

September 2011

Dear Members

News from the National Office

OWN Board and staff are delighted to welcome Paula Quirke to OWN staff as Development Officer. Paula hails from Tipperary and has a background in migrant rights and women's issues. OWN also welcomes Eleanor Muirhead who will join the staff from the USA as an intern until December next.

As you know, due to funding cuts, hours have been reduced for all staff. It may not always be possible to speak directly with a staff member but please be assured all calls and emails will be answered so please do leave a message on the answering machine or send us an email ownireland@eircom.net.

Website

We are pleased to announce that the new website will be live on **Monday, September 19th next**. The new website will allow you to join on line, renew your membership or pay for events. We have tried where possible to use images of OWN members nationwide. Any comments on the new site would be most welcome.

Board News

Members of the Board have represented OWN at events nationwide during August and more recently at the launch of the report by the St. Vincent De Paul "Older People – Experiences and Issues", Shine's (Mental Health) Grow Old Report, and AWN's Launch of Fingal Age Friendly County.

Members around the country have taken part in recordings for documentaries with RTE and a member of the network who took part in a human rights workshop has been nominated by Older and Bolder to visit Geneva as an observer with the Irish Council for Civil Liberties to listen to Ireland's response to the Universal Periodic Review. OWN's submission is on our website.

HEALTH PROMOTION DAY September 21st

Just a brief note to remind you of our forthcoming **Health Promotion Day** which takes place in the **Academy Plaza Hotel**, Findlater Place (just around the corner from the Gresham on Cathal Brugha St). The schedule for the day is as follows:

10.30 – 11.20 Registration Refreshments – Booking forthcoming events

11.20 – 11.30 Introduction

11.30 - 12.00 Pat Rees Pat has worked promoting women's health for 30years
In addition to writing books and making presentations on women's health she also holds workshops on menopause and other women's health issues Pat has written for the Irish Times, Independent, and Woman's Way magazine. Pat also was regular advisor on RTE's Afternoon Show for many years.

12.15 – 12.45 Larissa Atkinson Cardio Vascular Fitness
FITWELL Ireland was founded by Larissa Atkinson, she has always had a passion for helping individuals achieve the health and wellness goals. Larissa

has worked in the Health & Fitness Industry for over 12 years and currently runs an fitness class attended by many OWN members on Dublin's northside.

12.45 – 2.00 Lunch

2.15 – 3.00 Sarah Horgan Stroke and Stroke Prevention
Advocacy Programme Officer
Irish Heart Foundation

3.00 – 3.45 Róisín O'Kelly Naturopathic Healer –.
Róisín is no stranger to OWN and has made presentations to the Network on nutrition and life balance over a number of years. Róisín is trained in Reflexology, Holistic Dietetics, Naturopathy, Herbalism, Counselling, Pastoral care and has studied many other forms of natural healing. Róisín is currently a herbal lecturer/tutor for the CNM (College of Naturopathic Medicine) and is the CNM Head of Herbal Medicine in Ireland. She is a regular contributor to television and radio.

The cost for the event is €20.00 and includes a hot 2 course lunch.

Please book a place with the National Office by Tuesday next ,**September 20th**.

Payments will be accepted on the day for the event.

All members are welcome to bring along guests who can be paid for on the day but we must have advance numbers so that we can order meals.

We will also be selling tickets for the forthcoming **Fashion Show** on **November 20th** and taking bookings for our other events listed below.

Labour Women Seminar Free Event

“Empowering Women from Local to Europe”

Labour Women have asked us to circulate details of this event which takes place on Saturday next September 17th at Ballykisteen Hotel, Limerick Junction, Co. Tipperary.

Starting with registration at 10am the panel on the day includes

Karen Lyons – Labour Tipperary Town

Sara Burke – Tipperary Women's Network – Empowering Women in the Community

Katerine Dunne – Labour Women Chair – Women in Politics – Barriers and Solutions

Phil Predergast MEP – What Europe can do for Women in Tipperary

Light lunch provided but booking is essential

Contact Kirsi Hanafin (kirsi.hanafin@labour.ie or phone 01-6784721) to book your place.

