

MS and epilepsy sufferer gets on campaign trail

Calling for improved neurological services

BY KATE HEANEY

A LETTERKENNY based former hospital social worker who suffers from Multiple Sclerosis and epilepsy is campaigning for increased neurological services for the people of Donegal and the north west.

Pat McCarthy, who is 48, has had MS for half of his life and eight years ago developed epilepsy. He warned that as the services are, people can wait substantial periods of time to see a Neurologist which can have a negative effect on their outcomes.

Pat knows what it is like to suffer from both conditions and is well aware of what services are needed. He is one of just two people in Ireland to suffer from both chronic conditions.

As the general election campaign gets underway Pat is asking the public to ask potential candidates for the next Dáil to sign up to a pledge to improve neurological services here. The pledge is on the website of the Neurological Alliance of Ireland (NAI) and Fianna Fáil Deputy Charlie McConalogue is the only sitting TD in Donegal to have signed up.

In response to a query from the Donegal News this week, the HSE stated that the Neurology Services in the north west is a regional service based in Sligo University hospital with an Out-Reach OPD service to LUH two days per fortnight.

"There is no inpatient or day-case servicing in LUH. The maxi-



Epilepsy Ireland member Pat McCarthy.

mum waiting time for a routine appointment is 15 months," the HSE statement said.

Speaking to the Donegal News this week Pat explained that sharing services with Sligo and Leitrim means waiting lists for patients here which are just too long. The NAI is calling for investment in services for the 800,000 Irish people living with neurological conditions.

"This campaign covers people with MS, Epilepsy, Stroke, Acquired Brain Injury, Parkinson's, Dementia and injuries from Road Traffic Accidents. One in seven people today live with a neurological condition and I think most

of us know someone.

"People needing to see the neurologist can face long delays or have to go to Dublin or Galway. It is a complete neurological team we need here in Letterkenny which is now a University Hospital and should have these services. Some people with MS have to be treated in Sligo as they require different medication.

"With this election campaign underway, it is an opportunity to demand better neurological services for Letterkenny and everyone can help to do it by asking the candidates who come looking for votes to support it. Ireland's neurological care services are criti-

cally underdeveloped which means that thousands of people here and nation-wide face a constant struggle to get the level and type of care they need," Pat added.

Pat moved to Letterkenny in 2000 when he married Heather and worked as a social worker for people with disabilities in Letterkenny General Hospital. The couple have two daughters Katie and Jane.

Pat was diagnosed with MS while a student studying social work in Coventry in 1994. Then in 2006 he had his first epilepsy attack. He has had around eight attacks in the intervening years and requires immediate hospitalisation then rehabilitation following an attack. He wears an epileptic bracelet to notify anyone close by if he should have an attack.

"I would see my Neurologist about every nine months and in the interim I just get on with it. The existing staff here in LUH are second to none, but we need more.

"I got the opportunity to retire in 2010 and enjoy the outdoors but need to do everything in moderation. I would ask everyone in Donegal to put the candidates they meet on the spot and demand better services for the thousands of people, like me who have neurological conditions," Pat concluded.

To see which candidates have signed up and to support the campaign go to www.nai.ie



Lauren Grieve aged 13 from the Ferry School of Dancing, winner of the Confined Reel Championship U13 and solo heavy Jig U13 at the Derry /Donegal Branch Championships.

GOLDEN WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

JOHN AND AILEEN LAFFERTY

would like to thank their family, friends and neighbours and those who travelled to join them and their family in celebrating their 50th Wedding Anniversary.

We would also like to thank everyone for the beautiful gifts and cards. It was greatly appreciated. Thanks to the staff of the Station House Hotel for a wonderful meal and great service. Thanks to Martin McColgan for providing the music on the night which helped to make the night so enjoyable.

A special thanks to our own family who organised and arranged this wonderful celebration that has left us with great memories.

Man admits dangerous driving causing two deaths

A MAN who pleaded guilty to causing the deaths of two Letterkenny friends will be sentenced in April.

Noel Carr, 25, of Glenkeeragh, New Mills, was charged with dangerous driving causing the deaths of Shaun Graham and Matthew Crawford at Aghavannan Far, Kinnegar and Kintale, Rathmullan, on August 3, 2013.

He appeared before Letterkenny Circuit Court on Wednesday afternoon for a brief hearing, speaking just once to plead 'guilty' to a single charge of causing the deaths of the two young men.

Shaun Graham, (19), and 21-year-old Matthew Crawford, from Letterkenny, were both killed when the car in which they were travelling in crashed on the

Rathmullan to Portsalon Road. They had been making their way home from a festival.

Members of the Graham and Crawford family were in court for Wednesday's brief hearing.

ADJOURNMENT

A defence barrister asked for sentencing in the case to be adjourned until April to allow a report from the probation service and to prepare a plea of mitigation.

Addressing the bereaved families, Judge John O'Hagan, said that he recognised it was a "distressing time" for the families and advised them that gardai would help them in preparing victim impact statements for the hearing in April.

Older people can avail of grants of roof replacements - council

OLDER people across Donegal can avail of grants from Donegal County Council to assist with roof replacement on their homes.

The issue was raised by Fine Gael councillor, Jimmy Kavanagh, at a recent meeting of the council in Lifford.

POOR HOUSING CONDITIONS

He was told by Director of Housing, Corporate and Cultural Services, Mr Joe Peoples: "Under the Housing Aid for Old-

er People Grant Scheme, assistance is available to older people living in poor housing conditions to have necessary repairs or improvements carried out to their homes."

He added: "Eligible works under the scheme include both roofs and chimneys and where an item can be repaired instead of replaced the grant aid will reflect the repair cost as opposed to the replacement cost."

Patrick Gallagher COACHES



GWEE DORE - LETTERKENNY - DERRY		
Town	Twice Daily	
Anagry - Car Park	7.45	-
Bunbeg - Crossroads	8.00	12.30
Falcarragh - Bank of Ireland	8.20	12.55
Creeslough - Car Park	8.45	13.15
Letterkenny - Station Roundabout	9.30	14.00
Manorcunningham - Bus Stop	9.35	14.05
Newtowncunningham - Coyles Pub	9.45	14.15
Derry - Water Street	10.00	14.30
Departs		
Derry - Water Street	15.30	19.00
Letterkenny - Station Roundabout	16.00	19.30

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