
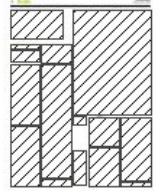


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# Charities in need of a helping hand

**Sylvia Thompson**

As the pandemic continues, fundraising efforts severely hampered by restrictions

**W**ith businesses closed, sporting and cultural events cancelled or postponed and many office workers confined to their homes during the Covid-19 pandemic, spare a thought for the charity sector whose fundraising efforts have been badly impacted by the restrictions put in place to slow down the spread of the coronavirus.

Many charities working to support sick or vulnerable people across Ireland have had to cancel or postpone fundraising events until later in the year.

The Alzheimer's Tea Day due to take place on Thursday, May 7th is one example of a postponed annual fundraiser which usually lifts the spirits of many while raising much-needed funds for the charity.

"Covid-19 has resulted in a perfect storm for The Alzheimer Society of Ireland (ASI). The Alzheimer's Tea Day is its biggest and most important (annual fundraiser. This will result in a severe drop in fundraising of up to €1 million," says Pat McLoughlin, the CEO of the ASI.

The 48 day care centres the ASI run are now closed and its social clubs, Alzheimer cafes and support groups are all postponed until further notice.

"Caring for somebody with dementia can be a difficult and lonely journey. But now people living with dementia have to isolate themselves even further from their

family and friends – and from essential supports like the services that we provide," adds Mary Bardin, operations manager at the ASI.

The society has developed some tips for carers coping with a vulnerable family member at this time on its website. The home care and dementia advisors continue to work during the Covid-19 crisis. The national helpline email (1800-341-341 or helpline@alzheimier.ie) and online family carer training also continues.

Pieta House is another charity which had to postpone its most high-profile annual fundraiser, the Darkness into Light walks held in towns and cities across Ireland and beyond.

The suicide prevention charity, which says that over 80 per cent of its income comes from donations and fundraisers, is down about €6 million in funds due to the postponement of this large-scale fundraiser.

The charity continues to provide free therapy services over the phone. People availing of their counselling services are asked to contact their local Pieta House centre to confirm the appointment time. If lines are busy, those seeking support can also text HELP to 51444 or email Mary@pieta.ie (Monday to Friday 8am-8pm) leaving name and contact details. The Pieta House 24 hour helpline is 1800 247247.

However, in a welcome gesture of solidarity in these unprecedented times, Accounting Technicians Ireland (ATI) donated €20,000 to support Pieta House to highlight the psychological challenges of the fight against Covid-19 after its charity lunch due to take place on April 24th was cancelled.

ATI's president and Grant Thornton partner Sinéad Donovan says support for Pieta House is now more important than

ever as people's psychological health comes into focus as a result of the restrictions on daily life.

"The core theme of our annual charity lunch was to have been wellness, with a particular emphasis on mental health," says Donovan. Pieta House was the nominated charity for ATI's annual charity lunch for 2020.

The Marie Keating Foundation which supports men and women with cancer has had to suspend its comfort fund during the Covid-19 crisis.

This fund, which has supported over 3,500 families in Ireland, gives one-off financial grants to cancer patients struggling financially during treatment.

"We are very aware of the impact this decision will have but at a time when our income is dropping, we have no choice but to suspend the fund. We very much hope it can be reinstated when the situation improves," says Liz Yeates, CEO of the Marie Keating Foundation.

The charity, which also had to cancel its Think Pink fundraising campaign, is asking the public to donate what they can by texting MARIE to 50300 to donate €4 or by going to [mariekeating.ie/donate](http://mariekeating.ie/donate).

Some charities have, however, benefited from alternative forms of fundraising during the Covid-19 crisis. For example, Irish artists have performed digital live music gigs for Childline (1800 66666 or Text 50101), the Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (ISPCC) helpline for children.

While watching bands including Kodaline, Dermot Kennedy, Picture This and Hozier on their live Instagram performances, people are encouraged to donate €4 by texting Childhood to 50300.

President of the ISPCC, Caroline Downey, says the ISPCC's mantra is "never give up on a child ever" and child abuse does not stop in a pandemic, if anything it increases.

The stress among young people being sexually, physically and emotionally abused and the added stress of the pandemic has put further demands on the Childline service with a 59 per cent increase in calls to the charity since March 17th.

### Art auction

The Jack and Jill Foundation will go ahead with its annual Incognito art auction – but online rather than in a gallery.

