cup final - with the proceeds coming to us.

All you need to do is text 'LidINI' to 70111. The competition runs until the end of December. Entry costs £3 and all the money will help local families affected by cancer.

Our Keeping Well health mobiles will be visiting 17 Lidl stores all over Northern Ireland between January 5 and 17 giving free health checks.

'The little ones were really upset I was so ill'

Sonia Patton got the shock news that she had breast cancer just after Christmas last year. Since then, she's raised an amazing £3,018 at her Girls' Night In to support vital research we fund at QUB into this devastating disease.

Sonia lives in Bready, Strabane, with husband Michael and daughters Molly (16), Eve (6) and Alice (4). She is also a valued Cancer Focus NI volunteer. Sonia first went to her doctor in September 2013 as she was feeling unwell and constantly tired. After various tests, Sonia asked her doctor to check a spongy mass of tissue at the bottom of her breast, which had become painful, and this was followed by a mammogram and scan just before Christmas 2013.

"The radiographer said he was 99% sure it was a benign cyst but took a biopsy anyway. I got a call back on 27th December and then I realised it was more serious," she recalls. "When I saw the breast surgeon she put her hand on my knee and asked if I was ok. I felt physically sick.

"I had a tumour and needed an immediate mastectomy. It was a whirlwind - nothing seemed real, but I couldn't bear having a breast removed without some form of reconstruction. I knew my hair and eyebrows would fall out, it was like losing my identity as a woman. I had chemotherapy between February and May 2014, which was a horrendous time - one of the low points as I reacted very badly to the treatment. I felt I couldn't go through with it, but of course I did," she reveals.

Sonia had a mastectomy and reconstruction on July 10, but there were a lot of hospital visits as her wounds weren't healing.

"That was when I was at my weakest but my family were all a tremendous support," she adds. This was followed by six weeks of radiotherapy.



Sonia with Michael, Eve, Alice and Molly

"I've a young family and one of the most difficult things was deciding how to talk to them about my cancer. Molly was very worried about me and fearful this could happen to her. The little ones were upset seeing their mum so sick.

"The girls missed me as I stayed overnight in Belfast a lot for treatment. Molly did her GCSEs in the middle of it all, but she did really well and I'm so proud of her.

"Coping with the fatigue is tough. I've started herceptin and also hormone therapy, which unfortunately has catapulted me into the menopause. That's something I'll just have to come to terms with," she says.

"Hopefully I've turned a corner and I couldn't have done that without all the support I've had from family, friends, medical staff and others - thank you all so much."



Looking forward
Sonia Patton

If you or your children need support when a mum, dad or grandparent has cancer, please call us on **028 9066 3281** or email care@cancerfocusni.org

Patients make a special delivery to Stormont

Cancer patients Vera Saunderson and Allister Murphy delivered 26,000 pledges for our equal access to cancer drugs campaign to Health Minister Jim Wells at Stormont.

Our high-profile campaign was launched in June 2014 and called for patients in NI to have the same access to 40 life-prolonging cancer drugs as those in England and Wales.

The campaign led to a Stormont consultation on the current method of allocating drugs and the review's outcome is expected by the end of 2014.

Our Chief Executive, Roisin Foster, said: "This campaign has resonated strongly with local people and we thank you for getting behind it. The next phase of the campaign is the demand for our Assembly to act now and put things right without further delay.

"England has had a Cancer Drugs Fund to pay for costly non-NICE approved drugs since 2011. While we fully understand the pressures on the budget, the Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme would give much needed access to these drugs in NI with little or no extra cost.

"We ask that the NI Executive give us better access without delay, which could be adequately funded by the PPRS."



Vera Saunderson (centre, seated) and pupils from Hazelwood College, Newtownabbey, helped present our equal access petition to MLAs

Smokin' event for health workers

'Proud to be a quitter' is the theme of next year's **No Smoking Day**, which will be held on **11th March 2015**. The catchy slogan was unveiled at a special event that we organised to brief health professionals on the new campaign.

Delegates included staff from the five health trusts, pharmacists, dentists, nurses, doctors, midwives, stop smoking specialists and local council staff from all over NI.

No Smoking Day in NI is organised by Cancer Focus NI, British Heart Foundation and the Public Health Agency. Health professionals who'd like to be involved can visit www.nosmokingday.org.uk for more details.

Our recent TV ads with Pfizer highlight that you're four times more likely to quit successfully if you get support from a health professional and use nicotine replacement therapy. If you need help to stop smoking call our free **NI Smokers' Helpline** on **0808 812 8008**.

