



NEWSLETTER – AUTUMN 2026

Galway Hospice Foundation



**Growing Moments
That Matter**

CONTENTS

WELCOME.....	3
AT A GLANCE.....	4
SPOTLIGHT.....	6
HOSPICE STORIES.....	8
OUR CARE IN ACTION.....	9
OUR HOSPICE VOLUNTEERS.....	14
OUR HOSPICE COMMUNITY.....	16
DATES FOR YOUR DIARY.....	18
IT'S ALL THANKS TO YOU.....	19



WELCOME

Dear Friends,

As we move into autumn, I am delighted to share with you the latest edition of our Galway Hospice newsletter. Within these pages, you'll find stories that reflect not only the care we provide every day, but also the remarkable people and partnerships that make that care possible.

This edition celebrates the many different ways hospice care supports patients and families. From our Day Care outings and creative community projects to the launch of our new Healthcare Assistant pilot service, you'll see how we continue to develop services that help people live as well as possible, wherever they call home.

You will also meet some of the dedicated professionals who make this care possible every day. Our nurses, doctors, researchers, therapists and volunteers each play an essential role in creating an environment where compassion, dignity and person-centred care remain at the heart of everything we do.



Our community continues to inspire us. Whether through Sunflower Days, the Croagh Patrick Climb, local fundraising initiatives or simple acts of kindness, the generosity of individuals, schools, businesses and volunteers enables us to continue supporting patients and families when they need us most.

To everyone who contributes to Galway Hospice in so many different ways — our staff, volunteers, supporters, community partners and donors — thank you. Your kindness, commitment and belief in our work allow us to continue making every moment matter.

Mary Nash
Chief Executive

AT A GLANCE

A Day at the Galway Film Fleadh

Our Day Care patients recently enjoyed a wonderful outing to the Galway Film Fleadh, where they watched the touching short film *Walking Holiday* before sharing a delicious lunch together at the Connacht Hotel.

The day was filled with laughter, conversation and the simple joy of spending time together — creating memories that will be treasured long after the credits rolled.

Our sincere thanks to Charlene Lydon, Festival Programmer at the Galway Film Fleadh, for her warm welcome and support, and to David and the team at the Connacht Hotel for their generous hospitality, which helped make the day so special.

Experiences like these are an important part of Day Care, offering opportunities to connect with the community, enjoy new experiences and continue living well.

Creative Project Brings Colour and Connection to Mayo Hospice

A unique collaborative art project created by students from four secondary schools across



County Mayo has found a permanent home at Mayo Hospice, bringing colour, creativity and a lasting sense of connection to patients, families and staff.

The project, *Felt Connections*, was developed through the Creative Clusters initiative and involved students from Ballyhaunis Community School, Scoil Mhuire agus Pádraig (Swinford), St. Louis Secondary School (Kiltimagh) and St. Joseph's Secondary School (Foxford).

Inspired by Ireland's native plants and wildlife, each student created an individual felt square, which was then combined into one large artwork symbolising unity, care and community.

Officially presented to Mayo Hospice in May, the installation is now on permanent display, offering warmth and comfort to everyone who visits.





Growing Moments That Matter

To celebrate Earth Day, patients from our Day Care service enjoyed a wonderful outing to McGaugh's Gardening Complex, where they spent the morning surrounded by nature, learning new gardening tips and sharing time together.

The group was warmly welcomed by Gerry and the team with refreshments in the café before taking part in a guided visit led by staff member Paul, who brought 26 years of gardening experience, alongside our wonderful volunteer, Eleanor, who also treated everyone to her delicious homemade baking.

More than a gardening trip, the morning was an opportunity to enjoy the outdoors, learn something new, and spend time together.



Art That Blooms

Our hospice garden has been brightened by a colourful collection of hand-painted rocks, generously donated by Helen from Kinvara Rocks.

