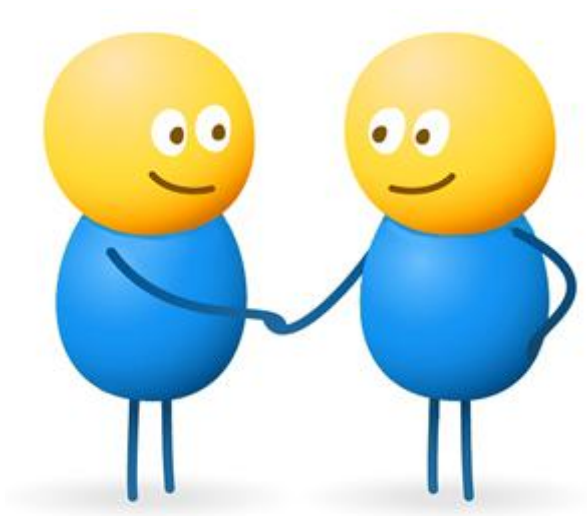


Fast Friends

Newsletter



June 2020

It was in response to the clearly communicated need for more opportunities for people to socialise with their peers within SMH that the 'Fast Friends initiative' was developed in April of 2018. While initially the focus of Fast friends was on the community within SMH, now this has branched out into intellectual disabilities communities within the greater Dublin area .

This is the 1st Fast Friends Newsletter and gives an overview of our Development over the last 2 years

'Friendships and relationships are usually the things that most people will say are important to them in describing their quality of life. Many people with learning disabilities however have limited opportunities to meet and make new friends.'



Limited opportunities to connect with similar others has a number of negative outcomes for physical and mental health. So many of the people we support have a very limited pool of people they see on a regular basis and little opportunity to develop new social connections. This was the inspiration for Fast Friends

Fast Friends aims to host events where people will have the opportunity to make new friends or to re-connect with friends they no longer see regularly. At a Fast Friends event, people are seated opposite somebody new and have 3 minutes to get to know them before they move on to the next person. Over an evening, each person who attends has the opportunity to talk to 5 – 10 people. We aim to pair people who do not know each other.

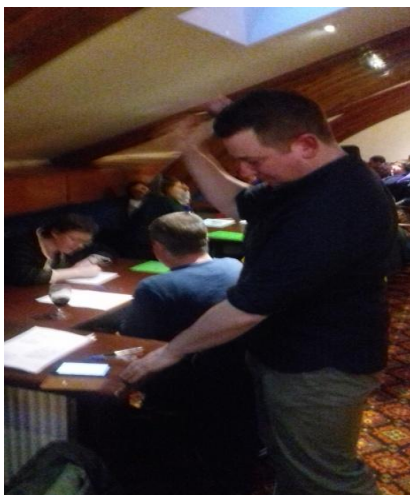
April 2018: 1st Fast Friends Event

In April 2018, we hosted the first ever Fast Friends night in the Artane Beaumont Family Recreation Centre. The night was a great success but also a big learning experience for the Fast Friends Committee.

Just under forty people attended and a lot of effort was put into arranging pairings. Each person was asked who they wanted to meet with again.



New Friendships being formed



Halloween 2018



Our Halloween event that same year was held in Plunketts GAA clubhouse with all attendees in Fancy dress this forum, while more spacious posed some issues for those attendees re; wheelchair size due to lift capacity. { another learning curve }



Ailbhe and Rebecca



The Fast Friends Committee

Summer party 2019

In Summer 2019, we moved venue to Grange Woodbine Community Centre with accessibility for all.

Fast Friends opened its doors to people from other disability organisations. This was hugely



successful and a number of connections were made between people from different organisations.



DJ Darren joined the Committee at this stage and added another layer to the services we could provide

Christmas 2019

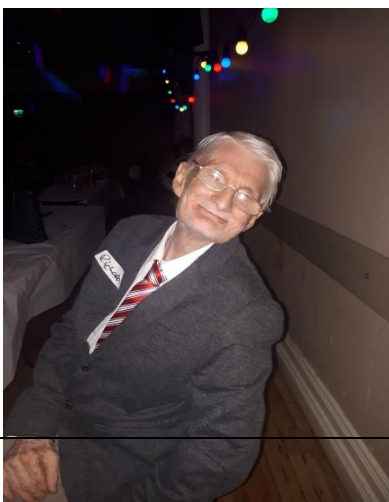




Fiona and Dina our helpers on the night



Valerie and Peter arranging to meet up again



Richie looking super smart



Juliette and Aaron.

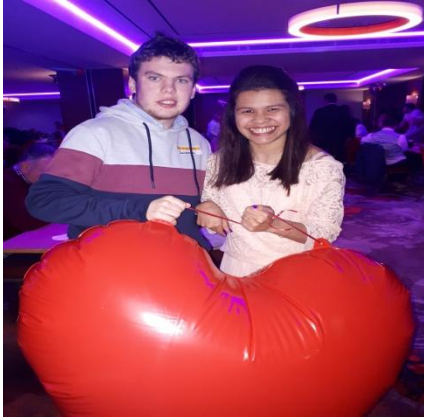


Mark and Jasmines 2nd date



14 th Feb 2020 saw our much anticipated Valenitine Ball in the Calyton Hotel we had in attendance 120 + people and as you can see all came suited and booted. The night was made all the more special but Joes' proposal to Geraldine.





Many of our Couples who have met through Fast Friends were in attendance and more friendships being made



Stephen looking very Dashing and using his communication device, with Cora looking stunning in her beautiful red dress



Our Fast Friends committee allocating seats for all attendees on the night, and Orla helping attendees with conversation topics.

Eir Coach kindly donated a bus for the night to transport attendees to and from the event



Joe & Geraldine's Love Story

Joe and Geraldine have known each other for a number of years as they are part of the same social circle. They are both members of the same bowling club and choir. At one of the first Fast Friends events in Parnell's Joe and Geraldine re-connected and a great friendship blossomed. Joe and Geraldine enjoyed lots of days out, going to the cinema and meeting up for coffee and dinners. After a while, they decided to make it official and became boyfriend and girlfriend. Joe and Geraldine still enjoy going out together for days out. They also continue to go to choir practice and bowling together each week.

When Valentine's day was approaching, Joe decided he wanted to pop the question so thought the Fast Friends Valentine's Ball would be the perfect place. Joe was a little nervous on the night but thankfully Geraldine accepted Joe's proposal. They both danced the night away celebrating their news with everyone at the ball.



Unfortunately, the COVID-19 Pandemic has put a halt to Fast Friends events for the moment but be assured that there will be plenty of Fast Friends events in the future, when it is safe to do so.

True friends
ARE NEVER APART.



MAYBE IN DISTANCE
BUT NEVER IN
♥ heart ♥

If you have a story of a friendship started or rekindled at a Fast Friends event we would love to hear it.

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