

# Positive Ageing Week 2022 Local Heroes



## Pat Farrell

Pat Farrell was well known in Gort as the friendly face of Open Sesame Healthfoods. She was always ready to give help and advice if needed or just have a chat. She has also given generously of her time for a number of community initiatives over the years. She has recently been involved in the Biogas group, protesting the development of a large biogas plant near the centre of Gort. She is on the editorial committee of Guaire Magazine and volunteers for a morning a week at the Gort Resource Centre.

But there is more to Pat than meets the eye. When she retired, she decided that this would be a good time to continue her education. Having had a lifelong interest in History and Politics she decided to enrol for a 3 year undergraduate degree in History at University of Galway (then NUI Galway). Despite a diagnosis of psoriatic arthritis, she completed that degree with First Class Honours and she is now in the second year of her research for a Doctorate in History also at NUI Galway. For Pat it is never too late to attempt something new and challenging. She says that she believes that growing older is a “dance with the possible” and that there are new ways of approaching health issues so that they do not become an impediment. This is surely the spirit of positive ageing.



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## Daniel McNamara

Dan lives in Newcastle in Galway City and is 76 years young. He is the full-time family carer for his beloved wife and best friend Bridie, also age 76, who has experienced much illness from a young age. Dan has cared for Bridie for all of their life together since they were 16, but particularly in the past 20 years.

Dan worked previously in the army, then as a taxi driver and later in security, but gave up work to care full-time for Bridie, who wishes to be cared for at home where they reared their five children. Dan has lead a healthy lifestyle throughout his life and completed many marathons. Although he slowed down a bit due to a heart attack and skin cancer a few years ago, it didn't affect him caring for his devoted wife.

The caring role is arduous as Bridie needs full assistance with all activities of daily living. Dan is a great cook and prepares all their meals. Despite the challenging nature of his full-time caring role, Dan continues to be positive, jovial and selfless and to have a truly inspirational zest for life. He walks his four legged best friend, his dog Max every day and he has joined the local Family Carers Ireland Carers Support Group, completing certified training courses in heart saver CPR, use of a defibrillator, and in manual handling and people handling.

Dan is an exemplary representative of the over half a million family carers in Ireland currently, who care for a loved one at home, and without Dan and the other family carer's constant care and attention, there is no doubt that the health service would be adversely impacted.



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## Celia Comber

Celia Comber lives on the west side of the city and is retired about 15 years now. She is one of the Local Heroes whose stories are featured in the Positive Ageing Week 2022 Local Heroes Exhibition.

Since she retired, she has joined "For Us Now" (F.U.N.) Ladies Club, with weekly meetings in the Westside Library. The club arranges a wide variety of activities and courses, with something for everyone. One of the first courses she completed was an introduction to computers. This then enabled her to successfully complete both a Certificate and Diploma in Community Development and Facilitation Skills, run by GRETB Training Centre and NUI Galway (now University of Galway).

With those qualifications, she started giving patchwork courses in various parts of the city, and set up a Patchwork club that meets weekly in the Westside Resource Centre. She is also a member of the Craft club in the Westside Resource Centre and a local city walking group.

Celia's voluntary work includes being a member of the board of directors of the Westside Resource Centre and helping organise their monthly 'Open Door' events. When not engaged in one of these activities, she enjoys spending time with her wonderful family and friends, travelling to see her beloved Manchester United play at Old Trafford (with apologies to supporters of other teams!), exploring parts of Europe, trips to visit family in New York (there may also be some shopping and Broadway shows!), and completing her own craft and patchwork projects.

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## Carmel Larkin

Carmel lives life to the fullest. Born in the Tuam Mother and Baby home, her start has not defined her happy go lucky attitude.

In October 2021, Carmel suffered a stroke, which has changed her mobility and memory, but has this stopped Carmel? No way, she is out walking with The Womens Shed Cairde Mná group encouraging everyone to do as much as they can, while she herself makes her way around the gorgeous park using her stroller.

Her home is open to all who want to learn how to knit, crochet, patchwork and upholstery, where she freely gives her time to women all over Tuam. Her home is adorned with striking pieces created by her own hands learned in woodturning & burning courses, she gardens, and she is learning the skills of reflexology, mindfulness, and yoga. Certificates can be seen everywhere and her knowledge is shared with all. Socializing and bringing people together are great skills of Carmel's, lending her cooking skills to the annual street BBQ, baking regularly for a person surviving cancer, along with organizing get togethers to encourage all her friends to get involved and use whatever skills they have. Carmel must have invented networking.