Congratulations to our stop smoking team who were finalists in the Chartered Institute of Public Relations awards for their Youth Stop Smoking Support Service. For more details about this service for 11 to 25-year-olds please call **028 9066 3281** or email behealthy@cancerfocusni.org



Doreen Regan (l) and Bernie Neeson, Cancer Focus NI stop smoking specialists, with ex-smoker Gavin Boyd, from the Rainbow Project, who spoke at the event



Feel good recipes to give you a lift

Chef Jeanne Rankin launched our attractive new Well Being Cookbook with a cooking demo at St George's Market in Belfast, with TV's Pamela Ballantine (right) giving a helping hand.

Our cookbook is out just in time for Christmas and would make an excellent gift, so please get in touch if you'd like a copy.

It's aimed primarily at cancer patients but has something for everyone. There are delicious recipes, tips on nutrition, and a section on breathing and relaxation techniques to help calm your mind and de-stress your body.

The cookbook was written by Jeanne along with our staff members Deirdre Conlon and Niamh McDaid.

You can get your copy, costing £9.95 (£12.45 including p&p), by contacting us on **028 9066 3281** emailing care@cancerfocusni.org or shopping online at www.cancerfocusni.org

Jeanne Rankin with Pamela Ballantine at St George's Market



Boost for Beauty for Life

We're delighted to have won £2,000 in the Aviva Broker Community Fund awards after being nominated by our charity partner, Lockton Insurance. The cash will go towards our popular Beauty for Life service, treating people who've been affected by cancer to mini-makeovers, manicures, massages and facials. This gives them a well-deserved confidence boost and time-out from their cancer.



Special treat - (l-r) Phil Bayles and Maurice Tulloch, Aviva, Roisin Foster and Deirdre Conlon, Cancer Focus NI, Michael Claney, Lockton, and Will Greenwood, Rugby World Cup Winner, at the Aviva awards night

This donation will help us extend our service to more patients and carers and shorten waiting times.

If you've a beauty qualification and want to volunteer, please call **028 9066 3281** or email care@cancerfocusni.org.

Dates for your diary

Art Journaling - January 2015 (date TBC), once a month for 4 months, Cancer Focus NI, 40 Eglantine Avenue, Belfast.

Walk - 7th March 2015, walk in the Mourne, starts 10am.

Breast Cancer Support Groups 2015 - 18th Feb, Dobbin Street Community Centre, Armagh, 8pm; 27th Jan & 24th Feb, Cancer Focus NI, 40 Eglantine Ave, Belfast, 7.30pm; 12th Feb, Rathain Fold, Union Street, Coleraine, 7.30pm.

Support Groups - Monthly family bereavement groups; 26th Feb 2015, NW Prostate Cancer Group, Agnes Jones House, Altnagelvin Hospital, 7.30pm

Zest for Life - 3rd Feb - 10th March 2015, 2pm - 4.30pm, Cancer Lifeline, north Belfast.

Sing for Life choir - 21st Dec, Victoria Square, Belfast, 4.30pm-6pm; 22nd Dec, Christmas concert, Fisherwick Presbyterian Church, Belfast, 7.30pm; 7th Feb, West Church, Bangor; 1st March, Ballyeaston 1st Presbyterian Church, Ballyclare, 7.30pm.

For more details email care@cancerfocusni.org or call **028 9066 3281**

Bright outlook for our newest charity shop

TV weather forecaster Cecilia Daly (left) predicts fair weather ahead for our brand new charity shop in Holywood.

Cecilia had a cup of tea and a chat after she cut the ribbon to officially open the shop at 66-72 High Street.

Shop manager Michelle Fordyce said: "Our new shop offers a wide range of great-value items, so be sure and check out our rails for that vintage chic, retro, smart tailored look or for a special gift.

"We'd also be delighted to take any of your good quality clothing, accessories, homeware, books, CDs/DVDs and knick-knacks off your hands."



The money raised helps run our Keeping Well mobile service, which travels all over Northern Ireland to help you lower your risk of cancer. We're also due to open another new shop at Main Street, Ballymoney, in mid-December.

We always need more volunteers to help us at our 11 charity shops, so if you have a few hours to spare please call us on **028 9066 3281** or email moragchambers@cancerfocusni.org. For shop locations visit www.cancerfocusni.org

Huge thanks to all our wonderful volunteers

We'd like to say a massive thank you to the many volunteers who've supported us in so many ways during 2014.

Amazingly, they give the equivalent hours of 15 full-time staff - driving patients to hospital, providing beauty therapy, supporting families, taking patients on healthy walks, collections, helping with admin, representing us at community events and much more.

The thanks of all the staff go to everyone who has helped in any way, either as individual volunteers or as part of a team from local businesses including Halifax, Big Lottery Fund, Johnston Campbell, Lloyds Bank, Santander, Lockton Insurance and Citi.

