

## **What is the Mayo Mental Health Association?**

We are a voluntary organisation founded in 1970 to promote positive mental health. We actively support persons with a mental illness and their families by identifying their needs and advocating their rights. For almost 40 years we have provided top quality residential accommodation in the community for persons with mental health problems.

Our ethos is based on the spirit of volunteerism and it is totally reliant on the time given unselfishly by the many volunteers who form the backbone of the organisation. The membership is drawn from local communities and off-duty health care workers who provide support, friendship and informal caring through the Association's befriending, educational and re-housing projects.

We are affiliated to the national body, Mental Health Ireland, who employs a Regional Development Officer, shared between Mayo and Roscommon, to develop, support and augment the work of local Associations. In addition we employ a part-time Resource Worker in our new **Information Centre and Office** at 2, New Antrim Street, Castlebar.

## **What role does the Association play in today's society where the emphasis is on care in the community?**

One of the biggest developments undertaken by the Association since our inception was an innovative plan to develop and promote a high quality re-housing project for people with mental health problems which began in the early 1970's. Today, in partnership with the HSE we provide social housing in Castlebar, Ballina, and Westport and we are planning to extend the scheme to other towns in the County.

## **What does the Association's education programme consist of?**

We play a key role in mental health promotion in the County through our school-based projects and public mental health information seminars. Every year we organise and promote the Mental Health Ireland National Public Speaking Project for students in 2<sup>nd</sup> level schools in Co Mayo. This project encourages and motivates students to foster a sensible approach towards maintaining good mental health throughout their lifetime. It also increases their level of awareness of mental health issues as they learn about the causes and effects of mental illness. Three Mayo schools have emerged as outright national winners in the past eight years, namely: Sancta Maria, Louisburgh, St Patrick's Islandeady and St Gerald's Castlebar.

We support the “Mental Health Matters” pack which is delivered to second level schools annually. This is a modular programme which addresses the issues of mental health in a realistic and age-appropriate manner. This programme provides a forum for teenagers to voice their concerns and fears in relation to the pressure many may find themselves under in today’s society.

We promote mental health awareness through our Public Educational Seminars. Recently we organised and promoted successful seminars, with topical mental health subjects such as --- “*Mind Matters*”, “*Facing up to Suicide*” “*Alcohol and drugs Misuse in Teens*” “*Who Cares*” and “ *Bullying in the Home, Workplace and School*”. We try to respond to the needs of local communities in selecting topics for these and future seminars.

### **Befriending**

Our Association historically played a role in providing social supports and promoted social integration for persons experiencing mental illness through its befriending or ‘*good neighbour*’ concept approach.

Recently we set up a formalised social befriending project in Mayo. This Social Befriending Project is a voluntary service operated by volunteers especially trained to provide a one-to-one relationship which enables people with mental health problems to widen their social network and become active participants in their local communities.

### **How is Mayo Mental Health Association funded?**

We are almost totally reliant on fund-raising for our ongoing programme of activities and enjoy the support and confidence of the public – (you have probably contributed) to our Countywide Church Gate Collection. We regard this public support as a vote of confidence in our work and for this we are extremely grateful.

We are also the beneficiary of many fund raising groups and organisations such as The Western Vintage Tractor and Engine Club: Muintir Mhuigheo, Midwest West Radio Station: Soroptomists International. Other smaller groups also contribute towards the running costs of our Association . The Health Service Executive also supports us financially on a partnership basis through lottery funding.

### **New Information Centre and Office**

Our new **Information Centre and Office** at No. 2, New Antrim Street in Castlebar was officially opened on Friday , 9<sup>th</sup> October. The opening was performed by the popular Mid West Radio Broadcaster Mr Tommy Marren, who is a valued friend of our Association and who has supported and promoted our aims and objectives over the years.

The Information Centre is staffed by our Resource Worker on a part-time basis initially with support from our volunteer members. We have plans to further develop our information and health promotion services and to extend the stock of mental health education literature in our sit-in library.

Our new Centre will provide an opportunity for persons who have particular mental health issues to telephone or call in person to the Centre for advice and information which will be provided in a confidential manner. Our information Centre will not be dealing with Clinical matters but as part of our signposting service we will direct your enquiry on to the appropriate care or service setting.

We extend an open invitation to the public to drop in and visit the Centre to find out more about us and see at first hand the service we are offering. We will continue to look at new initiatives and projects and would welcome your views and opinions on this. We are available to assist in any way we can.

If you wish to be involved in our work please contact Carmel at:  
**094 90 38148**