Carmel will never forget where her life started. She continues to be a part of the Mother and Baby Home Team seeking justice for all.

The Tuam Women's shed are proud to have Carmel as a member and a friend. And she certainly lives according to the motto seen on her living room wall "Life isn't about waiting for the storm to Pass. It's about learning to dance in the Rain"



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## Ann Concagh

Ann was born in Co Roscommon in 1932. She met and married Paddy Concagh, a farmer from Glenamaddy, in 1959. They had a house wedding with no honeymoon. Paddy's mother lived with them too, and Ann cared for her for ten years until she passed away.

Ann loves to cook and bake homemade soda bread and apple tarts, and whatever she makes her neighbours always get half.

Ann's husband passed away in 2003, and as they had no children that left Ann on her own, so She started going to the Active Age group in Glenamaddy. She loved going on outings and the Bingo and she also does radio Bingo in aid of Western Alzheimers, and she supports the local GAA lotto every week.

She has a support to help her get around now, but she is determined to keep active, by walking in and out to her gate a few times a day. She likes to keep in touch with the local gossip by reading The Tuam Herald, listening to Galway Bay FM and Midwest radio, and of course the Church Newsletter. She sits beside her kitchen window, and knows every car and tractor that pass the road. Ann turned 90 years young in September and celebrated with a big party, something she always loves.



# Positive Ageing Week 2022 Local Heroes



## Bernie Smith

Bernie is a local Westside woman who celebrates and promotes her local community through her own positivity and involvement in a number of groups. She has been active in the Westside Community Organic Garden where she not only volunteers but leads the chat and craic! Bernie's knowledge of plants, wildlife and biodiversity has been a central part of Westside Community Garden. Bernie also inspires her neighbours within her own estate by bringing a smile to the face of anyone who walks past her house with the planting of flowers and variety of colour.

Westside Craft Group has also benefited from Bernie's knowledge and experience. This was particularly the case when the crafters took on a piece of work for Galway 2020. This was a knitted replica of a well-known Galway place... The Long Walk. The Crafters, with Bernie as a motivator and inspirer, took on knitting the houses and buildings that make up The Long Walk near Spanish Arch in the centre of Galway.

Bernie always has a great way of welcoming people to local Westside Groups through her easy-going manner and unassuming ways. Most of all she always has a smile that shines through and makes you feel better from being in her company.

Bernie Westside is glad to have you!



# Positive Ageing Week 2022 Local Heroes



## Evelyn Moran

Evelyn Moran is passionate about active citizenship and is a great example of an older person working for older people to drive change – reminding us of the wisdom and experience brought to the community by older people. Evelyn has been an active member of a wide range of community groups and organisations over many years, and has worked tirelessly to promote the views of older people in policy development and decision making. Evelyn has been an active member of the Older Peoples Council in Galway since it first began. She served as the Secretariat of the Irish Senior Citizens Parliament for 8 years, and she was one of the founding members of Renmore Active Retirement Association (ARRA). She was also the Senior Helpline Coordinator in Galway for a number of years. To honour Evelyn for her commitment, she won the Galway City Council 2022 Mayors Award which acknowledged the many and varied volunteering activities carried out by the older members of our society. As an example of positive ageing in action, Evelyn was honoured for her generosity of spirit, air of positivity and activism for older people, and for reminding us all that age is but a number and that we should all live our lives to the full.





# Positive Ageing Week 2022 Local Heroes



## Derrick Hambleton

Derrick Hambleton (76) is first and foremost a family man, married to Mary with 2 adult children, Kate and Colm and the proud grandfather of Kates 2 young boys. Derrick and Mary moved to Galway from the UK in 1979, and while spending 30 years as a taxi driver in Galway, he grew to play a major role in promoting sustainability, protecting the environment and defending Galway's precious built heritage. In the process he has acted for many years as a major resource and source of knowledge for local communities and to those in the environmental movement, as he shared his experiences of campaigning and his knowledge in planning and environmental legislation. For over twenty years Derrick has been a representative of the Galway City Community Network (formerly Forum) and until recently a very active chairperson (still involved) of An Taisce Galway Branch, the only citizen's organisation to have a statutory role in planning and environmental matters. Derrick and this organisation were/are advocates of progressive development that is sustainable, not car dependent and being cognisant of the natural environment. It was through his membership of Cairde Othair na Gaillimhe that citizens first gained access rights to attend Council meetings, in a new Public Gallery at City Hall (1995). Derrick believes there is still a lot left to be done as he looks around our city, conscious now of the glaring need for better provision for older residents still living in town, especially catering for people with impaired mobility and access needs. No signs of giving up just yet then!