Handmade Syringe Driver Bags Support Patient Comfort

Galway Hospice was delighted to receive a generous donation of beautifully handmade syringe driver bags from the Galway Traveller Movement, including the Headford Road Traveller Women's Group and the Doughiska Traveller Women's Group.



These thoughtfully designed bags help make syringe drivers easier and more comfortable for patients to carry, while also providing greater discretion and supporting independence in everyday life.

This generous contribution is a wonderful example of how community kindness can make a real difference to the experience of patients receiving hospice care.

Each unique piece adds a touch of creativity and joy to our outdoor spaces, helping to create a welcoming and uplifting environment for patients, families and visitors to enjoy throughout the year.

We are sincerely grateful to Helen for this thoughtful gift and for helping our garden bloom with kindness.

SPOTLIGHT

Brian Dowling and Arthur Gourounlian Visit Galway Hospice

Galway Hospice was delighted to welcome **Brian Dowling and Arthur Gourounlian** earlier this year as part of the filming for the **AIB Community Fund** campaign, which highlights the impact of community organisations across Ireland.

During their visit, Brian and Arthur met with members of our multidisciplinary team to learn more about the work of Galway Hospice and the many ways specialist palliative care supports patients and families both in the hospice and at home.

They spent time with **Mairead Carr, Director of Nursing**, and **Lorraine Mernagh** from our Community Palliative Care team, discussing how hospice care helps people live as well as possible with a life-limiting illness. They also met patients attending our **Breathe Better Programme**, joining conversations with staff and participants about the importance of remaining active, connected and supported within the community.



As part of the visit, they met with **Lorraine Mernagh** from our Community Palliative Care team, who explained how hospice care reaches far beyond the hospice building.

“For many people, being at home is really important—it’s where they feel most comfortable, most themselves. Our role is to support that. Community palliative care helps people live as well as possible, for as long as possible, while giving families the reassurance that they’re not alone.”



They also spoke with **Mairead Carr, Director of Nursing**, about the growing need for palliative care and the importance of supporting people earlier in their illness.

“Palliative care is no longer just about the final stage of life. It’s about helping people maintain the best possible quality of life and ensuring they receive the right care, in the right place, at the right time.”

We are grateful to Brian and Arthur for their warmth, curiosity and genuine interest in learning about our work, and to **AIB** for helping shine a light on the importance of specialist palliative care within our community.



HOSPICE STORIES

“What surprised me most was the warmth of the people and the amount of laughter”

I have a brain tumour. It's been operated on and it's in a good place at the moment. I'm in phase three, and I still attend oncology regularly for my scans and appointments. I'm now into a period where it's mostly about monitoring.

I have been attending Day Care at the hospice for about six or seven weeks. Before this, I didn't really know the hospice. This is my first experience of it.

My experience with Day Care has been very good. What surprised me most here was the warmth of the people and the amount of laughter.

What I expected was people sitting around moaning about the fact that they've only got so long to live. I was quietly surprised that there was no mention of illness. It has been about positive talk. It's been nice. It's a nice experience.

It's lovely just to listen to people and enjoy being around them. It's lovely to see people enjoying something, even if you might not enjoy it yourself. It's a vicarious thing, you know. Something lovely like that.

I get aromatherapy and massage therapy, and that's quite pleasant. I've had some physiotherapy too.

There's music therapy, the ladies get their nails done, we go out, and there's art therapy.

I haven't had that yet, but I would like something to do with that.

I feel there are lots of things I haven't done and lots of things I would have liked to do, but circumstances or difficulties held me back. That's one of my things.

But coming here has been a pleasant experience. You're not sitting in the passenger lounge waiting for something, if you know what I mean. You just live in the moment here. That's been my experience.

– Paul, Day Care patient



OUR CARE IN ACTION

New Pilot Healthcare Assistant Service Launched

Galway Hospice has launched a new pilot community-based Healthcare Assistant service, providing additional practical and emotional support to patients receiving specialist palliative care at home.

