



The National Programme for
Sport and Physical Activity for Older People

more older people
more active, more often

ISSN 1393 4465

WINTER 2012 / SPRING 2013

newsletter

In this issue...

Mary Kennedy on the next stage of life
The Go for Life Games

Go for Life - The National Programme for Sport and Physical Activity for Older People

A message from the Go for Life team

As the dust settled on our ten-year birthday last year, we thought “wouldn't it be great if we could bring people together like this every year for a celebration of sport?”. And that is when the idea for the Go for Life Games was born. This year, in June, we ran a pilot Games with over 80 people from six counties and, in November, we ran a second event with five more counties and another 60 people (almost all of them men).

The evaluations that people filled out on the two days have been hugely positive so we hope to be able to extend the invitation to more and more counties in future and, hopefully, introduce an All-Ireland Go for Life Games.

Go for Life, Age & Opportunity,
Marino Institute of Education,
Griffith Avenue, Dublin 9

t: 01 805 7733 f: 01 853 5117

e: gfl@ageandopportunity.ie

www.ageandopportunity.ie

King of the Hill



The Ashbourne Hillwalkers enjoy a challenge
Photo: Paul Gaughan

Hillwalking is a popular pastime. With developed trails around the country and such beautiful settings (even on the frequent wet days), it can be hard to resist. Eamon Walsh joined the ranks of hillwalkers three years ago, when a group of friends asked him to become part of their informal walking group.

This Easter, he faced his biggest challenge when eight members of the group walked from Glasgow to Fort William in the Scottish Highlands – a journey of 97 miles – with three of them (including Eamon) going on to climb Ben Nevis: “I’ve always liked a challenge, all my life.”

Of course, you don’t have to be that adventurous and most groups will cater for different levels: “You don’t have to go up the high hills, you can do lower ones. You set your own pace. Some people walk faster than others.”

Eamon enjoys the opportunity a hill walk gives to socialise: “You’re walking with people all the time, but not with the same person for the whole day. You could walk with one person for a half an hour, then you might drop back and talk to somebody else.”

Despite a few possible setbacks, Eamon is committed to getting out on the hills. As long as he can get himself up, over and around the hills of Ireland (and elsewhere), he sees no reason to stop: “My ears are gone and my eyes are gone, but my legs are still working.”

Watch out for the **Get Ireland Walking** initiative coming to a county near you in **2013**.

Preaching to the Converted



Noel Carey at the Go for Life 10 Year Celebration
Photo: Go for Life

Noel Carey, a Cork-based Go for Life tutor with over a decade of experience, talks about his involvement with Go for Life and how it has brought the benefits of being active to many older people.

I've made hundreds of presentations to senior citizen centres in County Cork and in Kerry over the past twelve years, but I still remember my first presentation, which was at a day care centre in Mallow. I had charts, handouts and a critical audience who, at the time, wanted to get back to their bingo and not to be interrupted by these 'silly exercises'. It was difficult in the early days to get our message across to sceptical groups, because many felt that we were intruding on their time. As tutors for the Go for Life programme, we were like missionaries travelling to Africa, to preach a gospel of the value of daily exercise!

The Go for Life programme – now stressing the importance of physical, mental and social health and the need for people to be active daily – became more relevant to people as

they saw the crisis developing in the health services. Community groups for older people, ICA groups and others were now requesting presentations, and the tutors were inundated with requests for Go for Life programmes.

I've witnessed the phenomenal success of the Go for Life programme, and the success of the PALs training and their involvement in promoting the activities is invaluable. I feel privileged to have been involved in Go for Life since its inception, and to have met such dedicated people: those at senior citizen centres, front line promoters, my fellow tutors in the Southern Region, dedicated PALs and so many more who have contributed to the outstanding success of Go for Life.

We celebrated the tenth anniversary of Go for Life last year at The Helix in Dublin, and it was a memorable event. I hope that it will continue to grow and develop over the years ahead.

Age & Opportunity – could your next phase be your best phase?

Go for Life is an Age & Opportunity programme funded by the Irish Sports Council. At Age & Opportunity, we believe that your next phase could be your best phase. Every May, we run the Bealtaine festival, celebrating creativity as we age. Throughout the year, we also devise and run workshops and training programmes. Some are aimed at helping people to explore their own ageing or to get more involved in their local community. Others are aimed at tackling ageism and discrimination. To find out more about these and other programmes, call

Age & Opportunity on (01) 805 7709 or see our website www.ageandopportunity.ie

Serious Fun and Games



Warming up at the Go for Life Games in June
Photo: John Ohle

June and November have seen two pilots for the Go for Life Games. Almost 150 participants in Kilkenny and Dublin took part in a Games which Go for Life hopes will go national in the future.