# Positive Ageing Week 2022 Local Heroes



## Gerry Lydon

Gerry is a man that exudes community spirit. His passion is in sharing his love of all things heritage, working with the Collinamuck heritage committee and local community group, and has poured so much of himself into the restoration of the children's graveyards. This is no mean feat, as the graveyards are classed as national monuments and has involved extensive consultation with the heritage officer, ecologist and archaeologist from relevant agencies. His group has finished three local graveyards to date.

Never to be seen idle, Gerry is a passionate paddler and is working with fellow enthusiasts to develop the Galway Blueway to Oughterard. During Covid Gerry was initiating support groups for the local community, joining with the GAA "one support" programme culminating in the group receiving the Mayor's award for the contribution they made to their community.

Gerry was also one of the main drivers behind the development of the community pitches in Killannin, fundraising nearly €300,000 through group efforts over the last two years. He has organised 'Hands across the Corrib' to bring together the communities of the Corrib catchment area and using these resources to organise celebrations to mark the end of National Heritage Week.

He shares his knowledge so freely, organising walks and infecting others with his love of learning about the world that surrounds us. He represents the community on the Collinamuck National School Board of Management and supervises FAS workers to maintain the beauty of the community.



# Positive Ageing Week 2022 Local Heroes



## Hannah Sullivan

Hannah is 92 years young! She hails from West Cork and now lives in Ballinasloe with her family. She attends Ballinasloe Social Services two days a week, and she is the life and soul of the centre. She shows nothing but a positive outlook on life. She will help out at the centre given any opportunity. She gives one to one dance lessons to staff and volunteers, who find it difficult to keep up to her pace on the dancefloor! Hannah's dancing skills were learned in her 22 years in England where she practiced Scottish Formation dancing.

Hannah's motto is "keep moving, don't sit for too long!". There isn't much time for sitting when Hannah is up at 6.30am each morning to attend to her hens, complete her housework, look after the garden, attending the centre and being part of the Ballinasloe Active Retirement Association Online Active Retirement Group. She just loves the monthly outing with this group. She is a whizz with the phone and is up to date with children, grandchildren and great grandchildren through her WhatsApp contacts and her iPhone!!! Hannah puts her energy and positive outlook down to an active life and keeping both your body and mind busy!

# Positive Ageing Week 2022 Local Heroes



## Helen Murphy

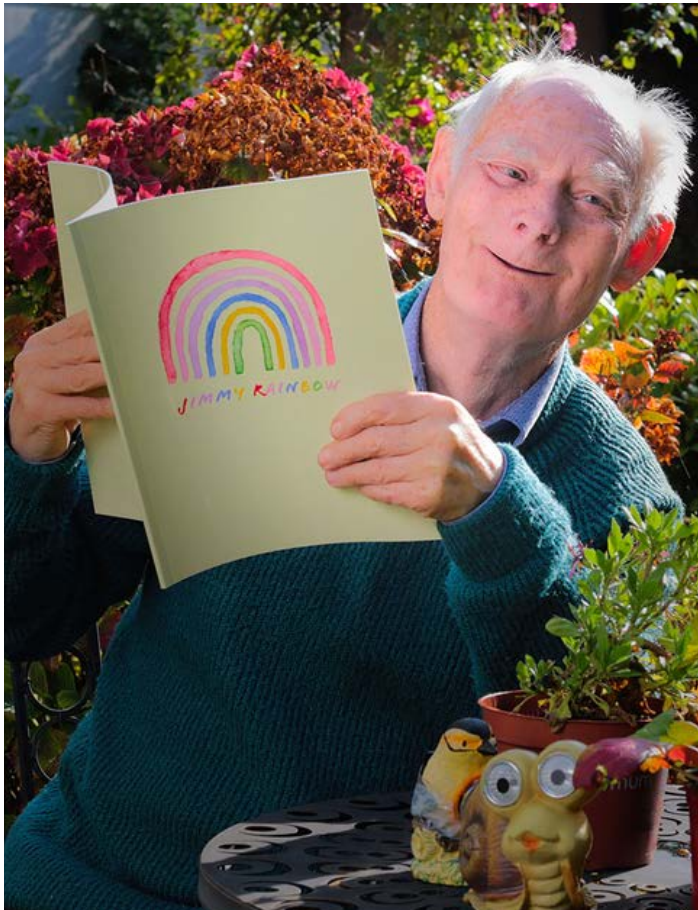
Having grown up on a small farm in North Mayo. She has been active from a very young age and has continued being so right through life. Helen believes that keeping active as one gets older contributes greatly to having good mental and physical health. Since retiring from work Helen does a lot of walking and cycling to keep fit. She really enjoys a park run and regularly does the 5 km on a Saturday morning in Knocknacarra.