The service forms part of Galway Hospice's Community Palliative Care team and has been developed to help patients remain comfortable and supported in their preferred place of care, while also offering reassurance and respite to families and carers when they need it most.

Working closely with specialist palliative care nurses, doctors and the wider multidisciplinary team, the Healthcare Assistant service provides support with personal care, mobility, comfort measures and emotional wellbeing, helping to ensure patients and families receive coordinated, holistic care.

Breeda Feeney, a Clinical Nurse Manager with Galway Hospice's Community Palliative Care team, welcomed the introduction of the new service: "This is an additional support for patients and families. It is not intended to replace existing home support services, but rather to complement them when people need extra help. Sometimes just a few hours of support can make a real difference to a family."

This Healthcare Assistant service is designed to complement existing community supports and home care services, providing an additional layer



of care when circumstances change or needs increase, often outside of normal workday hours.

Amy Kybartaitė, who delivers this service, explained: "During normal working hours, patients and families can access a range of community supports. However, outside those hours, people can often feel alone when difficulties arise."

“ This service provides an additional layer of support and reassurance during evenings, nights and weekends, when families may feel most vulnerable.”

The service can assist patients who are experiencing discomfort, distress, changes in their condition or increasing care needs. It can also provide short periods of respite, allowing carers time to rest, attend appointments, complete everyday tasks or simply take a break.

The service is currently available to patients under the care of Galway Hospice's Community Palliative Care team.

Raising Awareness of Falls Prevention

In May, the Falls Working Group hosted a three-day awareness event to highlight the importance of falls prevention for patients receiving palliative care.

The programme included:

- Education for staff on falls prevention equipment.
- Information stands at both sites, with leaflets, a quiz, and members of the Falls Working Group available to answer questions.
- A journal club discussion, led by our pharmacy representative, on blood pressure and its relationship to falls risk and management.

Many people do not realise they may be at risk of falling due to factors such as medication, fatigue, changes in their usual environment, or balance and mobility issues.

For this reason, it is important that both our teams and our patients and their families are aware of these risk factors. By taking a proactive approach, discussing risks openly, and implementing appropriate care, we aim to reduce the risk of falls before they occur.

Leaflets on falls risk factors, falls prevention and appropriate footwear are available at both Galway and Mayo Hospices. Please ask a member of staff if you would like a copy.



Research Highlights the Importance of Supporting Palliative Care Staff

New collaborative research involving the University of Galway, the Health Service Executive, and Galway and Mayo Hospices has

highlighted the importance of trust, psychological safety and reflective support for nurses working in specialist palliative care.

The study explored palliative care nurses' experiences of clinical supervision and identified the factors that help staff feel supported in their roles. The findings show that creating safe spaces for reflection, supported by a positive organisational culture and protected time, helps nurses build resilience, maintain their wellbeing and continue providing compassionate, high-quality care to patients and families.



Recognising Our Medical Team

Behind every consultation, conversation and decision is a team of doctors dedicated to providing compassionate, specialist palliative care.

Our medical team recently came together for **Galway Hospice's first Research Symposium**, organised by our doctors as part of a growing commitment to research, collaboration and continuous learning.

The symposium provided an opportunity to share research exploring practical ways to improve

palliative care, from symptom management and communication to supporting Irish-speaking patients and strengthening evidence-based clinical practice.

Alongside their daily work supporting patients and families, our doctors are helping to build a culture of research and learning, always asking how we can continue to improve the care we provide.



More Than Nursing: Being There When It Matters Most

At Galway and Mayo Hospices, our nurses and other healthcare professionals are often the people patients, families and carers remember long after their time in our care. They are the reassuring presence at the bedside, the calm voice during difficult moments, and the compassionate professionals who help people live as well as possible with a life-limiting illness.

This year's International Nurses Day theme, Our Nurses. Our Future. Empowered Nurses Save Lives, recognised not only the expertise of nurses, but also the humanity they bring to their work every day.