Our volunteers also continue to win well-deserved recognition for the high standard of their support - James Nixon, Enniskillen, and Heather McCord, Carrickfergus, were finalists in the QUB Student Volunteer of the Year awards for their work with our Family Support Service. We couldn't do it without you!

If you'd like to help too please call us on **028 9066 3281** or email moragchambers@cancerfocusni.org



Driver Paul Maxwell and volunteers (l-r) Laura McDonald, Ruth O'Doherty, Charlotte Manning and Nicole Tsappourdi help out with our Keeping Well van.



It's a wrap

Cool FM DJ Gareth Stewart was in festive form as he helped us with our Christmas wrapping service at Victoria Square shopping centre in Belfast.

Our elves will be waiting on the Lower Ground level, opposite House of Fraser, to parcel up all your wonderful surprises in exchange for a donation.

We'll also be holding a raffle with amazing prizes such as Belsonic tickets, life-size Disney cuddly toys, four tickets to Aladdin in the Grand Opera House, and M&S and Boots vouchers.

If you'd like to volunteer to help with our wrapping service, please contact Morag on **028 9066 3281** or email moragchambers@cancerfocusni.org

Roaring success

Huge thanks to Cookstown and Magherafelt Lions Club for their fantastic donation of £2,000.



Hangin' in

Michelle Taggart (l) and Roisin McCabe and their 20-strong team from SpecDrum Engineering, Coalisland, did the Hell and Back 10k in Co Wicklow, raising an amazing £1,763.



Walking tall

A massive thank you to Dunluce School in Bushmills who rambled to the Giant's Causeway and raised £4,893. A big thank you to retired teacher Paul Scullion who's been the driving force behind the walk for many years.



10 mile walk

A fantastic day was had at the annual Cushendall to Carnlough 10 mile walk in July, organised by Jimmy Darragh. Over 160 walkers took part, raising an amazing £11,623.



News from our Cancer Focus NI fundraising support groups



Garvagh/ Kilrea Cancer Focus Group - held a very successful Girls' Night Out in Garvagh on 18th October and raised a fantastic £1,065.



Joyce Thompson (right), chair of **Enniskillen Cancer Focus Group**, presented Wilma Irwin, outgoing Secretary, with a bouquet to celebrate over 20 years in the job. Wilma, who helped raise over £540,000, is with Barbara Brand (second right), new Secretary, and Eileen Connolly, Treasurer.

From Belfast to Beijing



Why not set yourself a brand new challenge and join us as we trek one of the great wonders of the world - the Great Wall of China - from 16th - 25th October 2015?

This trek is one of the world's classics, offering stunning scenery, challenging walking and a fascinating insight into both an ancient and modern culture. This adventure begins and ends in the exciting city of Beijing, which you can explore at your leisure on the last day of the challenge.

This really is a once in a lifetime opportunity and also a chance to help children when a mum, dad or grandparent has cancer.

If you sign up for our incredible early bird offer before 8th December 2014, you'll pay just £100 registration (normally £200) and your place will be guaranteed.

Contact Emma on **028 9068 0771** or events@cancerfocusni.org for more information.



Daring Darling

A huge thank you to Chris Darling who did the Inca Trail in September and raised an amazing £7,106. Chris had the experience of a lifetime and is now planning her next trek for Cancer Focus NI. Thanks also go to Chris's colleagues who supported her fundraising and are all very proud of her.



Best foot forward

Well done to the 30 walkers who conquered Scotland's Ben Nevis and raised almost £38,000 and to the 30 runners who took on the Great North Run half marathon in Newcastle Upon Tyne, raising almost £20,000, with money still coming in for both events. We'll be going to both events in 2015, so if you're interested just get in touch.



Marathon madness

Four runners took part in the New York Marathon for us. They did us and themselves proud, with the fastest coming in at just under four hours. Well done Donna Owens, Diane Woods, Scott Higginson and Stephen McCann. Runners took part in the London, Belfast and Dublin marathons, the Belfast half-marathon, Colour Run, RunHer and many more races, taking our marathons total this year to a whopping great £175,000. Many thanks to you all for your fantastic efforts.

Challenge Events 2015

- London Marathon - April
- Paris Marathon - April
- Glens of Antrim Walk - April
- Belfast Marathon - May
- Slieve Donard Moonlit Walk - May
- Ben Nevis Challenge - June
- Great North Run - September
- Dublin Marathon - October
- New York Marathon - November

If you'd like to join us for any challenge event please call

Emma on **028 9068 0771**

or email events@cancerfocusni.org

For information on our upcoming events log onto
www.cancerfocusni.org