Over many years she has enjoyed volunteering with various groups and continues as a volunteer to fundraise for the Galway Hospice, a very worthwhile cause. She loves gardening and finds it very therapeutic. Helen is involved in the local Westside Community Garden as a volunteer, a great network of people. She likes card playing but unfortunately some group games are 'dying out' probably because so many are now doing this on the internet. She plays whist in Loughrea weekly during the winter. Helen travels quite a bit and has visited many places including Cuba and Sri Lanka. Helen is 70 years young!





# Positive Ageing Week 2022 Local Heroes



## Jimmy Rainbow

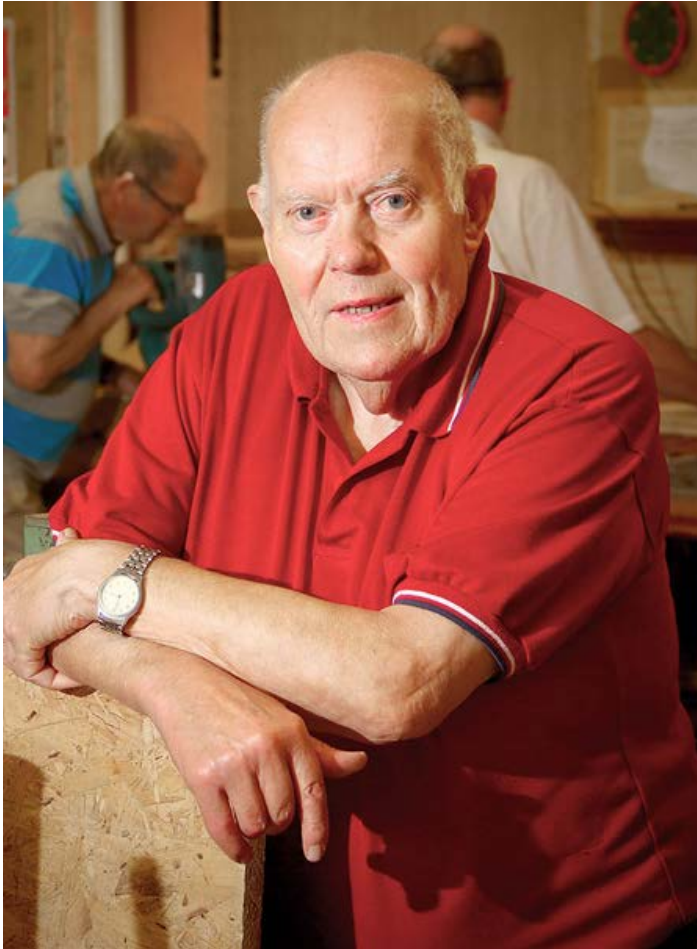
Jimmy Rainbow is not just a man with a colourful name, but a very colourful life. Born into a big family in 1941 in Kildare, Jimmy grew up horse riding in the Curragh. This love of horses resulted in him competing in the Special Olympics Ireland, where he won a Silver and Gold Medal. Jimmy's biggest achievement to date was getting his own house by the water, near Galway City.