"We have had to close our charity shops and cancel fundraisers like bake sales and tractor runs and are down about €500,000 in funding for 2020. But we're hoping that people will view the Incognito collection of 1,800 postcard size paintings

and buy one for €50 on Friday, April 24th," says Carmel Doyle, CEO of the foundation which supports children with neurological conditions.

The annual sale of art pieces from artists, designers and celebrities, including singers Bruce Springsteen and Bono, artists Mick O'Dea and Alice Maher, usually draws a crowd as each piece is bought without knowing the artist until the item is paid for.

The Irish Cancer Society's high-profile Daffodil Day was scaled back to a digital fundraising event last month, due to the coronavirus.

"Daffodil Day is our single largest fundraiser each year. It usually raises €4 million to fund vital supports like our free nursing, counselling and transport services. This year, we also have the added expense of funding new and expanded services to help cancer patients cope during the Covid 19 crisis," explains Irish Cancer Society CEO Averil Power.

However, Power was pleased to say that, by April, more than €1.3 million was raised from donations on [cancer.ie](http://cancer.ie) and by text for the digital daffodil campaign. The charity continues to provide information, counselling advice on cancer and coronavirus through its helpline/email 1800 200 700 or [cancernurseline@irishcancer.ie](mailto:cancernurseline@irishcancer.ie).

CMRF Crumlin and Temple Street Foundation launched an emergency appeal on April 1st to support front-line workers in Children's Health Ireland (CHI) during the Covid-19 pandemic. The 'Together With Our Heroes' appeal asks for support for our healthcare workers in CHI at Temple Street, Crumlin and Connolly during this challenging time.

### Virtual events

Donations from the emergency appeal will go towards ensuring that staff are equipped to do their jobs during this crisis – from essential supplies, to meals for front-line staff as well as comforts and supports for patients and their families. People can donate on [togetherwithourheroes.ie](http://togetherwithourheroes.ie) and share online at #TogetherWithOurHeroes.

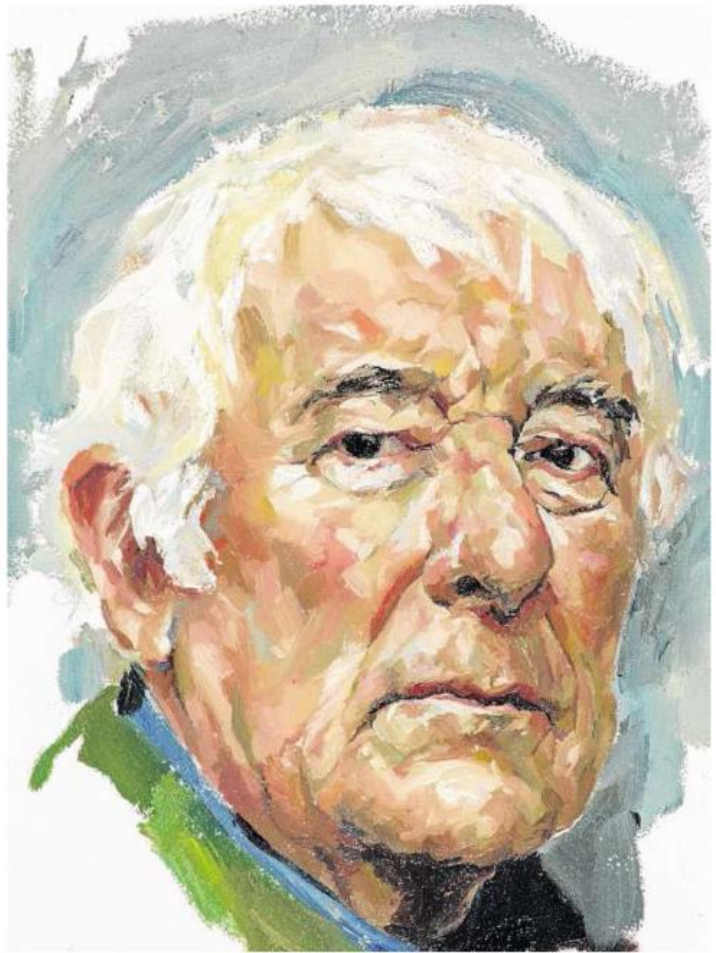
Several charities are using virtual events to continue to spread awareness and generate funds.

The Down Syndrome Centre is holding a Bunny Hop colouring competition. Their website has family-friendly games, activities, and colouring sheets available to download, with a suggested donation of €10 per family. The centre is also inviting people to 'Dine in'. Participants are included in a weekly prize draw and have access to recipes by a new celebrity chef every week.



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■ Pieces from the Incognito online art auction to raise funds for Jack & Jill Foundation