Throughout the week, we invited some of our nurses to reflect on what hospice nursing means to them. Although each shared a different perspective, a common message emerged: hospice nursing is about far more than medical care. It is about listening, dignity, comfort and being present.



“Blessed be these hands that care.”

Nicola Purcell chose to reflect on nursing through words inspired by writer Diann Neu:

“Blessed be these hands that have embraced others with compassion. Blessed be these hands that have assisted those in need. Blessed be these hands, for they are the hands that care.”



“Be their voice and companion.”

For **Mark Joseph Dimaano**, quality of life sits at the heart of hospice care.

“We should have compassion for everyone, be their voice and companion, and provide comfort and the highest standard of care.”



“Being present, listening, bringing comfort.”

Having worked in healthcare across four countries, **Renata Pinto** believes hospice care is unique because it is truly holistic. For her, the small things often matter most:

“Being present, listening, bringing comfort.”

Behind every nurse is a unique story, but together they share the same commitment: helping patients and families feel safe, heard, respected and cared for during some of life's most difficult moments.

We are deeply grateful to every member of our nursing teams across Galway and Mayo Hospices for the compassion, expertise and humanity they bring to our services every day.



“A referral to us does not mean hope is lost.”

For **Kevin Finnegan**,
Clinical Nurse
Specialist with the
Community Palliative
Care Team, hospice
care is about helping
people remain where
they most want to be.

“Our aim is to empower patients to live at home with dignity, whilst being able to access a professional and compassionate programme of care designed around them and their families. A referral to us does not mean that hope is lost—it means support, comfort and care when it is needed most.”



“People remember kindness.”

For **Eugene Slattery**,
the lasting impact of
nursing is rarely found
in procedures, but in
human connection.

“People rarely remember clinical interventions. They remember kindness. They remember being listened to. They remember being treated like a person, not a diagnosis.”



“It’s about being a safe hand to reach for.”

Laura Glynn describes
palliative care nursing as
supporting patients and
families through some
of life’s most challenging
moments.

“I love being a palliative care nurse. It’s about providing support to patients and families through challenging times. It’s about being a safe hand to reach for.”

OUR HOSPICE VOLUNTEERS

Celebrating the Heart of Hospice Care During National Volunteering Week

During **National Volunteering Week**, we proudly celebrated the extraordinary contribution of the **158 volunteers** who support hospice services across Galway and Mayo, including 118 volunteers in Galway and 40 in Mayo.

Throughout the week, both hospices marked the occasion by recognising the kindness, generosity and compassion of the people who help make every moment matter. Coffee mornings were held at both sites as a small gesture of appreciation

for the volunteers who give their time so generously throughout the year.

This year's National Volunteering Week theme, "From Every Corner, For Every Cause," resonated deeply within the hospice community, where volunteers from all walks of life come together with one shared purpose: supporting patients and families through some of life's most difficult moments.

Volunteers play a vital role across both hospices, supporting reception areas,

day care services, patient transport, meal delivery, fundraising activities, administration, and many other aspects of hospice life. Beyond practical support, they also offer something equally valuable — presence, warmth, conversation, and human connection.

Noreen Glennon, Volunteer Co-Ordinator, said: "National Volunteering Week is all about recognising our incredible volunteers who keep everything running with smiles, patience, and a sense of service that inspires us all."





Galway volunteer Gerry Leonard reflected on the friendships and sense of purpose volunteering has brought into his life:

"Once I come in that door in the morning and go home in the evening, all my troubles are parked outside," he shared. "It's just a wonderful place — wonderful staff, wonderful volunteers, overall wonderful people."

For many volunteers, the experience is also deeply meaningful on a personal level. Ann Marie Jordan, who has volunteered with



Mayo Hospice for over four years, described hospice volunteering as "something very special."