Jimmy has made his house a home, which he shares with his cat Tabatha. It is full of colour, from his flowers and apple plants, to the artwork that lines his walls. He has many interests that keep him busy each day, from completing art projects such as That's Life, attending the Cathedral each day to pray and light a candle, and enjoying a jig or reel in An Pucan. Jimmy used to Irish Dance there every Thursday until recently and now he enjoys sitting back and watching others take over the dancefloor.

He has an interest in theatre and drama working with Blue Teapot Theatre Company group a few years ago. He also has a love of country music, and is a big fan of Tom Jones and Dickie Rock. Jimmy has written his first (of soon to be many) books about his life, titled 'Jimmy Rainbow'. Big things are yet to come from this multi-talented native Kildare man, stay tuned.



# Positive Ageing Week 2022 Local Heroes

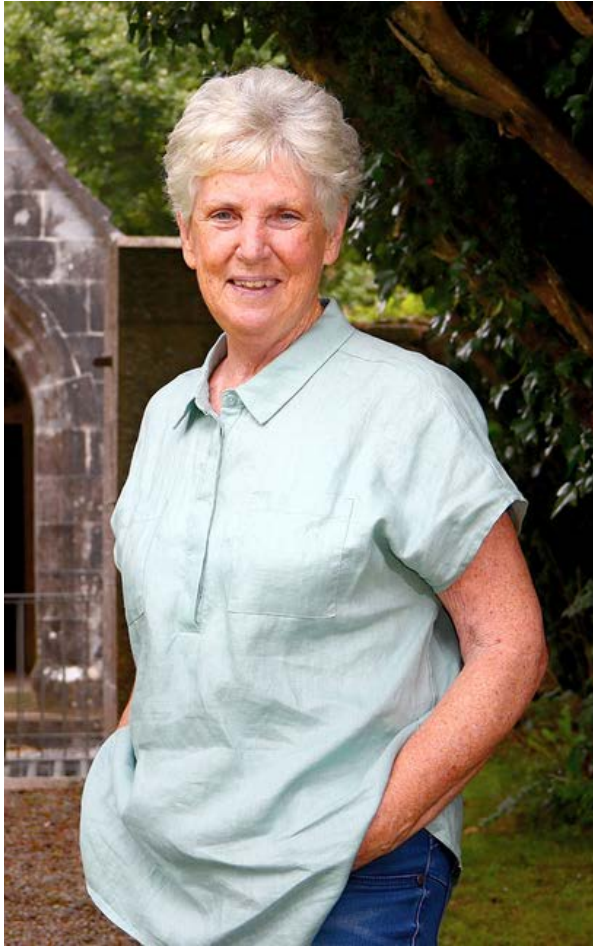


## Jarlath Fahy

We have a lovely community of 44 'mature age' residents here in St. Jarlaths Court in Tuam. Many are returning emigrants who bring with them the richness of life experiences gained in many parts of the world. One such is our friend and neighbour Jarlath Fahy, who we have the great pleasure in nominating for his contribution to our community here. A lifelong early riser, Jarlath gets a daily newspaper for many of our residents and has it at their door before 9am seven days a week, regardless of the weather and Jarlath doesn't drive. He is a prominent and much-loved member of our local men's shed, where his good humour and kind nature are very much appreciated. As he says himself, he looks after the 'grub', so he ensures they are well nourished. We often get a knock on the door when Jarlath comes back with a delicious salad for tea. Jarlath is a neighbour you could run to in a crisis and know he is going to help. He is the friend who will come to your door with a steaming soup if he hears you are unwell. Utterly dependable, and always in good form, he has a sense of mischief about him, so is always a pleasure to meet.



# Positive Ageing Week 2022 Local Heroes



## Karen O'Neill

Karen is a retired radiographer and is in her 70's. After moving to Ardrahan from San Francisco in 1976, Karen and her husband Sean soon became part of their local community in South Galway where she is active in many community projects. Attending the first reading the landscape series in Coole Park had a huge influence on Karen's knowledge and understanding of the region and over the years she has been involved in various initiatives such as the Labane Ardrahan Community Development Association, The Lady Gregory & Yeats Heritage Trail, The Burren Lowlands development group, The Gorgeous Gort Forum and the Gort Riverside Development group, and much more, working with Galway County Council officers over the past 20 years to enhance the enjoyment and knowledge of the region for everyone.