Teams from Carlow, Dublin, Kildare, Kilkenny, Meath, South Tipperary, Waterford, Wexford and Wicklow, competed in events based on some of the activities played by Go for Life groups around the country. Mary Jackson, from Baltinglass, was one of Wicklow's representatives. She had a great day, as did all of her teammates.

Mary's local active retirement group in Baltinglass were focused on other projects, so Mary went to a group in Tinahely who were participating in Go for Life. When the prospect of attending the Games came up, some people were apprehensive about competing: "I just felt that they were nervous about going but I thought 'It'll be a bit of a laugh'", and she eventually got two other group members to come with her.

"I think they would go home and think 'Gosh, look at these older people and all the things they could do'."

Both Mary and her teammates had a wonderful day and she'd hate to think that other people would miss out on the fun: "If it was coming up again, I would tell people my experience of it. I might go and talk to the Active Retirement group here in Baltinglass, and explain to them. I think when you've been there yourself, you understand it better. And people would say 'Well she's been there, so she knows what it's about'. For me, I would definitely do it again... and I'd recommend that anybody take part."

Mary also enjoyed the intergenerational aspect to the Games: "There were young guys and girls there, helping out. I thought it was great to let them see what older people can do, and what's out there for people to do. I think they would go home and think 'Gosh, look at these older people and all the things they could do'. And unless you go to things like this, you don't know what's out there, really".

The Games People Play

The Go for Life Games are: 'Lobbers', a variation of boules or petanque; 'Scidils', using a single skittle – just to make life difficult; and 'Flisk', a Frisbee-style game using small plastic discs. There are separate teams for each game from each county. The games are played in a 'round robin' style so that most people are competing most of the time. Each team scores points for their county. The overall scores are added up to find the winning county. The emphasis on sportsmanship is also important and 'Spirit of the Games' awards are given to individuals who show fair play on the day.

The Kennedy Era:

Mary Kennedy talks to Go for Life

Mary Kennedy, presenter of RTÉ's Nationwide and one of Ireland's most recognisable faces, talks to us about the joys (and the perils) of entering the next phase in your life and how a run can sometimes be just what you need.

As someone who's in great shape, do you enjoy being active?

It's important to me. I do like to keep fit and I've had an interest in fitness ever since I was in school. I still jog. I've done two marathons but not recently – I don't know if the knees would take it. I also go to Pilates. When it comes to being healthy, you can't turn back the clock, but you can maximise your potential. I try to live and eat healthily during the week, and then throw caution to the wind at the weekends - you couldn't do it all the time!

What would your jogging regime be?

I jog about three times a week and do four miles each time. They're ten-minute miles which are very average but I feel tired at the end of it so that's good enough for me. I run about 80 per cent on grass rather than concrete. Now, when I say 'grass' that can include grass verges but I do try to run on a soft surface most of the time.

Are we seeing a new era of people getting more active?

I do think exercise is on the up. There are a huge number of people now walking or cycling to work, which is brilliant. I also believe that, because we're four years now into the recession, people view life differently and that they're more open to just 'being'. I'm a great fan of Sr Stan and she talks about mindfulness, which is about just being aware of where you are at any particular time and that you can enjoy going out for a power-walk or going out for a run instead of thinking "I should be working harder to be able to buy a second home in the sun" or something like that.

In your last book, "Lines for Living", you're very open about the menopause and about

'the empty nest', that point when you're no longer central to your children's lives.

The menopause coincides with a time when your children are grown up and leaving and, all of a sudden, you feel kind of 'different', and at a different stage in life. And I think it's good to be talking about it. An awful lot of women have said to me, since I wrote about it in the book, "That's how we were feeling as well". You're supposed to kind of disappear into a corner and say nothing and pretend it's not happening and let others get on with life. I just think that's an appalling vista. Also, it's important to emphasise the positive too because women in middle age have so much to offer: they have wisdom, they have experience, they have so much potential to be able to do what they want to do, and the more women to do that the better.

What can help when things feel particularly gloomy?