SHINE – Taking Control Training for Trainers

Shine - supporting people with mental ill health are running a four day training for trainers programme. This training is specifically aimed at Community, Voluntary and other NGO organisations. The training will provide participants with the skills to deliver the Taking Control workshop to their own client groups.

The four day training is free and will take place on 29th,30th of September and the 13th and 14th of October in the Marino Institute, Griffith Avenue, Dublin 9.

What is the Taking Control Workshop?

The 'Taking Control' Workshop is about practical ways to face life challenges, maintaining and taking control of your physical and mental wellbeing.

The Aims are as follows;

- To build resilience in the face of life challenges and setbacks.
- To enhance coping skills, esp. pre existing.
- To build and support self-esteem and confidence.

After participating, people will:

- Be aware of positive factors in their lives.
- List positive skills and knowledge they bring forward with them.
- Recognise the physical, mental and emotional effect of stressors.
- Have action plans to safe guard against these stressors.
- Be aware of opportunities and avenues open to them.
- Know professional supports available to them.
- Have set goals and have created an action plan around these.

If you are interested in taking part in this course, please contact the OWN National Office to register.

Singing Our Cares Away: Free Workshop Singing Our Cares Away - A free Singing Workshop to celebrate positive mental health on **Saturday 8 October, 11am-3pm** Carmelite Community Centre, Aungier St, Dublin 2

Did you know that singing is good for our well being and general mental health? Would you like to provide a great uplifting singing experience for you, your family, friends, colleagues or clients?

SoundStories, Voices in Harmony is a recently launched initiative to promote group singing. As our contribution to this year's National Choral Singing Week in October to mark World Mental Health Day, we are offering a free singing workshop to everyone interested in positive mental health. The workshop will celebrate the power of singing to enhance our mental wellbeing.

The workshop, **Singing Our Cares Away**, takes place on **8 October in Dublin's city centre** and is open to absolutely everyone, regardless of singing ability and age. We will sing a range of easy-to-learn, uplifting and inspiring songs from all over the world. We will also learn about some ways of using the voice to reduce stress and enhance wellbeing. There will be no solo singing and you don't need to be able to read music.

The workshop is facilitated by Rachel Dempsey, who runs Global Harmonies. www.dublin.ie/globalharmonies. **The workshop is free but booking is essential.** Donations to cover costs will be accepted on the day.

Please email soundstoriesireland@gmail.com, or phone 086 309 7232 to book your places by October 3rd at the latest.

Review of National Poverty Targets

The Government is undertaking the review to enable it to adopt appropriate and achievable national poverty targets to meet Ireland's contribution to Europe 2020 and the commitments in the programme for government (Government for National Recovery 2011-2016). As part of the review, the Social Inclusion Division of the Department of Social Protection is consulting with key stakeholders, including the technical advisory group on poverty data and indicators under the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion, the social partners and people experiencing poverty.

The format for the workshops will include two inputs, one from the Social Inclusion Division on the background to the review of the national poverty target, and the other from representatives from community organisations on what they see as the key issues in the review.

This will be followed by a small group discussion based on defined questions. The event will conclude with feedback on the groups and an open discussion

The workshops will begin at 10:00 and finish at 12:45. Tea/coffee will be available from 09:45. A light lunch will be available after the workshop.

Workshops will take place in

Galway	Tuesday, 27 September	1 The Plaza, Headford Road, Galway Hosted by: Galway Traveller Movement
Cork	Wednesday, 28 September,	Community Resource Centre & Creche, Lower Friars Walk, Ballyphehane, Cork Hosted by: Ballyphehane/Togher CDP
Dublin	Thursday, 29 September	Carmelite Centre, 56 Aungier Street, Dublin 2 Hosted by: TBC (a small number of places have been reserved for OWN members)

There are a limited number of places available. Please contact the OWN National Office to book a place at these meetings alternatively **OWN will be conducting their own workshops** with a focus on the key issues effecting women in

Dublin	Wednesday October 5th	10.30 – 12.30 Carmelite Community Centre Aungier Street, Dublin 2 2.00 – 4.00 Le Cheile, Donnycarney Dublin 5
Cavan	Thursday October 6th	11.00 – 1.00 Cavan Crystal Hotel Galway
Galway	October 10th	VENUE TO BE CONFIRMED

Please confirm with OWN National Office if you wish to attend as all workshops are subject to sufficient numbers forming.