She has grown to love the area and loves sharing her knowledge with visitors and locals. Every day, Karen gives of her time and knowledge to the community and to her friends. She stays active by taking cycling trips, working at the Gort River Walk, and always willing to go on an outing or a travel adventure. Karen is known and respected by so many where she lives and where she volunteers. She is a wonderful example of positive ageing and she is such an inspiration to others.





# Positive Ageing Week 2022 Local Heroes



## Liz Brosnan

Liz is dog keeper, biker, year-round sea swimmer and organic gardener living in Ballybane, Galway City. Originally from Mullingar, she has lived in Galway over the past 30 years, apart from a few years in London before the pandemic. She works as a social science researcher, currently on a part time contract at the University of Galway. She dabbles in creative writing and painting, and you will often find her writing and singing her own songs and creating art.

She is a keen environmentalist and carries out regular litter picking in Merlin Woods. She is also a member of Blood Bike West and, during the pandemic, was one of only two women bikers in the charity. She is also a founder member of Amach LGBT Galway Silver Rainbows group.



# Positive Ageing Week 2022 Local Heroes



## Maggie Woods

Maggie is currently project officer of Access Together Galway, a Gold Star initiative designed to improve accessibility and services for disabled people across businesses in Galway City.

Removing barriers for disabled people is a cause she is passionate about and, in many ways, has been advocating for all her life. As one of the youngest survivors in Ireland of the thalidomide drug disaster, Maggie has faced a lifetime of adversity and succeeded through hard work and a positive outlook. Maggie worked most of her life with for the Irish Wheelchair Association in Tuam. She was also chairperson of the Irish Thalidomide Association and negotiated with two different governments for people born with disabilities caused by the biggest drug catastrophe in the 1950s and 1960s. In addition, when she was in her 30s, she organised a fundraiser for the Galway Hospice Foundation, flying a small Cessna plane from Galway to Shannon and back and raised €8,000 for the organisation. At age 60, and a grandmother of two, her fight for disabled services is not slowing down.

"I came to Galway about thirty-eight years ago with a weekend bag and never left," she said. "I know the people of Galway will work with me to improve accessibility ."



# Positive Ageing Week 2022 Local Heroes



## Marian Moloney

She is the Chairperson of Access for All Galway, a network of individuals who have lived experience of disabilities and local agencies, focusing on improving access and rights for people with disabilities. Marian has worked tirelessly for more than two decades to ensure equal access to services in Galway City for persons of all ages in order to progress an accessible and disability friendly city for all based on equality and diversity.

Marian accepted the Community Service & Social Inclusion (Group) Award on behalf of "Access for All" at the annual Mayors Awards in 2022. She is an experienced influencer and campaigner on causes that are important to her and the wider society including International Day for People with Disabilities, Make Way Day, Galway Childcare Committee, and Galway City Community Network.

Marian regularly attends blind tennis and tandem cycling with the Galway visually impaired activity club and she walks several times a day with her guide dog, Leon.

She champions issues for older people with disabilities including access to Personal Assistants and Age and Disability Friendly housing, the built environment and public realm.





# Positive Ageing Week 2022 Local Heroes



## Michael Grealish

Michael Grealish is one of the most cheerful, positive, polite and helpful people, according to the residents of a housing complex in Tuam.

“He would brighten everyone’s mood with his cheerfulness and so helpful to all the residents in the block of 44 apartments. People always seem to go to him if they need help with anything, and he obliges with a smile. As chairperson of the residents association until recently, he was able to organise things like free dinners during lockdown, and coffee mornings when restrictions allowed. Everyone trusts and likes him, and despite having some medical problems of his own, he tries to keep active and makes sure he does his daily walk. At 73 years of age, Michael is so young at heart.

He loves life, his motto is “No matter what the weather is, every day is a good day”, and he lives life to the full.



# Positive Ageing Week 2022 Local Heroes



## Nora Murphy

Nora Murphy lives in Ardrahan, Co. Galway and is 71 years young. Nora is the full-time carer for her beloved husband and best friend Tom, also age 71, who experienced a stroke when he was just 48 years of age. At that time, Nora and Tom had two young adult children attending college, and family life and financial circumstances changed considerably, as Tom could no longer work and now needed full-time care and attention from Nora. For the past 23 years, Nora has been devoted in her caring for Tom, who requires assistance with all activities of daily living.