Nobody has 100 per cent happy-clappy feelings every day when they get up in the morning. There are days when you can wake up a bit blue. I find that what dispels that kind of feeling is going for a run. It just does. I also like to be busy, to have a focus and projects. Apart from my work, I also donate time to causes. I grew up in a family where it was about not just taking but about giving back. That's another positive thing about this time of life: I can do that now that my children are grown up and I don't have to have the dinner on the table at seven o'clock every evening or be at the school gates at four o'clock. The Care Trust is one charity that is very close to my heart.

Nationwide with Mary Kennedy is on RTÉ One at 7pm every Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

HSE and LSP listings

Go for Life is run in partnership with the •Health Service Executive and the •Local Sports Partnerships.

Find out what is going on in your area by getting in touch with the coordinator nearest to you.

CARLOW

- Martha Jane Duggan (059) 913 6207
- Olive Fanning (059) 914 3630

CAVAN

- Colm Casey (049) 437 3110
- Nadine McCormilla (049) 437 8582

CLARE

- Geri Quinn (065) 686 5837
- John Sweeney (065) 686 5434

CORK

- Sheelagh Broderick (028) 40 488
- Michael Crowley (021) 466 5080

DONEGAL

- Geraldine Delorey (071) 985 2000
- Myles Sweeney (074) 911 6078

DUBLIN

- Dublin City
Aideen O'Connor (01) 222 2099
- Dublin North
Ailis Brosnan (01) 882 3402
- Dublin South East
Jim Gorman (01) 274 4200
- Dublin South
Caroline Peppard (01) 463 2813
- Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown
Shane McArdle (01) 271 9507
- Fingal
Marion Browne (01) 890 6256
- South County Dublin
Thomas McDermott (01) 414 9000

GALWAY

- Paul Gillen (091) 548 323
- Galway City
Jason Craughwell (091) 536 459
- Galway County
Michael Curley (091) 476 509

KERRY

- Cora Carrigg (066) 718 4776
- Anne Culloty (064) 70 767

KILDARE

- Syl Merrins (045) 980 547
- Caroline Peppard (01) 463 2813

KILKENNY

- Nicola Keeshan (056) 772 0870
- Meabh McGuinness (056) 776 1400

LAOIS

- Clodagh Armitage (057) 935 7824
- Caroline Myers (057) 867 1248

LEITRIM

- Geraldine Delorey (071) 913 5061
- Declan Boyle (071) 965 0498

LIMERICK

- Anne Costello (069) 61 430
- Limerick City
Elaine Barry (061) 333 600
- Limerick County
Phelim Macken (061) 496 428

LONGFORD

- Clodagh Armitage (057) 935 7824
- Siobhan McGuinness (043) 334 3307

LOUTH

- Mary Browne (042) 932 4356
- Yvonne Gilsenan (046) 907 6400

MAYO

- Paul Gillen (091) 548 323
- Charlie Lambert (094) 904 7256

MEATH

- Yvonne Gilsenan (046) 907 6400
- Mary Murphy (046) 906 7337

MONAGHAN

- Colm Casey (049) 437 3100
- Michelle Murphy (042) 975 5126

OFFALY

- Clodagh Armitage (057) 935 7824
- Eamonn Henry (057) 935 7462

ROSCOMMON

- Noel Feeley (090) 663 0853
- Paul Gillen (091) 548 323

SLIGO

- Geraldine Delorey (071) 913 5061
- Deirdre Lavin (071) 916 1511

TIPPERARY

- Tipperary North
Elaine Cullinan (067) 43 604
- Tipperary North
Fionnuala Kenny (067) 46 675
- Tipperary South
Valerie Connolly (062) 64 737
- Tipperary South
Catherine O'Loughlin (052) 617 7930

WATERFORD

- Peter Jones (058) 21 191
- Susan Scully (051) 846 714

WESTMEATH

- Clodagh Armitage (057) 935 7824
- Sonja Statham (044) 939 0208

WEXFORD

- Nuala Harpur (053) 918 5781
- Fran Ronan (053) 917 6688

WICKLOW

- West Wicklow
Caroline Peppard (01) 463 2813
- Rest of Wicklow
Jim Gorman (01) 274 4200

Go for Life is an Age & Opportunity initiative funded by the Irish Sports Council.

Age & Opportunity is the national not-for-profit organisation that promotes opportunities for greater participation by older people in society through partnerships and collaborative programmes.

The Irish Sports Council's mission is to plan, lead and coordinate the sustainable development of competitive and recreational sport in Ireland.

Cover shows: Mary Kennedy
Photo courtesy of RTE