NEAR FM Radio Project – Coolock, Dublin 5

Near Media Co-op is seeking 8 participants (4 Irish and 4 non-EU nationals) to take part in a new project “**Intercultural Dialogue through Community Media.**” The aim of Near Media’s Intercultural project is to increase integration and intercultural understanding in society.

Participants will complete a FETAC Level 4 course in community radio and intercultural media literacy, and when accredited, will form a production team to create a series of 13 programmes on the theme of intercultural dialogue, to be broadcast on Near90fm. The project will run from late October 2011 to mid-March 2012. The first 7 Fridays of the project (October 21st – December 2nd) will involve delivery of the FETAC training course, 10am – 4pm each week.

The following 13 weeks will require a 3-hour weekly time commitment for the planning and production of the radio series.

If you are an Irish or non-EU national interested in participating, please contact: Grace Wilentz, Intercultural Dialogue through Community Media Co-ordinator: grace@near.ie.

Computer Courses

The Media Co-op in Dublin's Northside have recommenced their computer courses. Anyone interested in attending a computer course should contact them at 01-8485211 to add their name to the waiting list.

Classes are also taking place nationwide – members interested in attending a class in their area should contact the OWN National Office and we will direct to your nearest centre.

Intergenerational Event

All members are invite to attend an intergenerational event with the Transition Year Students from St. Mary's Holy Faith in Killester on Wednesday October 12th in Le Cheile from 10am – 3pm. Bus numbers 14 and 128 travel from right across the city and stop outside Donnycarney Church – the centre is located beside the church on Collins Avenue.

This film event will include a screening of a film with a discussion followed by a light lunch. To defray the costs of lunch and the hire of the room there will be a €5.00 charge.

If you would like to attend this event, please confirm your attendance with the National Office by Monday October 10th and send in your payment by cheque, postal order, online payment or with cash at one of the forthcoming events.

Carelocal

OWN friends and colleagues in CareLocal are hosting their Annual Carelocal Walk which takes place in Howth on Sunday, 2nd October next.

OWN Members interested in enjoying a Sunday stroll for a good cause should contact the OWN national office and we will co-ordinate a group to go together.

Care Local volunteers visit an older person in their local area once a week in the older person's home. This forms the foundation of a relationship that builds and strengthens over time.

Home Care Benefits Package

In 2011, the Department of Social Protection expects to spend over €530 million on the National Fuel Scheme and the telephone, gas and electricity elements of the Household Benefits Package. Over 630,000 people receive these benefits.

A number of changes to the Household Benefits Package are being introduced from September 2011. There are no changes to eligibility but there are changes to the value of the package, which includes the Electricity Allowance, Natural Gas Allowance, telephone rental and TV licence. Changes are also being made to the Fuel Allowance, which is not part of the package. The following changes are being introduced:

Electricity Allowance

The annual value of the Electricity Allowance is being reduced from 2,400 units a year to 1,800 units. That means you are entitled to 300 free units in each two monthly billing period. If you do not use all your free units, up to 1,200 unused free units may be carried forward between each billing period.

The allowance continues to cover the standing charge and the Public Service Obligation (PSO) levy.
Electricity (Group Account) Allowance The value of this allowance is being reduced from €43.80 to €35.80 a month.

Natural Gas Allowance

This allowance is being reduced from €52 every two months in the summer (June to November) to €42 and from €111 every two months in winter to €89. The total allowance for a year will be €393.

Bottled Gas Refill Allowance

This is being reduced from €40.70 a month to €32.70 a month.

Telephone Allowance

The Telephone Allowance is being reduced from €21.41 plus VAT (at 21%) each month to €18.36 plus VAT each month.