"I've become part of a truly beautiful and supportive community," she said. "Even small gestures, like a smile or a calm conversation, can make a real difference to someone who might be going through a difficult experience. It's an honour to play even a small part in supporting patients, families, and staff in such a caring environment."

Galway Hospice Foundation extends heartfelt thanks to every volunteer whose kindness, compassion, and generosity continue to make such a meaningful difference every day.

Mary Nash, CEO of Galway Hospice Foundation, thanked volunteers for the profound impact they have on patients, families, and staff: "You are truly at the heart of our hospice community, giving us the fantastic gift of your time, and helping us ensure that every moment truly matters for the patients and families who use our services. Thank you."

OUR HOSPICE COMMUNITY

Sunflower Days: A Community United

The people of Galway once again showed their incredible generosity during **Hospice Sunflower Days 2026**, helping raise an outstanding **€118,716.63** to support specialist palliative care across the county.

Over two days, more than **500 volunteers** took to the streets across Galway city and county, collecting donations in communities from **Galway City, Salthill and Oranmore to Athenry, Ballinasloe, Clifden, Loughrea, Mountbellew, Portumna, Tuam** and many more. Local schools also joined the campaign through **Sunflower Fun Days**, helping to spread awareness of hospice care among younger generations.

We are especially grateful to the many businesses and organisations that supported this year's campaign, including our

corporate volunteer teams from **Intact Insurance, Zimmer Biomet, Ribbon Communications and Medtronic, Galway Chamber**, the management and staff of shops and businesses across Galway who hosted collections, and **Deavey Transport**, together with our dedicated volunteer drivers, whose support was invaluable throughout the campaign.

Every euro raised locally stays locally, helping Galway Hospice continue to provide specialist palliative care and support, free of charge, to patients and families across Galway. A heartfelt thank you to everyone who donated, volunteered and supported Sunflower

Days 2026. Together, you are helping us ensure that every moment matters.



Croagh Patrick Climb 2026: Together to the Summit

Families, friends, colleagues and supporters once again came together for our annual **Croagh Patrick Climb**, sharing a meaningful day of remembrance, reflection and community while raising vital funds for Galway Hospice.

We were delighted to welcome **Revive Active** as the official sponsor of this year's climb. Their generous support helped make another memorable day possible, and we are sincerely grateful for their commitment to hospice care.

A special thank you also goes to **Callinan Coaches Ltd.**, our bus sponsor, together with **Mayo Civil Defence**, our dedicated hospice volunteers, **Peter Joyce**, the **Croagh Patrick Stakeholders Group**, **Croagh Patrick Ambassadors**, and everyone who helped organise and support the event.

Every step taken up the Reek was a step towards helping Galway Hospice continue providing specialist palliative care and support to patients and families across Galway. Thank you to everyone who climbed, volunteered, donated and remembered loved ones with us.



"I Thought It Felt Like Home"

At just 10 years old, Thomas Byrne-Burke was inspired by the story of Liz Kavanagh O'Malley and wanted to do something to support Galway Hospice in her memory. Here, he shares what inspired him and his experience of visiting the hospice.



"My name is Thomas Byrne-Burke. I am 10 years old.

I first heard about Liz from my mum. Liz was a warrior for telling her story to the world.

I wanted to do a GoFundMe to give something back for all the care and love they gave to Liz and her great husband, Kieran.

When I came to Galway Hospice, I didn't know it was going to be so different from a normal hospital. I thought it felt like a home. I wasn't scared or nervous. Instead, it felt comforting and relaxed.

I will never forget Galway Hospice for what they do for their patients, and I will always think of Liz."

— Thomas Byrne-Burke, aged 10

Through his incredible kindness and determination, Thomas raised an amazing **€3,266** for Galway Hospice. Thank you, Thomas, for your generosity, your compassion, and for reminding us that kindness has no age.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Host a Big Coffee Morning This September



Big Coffee Morning for Hospice will take place on Thursday, 24th September, bringing people together in homes, workplaces, schools and communities to raise vital funds

for specialist palliative care services in Galway and across Ireland.