Despite the long number of years caring, and the trauma and shock of a change in having to care for her young husband, Nora always welcomes people with a warm engaging smile and good humour. She is truly an inspirational lady who despite such adversity, continues to always have a positive outlook on life. The care and dedication she provides to her beloved Tom is a joy to behold, and Nora's giving nature does not stop there. She was one of the founding members of Galway Head Injury Support Ltd providing support, information and counselling for families of people with brain injury.

Paying tribute to his wife's love and dedication, Tom describes Nora as his "angel", and says he is very grateful and lucky to have Nora caring for him.

Nora shines a light on the over a half a million family carers in Ireland currently caring at home, and Nora like these family carers, care out of love, not duty. Family Carers Ireland. Nora is truly an inspiration to us all.

# Positive Ageing Week 2022 Local Heroes



## Nora Ward

Nora Ward (Nee Stokes ) is a Traveller woman living in Tuam. She was born in 1942 on the side of the road three miles outside Roscommon, in a tent. Nora grew up in very hard times and was the youngest of 13 children.

She married her husband Martin in 1963 and travelled town to town with their tent on a horse and cart. She wore a shawl and begged the houses. In the late 60's plastic came into use, taking trade from many Travellers. Nora and her family moved into a caravan and in the 70's she put her shawl away and told her children that they had to move on. She didn't want her children begging because they were going to go to school.

She has always been a great cook and could make a meal out of anything! In the 90's she went back to education and learned to read and write in Benin's Training Centre, Tuam (Galway Traveller Movement). She then went on to become a Primary Health Worker. With the average life expectancy of Travellers being 70, Nora is delighted to now being enjoying her retirement at the age of 80.





# Positive Ageing Week 2022 Local Heroes



## Nuala Nolan

Nuala Nolan, is a former Galway City Council Councillor from the years 2011-2014, lives in Galway City, and has been retired for the last 10 years. During her working years, she worked in Royal Tara China, and Boston Scientific, and was the chair of the Galway West Constituency Labour Party in 2004 (Labour Galway-West). Her passion to understand more about politics and to up skill and broaden her knowledge led Nuala to complete a diploma in community practice in 2015, and she then went on to get a degree in Public and Social Policy from University of Galway.

Nuala has spent many years travelling around Ireland and other parts of the world. She is an extremely passionate and knowledgeable person and stays very involved in her community by being an active member of various boards. She is on the board of the Mechanics Club, and due to her massive interest in politics she is an active member of the Trade Council, and she is on a Strategic Planning Committee. Her interest in family history drew her to becoming a member of the Western Family History Association.

In her downtime, Nuala is a huge art fan and is part of an art group that meets on a weekly basis. Her love of art inspired her to organise a 1916 commemoration art exhibition in the Connacht Tribune - Galway City Tribune Print Works in 2016, which ran for two weeks. Artist from all over Ireland showcased their art, and Robert Ballagh donated a print for the show.



# Positive Ageing Week 2022 Local Heroes



## Sister Maura Staunton

Originally from Eyrecourt, Co Galway, Sister Maura Staunton has had a fascinating life to date, and she continues to embrace life every day. After completing her leaving certificate, she made the decision to join the Mercy Sisters in Loughrea. She went on to train as a home economics teacher and taught for a number of years in a secondary school. As many of the Sisters were engaged in voluntary work during the early 80's, five Sisters were chosen to go on the missions in South Africa, including Sr Maura. This was the beginning of a new chapter in her life.

The Clonfert Sisters of Mercy Mission was founded in Dundee Diocese South Africa in 1986. For the next 33 years, Sr Maura was active in community life there. She started sewing classes in rural areas, offered spiritual care, engaged in prison work, supported people and their families with AIDS and much more. She speaks of the experience with great passion and wonderful memories. The joyful singing in the churches there is a memory she holds dear.

In 2019 at the age of 75, Sr Maura returned to Ireland. Her love of people and helping in whatever way she can has not slowed down. She is involved in the community in Renmore and Mervue. She made new friends during lockdown walking in Ballyloughane, offers help to vulnerable people in the community, and is always ready to be of assistance to those who need it.

At the age of 78 she is as busy as ever.

"I love life, to be yourself is the most important thing"