If you have a hearing or vision impairment, the allowance also covers the cost of renting a special telephone, subject to availability.

Free Television Licence

There is no change in this.

Fuel Allowance

The **Fuel Allowance is not part of the Household Benefits Package**. From September 2011, the Fuel Allowance is to be standardised at €20 a week. This rate applies to the majority of recipients. There will be no additional allowance for living in an area where smokeless fuel must be used. Again, there are no changes to the rules on eligibility. Separately, under the Supplementary Welfare Allowance scheme, you may get a special heating supplement if you have special heating needs because of ill health or infirmity. Exceptional Needs Payments (ENP) may be made to help meet an essential, once-off cost, which you are unable to meet from your own resources.

Check with your local Social Welfare Office if you have any queries.

VAT on Energy Bills

An element of the cost of increases in energy prices is the VAT. OWN wrote recently to Minister Noonan in support of a request by the Consumer Association of Ireland asking the Minister to consider the introduction of a tiered level of VAT. This would allow the maintenance of current VAT exchequer funding from bills but would provide some relief and much needed confidence to all consumers in all homes across the nation by limiting the additional amount of VAT to be deducted.

With an average monthly electricity or gas bill of €100 the VAT recovered is €13.50. With increases as outlined above the VAT recovered would be €15.39 and €16.47 respectively.

CAI requested a consideration of a reduced rate to 9% on energy charges per month over €100 for a home. This would present a return for the higher bills, again as outlined above, of €14.76 and €15.48. In each case the Exchequer gains but with a reduction of €0.63 and 0.99 per bill that is saved by the consumer on the increased tariffs. Again, this will not be on all bills but simply the higher and, predominantly, family users.

Changes to the Domestic Violence Act

The Act amends the Domestic Violence Act 1996 so that one parent may apply for a safety order against the other parent even where the parents do not live together or have never lived together. It also provides that same-sex couples who have not registered civil partnerships and unmarried opposite sex couples have the same rights to apply for orders under the Domestic Violence Act. There will no longer be a requirement that couples have lived together for a minimum period before one can apply for a safety order

The Minister for Justice and Equality has said that he intends to introduce further changes to the law on domestic violence and to consolidate the legislation.

New charges for long-stay care

The maximum in-patient charges for residents in long-stay care have been increased with effect from 23 July 2011. The new rules are contained in Statutory Instrument (SI) 382/2011.

These charges may apply if:

You have been resident in a public nursing home since before 27 October 2009 (if you became a resident subsequent to this date, you are paying charges in accordance with the Nursing Homes Support Scheme rules)

You are receiving acute care in a public hospital for more than 30 days (if you are in hospital for more than 30 days and you are considered not to need acute care, you may be charged in accordance with the Nursing Homes Support Scheme rules)

You are living in long-stay care facilities for people with disabilities or other non-acute long-stay facilities. The overall new maximum charge is €175 a week but the maximum is reduced if this would leave you with less than €33 a week or if you are not getting 24-hour nursing care.

Residents are divided into two groups:

Class 1: if you are receiving in-patient services in premises where nursing care is provided on a 24-hour basis, the maximum weekly charge is €175 or your weekly income less €33, whichever is the lesser

Class 2: if you are receiving in-patient services in premises where nursing care is not provided on a 24-hour basis, the maximum weekly charge is either €130 or your weekly income less €64 or 60% of your weekly income, whichever is the least amount

Family Mediation Service

The Family Mediation Service, which is currently part of the Family Support Agency, is to be transferred to the Legal Aid Board. It is not yet known when this transfer will take place.

The Family Support Agency comes under the remit of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs.

The Minister for Justice and Equality intends to publish a mediation and conciliation Bill at a later stage. This will provide for the better operation of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms.

Board of Directors: Bréid Morris (Chairperson), Hazel Abdulla, Carol F Carey,
Margaret Carragher, Ruth Stenson, Máire Uí Bhraoin, Brenda Whitley.

National Director : Christine O'Kelly

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