If you can't host on the day, you can organise your coffee morning on a date that suits you. Every cup of coffee shared helps Galway Hospice continue providing compassionate care and support to patients and families across Galway.

To register, visit galwayhospice.ie/coffee or contact our Fundraising Team on **091 770868**.

Autumn Remembrance Services

This autumn, Galway and Mayo Hospices will hold their next **Remembrance Services** on **Thursday, 1st October** in Mayo and **Wednesday, 7th October** in Galway.



These special gatherings provide families and friends with an opportunity to come together to remember, reflect and celebrate the lives of loved ones who were cared for by our hospice teams. During each service, candles will be lit in memory

of those who passed away under our care between 1st February and 30th June 2026.

The services are co-facilitated by our Pastoral Care and Medical Social Work teams, who warmly welcome families to share this time of remembrance together.

Tree of Lights Returns This November

Our much-loved **Tree of Lights Celebration** will take place on **Sunday, 29th November 2026, at 5pm** at Galway Hospice.

This special community event offers an opportunity to pause, reflect and remember loved ones in the lead-up to Christmas. Each light on the Memorial Tree shines in tribute to someone special, celebrating lives that continue to be remembered and cherished.

Further details will be available in early November, when supporters will also be invited to sponsor a light in memory of a loved one and have their name included in our **Book of Remembrance**.



IT'S ALL THANKS TO YOU

Every act of kindness helps make our care possible. Whether it's organising a fundraiser, volunteering your time, supporting one of our events, or making a donation, your generosity has a lasting impact on the patients and families we care for.

We are deeply grateful to every individual, school, community group and business that chooses to support Galway Hospice. Together, you help us continue providing specialist palliative care and ensure that every moment truly matters.

Our sincere thanks to **ESB** and the **Energy for Generations Fund**, which has awarded Galway Hospice €2,000 as one of its Charity Champions 2026. We are especially grateful to Deirdre Newell for nominating Galway Hospice and to ESB for recognising and supporting the care we provide to patients and families across Galway.



Our sincere thanks to the **Lenihan family**, who recently presented a cheque for €9,505 to Galway Hospice following this year's **Croagh Patrick Climb**, in memory of Theresa Lenihan. Their generosity and support will help us continue providing specialist palliative care and support to patients and families across Galway.



Our heartfelt thanks to **Joe Kavanagh of Clifden Garda Station**, who, together with his son Eoin, recently presented a cheque for €10,771.81 to Galway Hospice in memory of Liz Kavanagh. We are deeply grateful to everyone who supported



this wonderful fundraising effort, which will help us continue providing specialist palliative care and support to patients and families across Galway.

Our sincere thanks to **Revive Active**, official sponsor of this year's Croagh Patrick Climb, for supporting one of Galway Hospice's most meaningful fundraising events. Pictured at the launch are Sabine Rybak (Galway Hospice), Siobhan O'Sullivan (Galway Hospice Fundraising) and Triona McDonald (Revive Active). We are grateful for Revive Active's partnership and support.



Congratulations to Rita Molloy, who was named **Galway Hospice's 2026 Hospice Hero** in recognition of more than 30 years of dedicated fundraising and volunteer support. Rita received her award from **Miriam O'Callaghan** at the national launch of **Hospice Sunflower Days 2026**.

Our sincere thanks to the **Dunmore Church Choir and Musical Society**, whose annual Carol Service raised €4,150 for Galway Hospice. We are deeply grateful to everyone who supported this wonderful community fundraiser.



Our sincere thanks to everyone who supported the **Ballyconneely Progressive 25 Drive**, raising an outstanding **€4,846** for Galway Hospice. Thank you to the organisers, players and everyone who contributed to this wonderful community fundraiser.



Every moment matters

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