

# Carrick Hill Resident's Association

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Carrick Hill Resident's Association Annual Report 2023/2024

Our centre has now found itself back to running at full capacity now we are at the other side of COVID. However, we are still suffering some of the effects of it on our activities mainly our Tuesday Senior Citizen's Dance. Their numbers have dropped immensely, but with the power of social media and local newspapers we hope to get them more football through their doors.

Our centre is still in the process of being handed back to Belfast City Council but will continue to be independently managed by Carrick Hill Residents Association. By doing this Belfast City Council will be responsible for all the major repairs within the building, and CHRA can focus on bringing in the funding to cover the substantial running costs.

Many community development activities took place throughout the year the 1<sup>st</sup> being our Valentine's Disco, Arts & Crafts for our junior group, we also had seasonal pottery sessions for the youth of the area which was a great hit for all those involved. We have had many other activities running throughout the year which included Fitness Freddy for both adults and children, Pilates Classes for our ladies fitness group, the gymnasium runs 5 days and nights per week as well as our internet café. Our After Schools club runs 3 days per week and we also have Patrick Downey in every Monday afternoon providing multi-sports with our juniors our disco runs every Friday night.

CHRA run a very successful 2-week summer scheme in July for our juniors which consisted of both centre based activities and out door trips. We faced a few hurdles this year with our scheme due to the weather conditions and had to change trip venues at the last minute, the trips included visits to Adventure Playground, The Ark Farm, Snow Tubing, Wallace Park, Stormont Park, Fun Work, Ice Skating and Indiana Land. Our seniors also have a wide range of trips throughout the year which we

based over the times of contentious parades going past our area, these trips included Ice Skating, Snowtubing, Scrap Yard Golf, Bowling, Airtastic and Clip n Climb.

Operating the centre has seen many challenges for our committee and staff this year such as loosing so many of our volunteers due to them having to work extra hours due to the cost of living crisis, resulting in them not being able to dedicate as much of their time to us as they usually would. However, with a great committee and group of staff we were all able to pull together and make it work for the community.

CHRA are currently seeking further funding to complete a derelict wall on the side of Tru Fit's garage. We hope through successful funding to place a black and white image of an old coal man with his horse and cart this would be the final stage of the area clean up carrying on from previous murals being put on the derelict walls within the area. CHRA have had meetings with the University of Ulster and their artists regarding the garage wall which would be a hotspot area for drugs within our estate. Through these talks we have come to an agreement for the University artists to place a super hero mural on this wall highlighting the impacts of drugs on our young people. This project will take place in the spring with our young people working alongside the artists to complete the image. Part of our area cleanup campaign is working with Belfast City Council to create an environment by creating colorful images on a number of electric boxes through the area, this will take place in the spring.

Thanks to funding from the NIHE's Cohesion Unit CHRA we're able to take our senior citizens away on a day trip to Newry City, where they were able to have a day's shopping, socializing and seeing the sights of Newry, afterwards we brought them back to the Canal Courty Hotel where a 3 course meal was provided along with a nights entertainment, dance, bingo and craic was had before returning back home to Belfast in the small hours.

September also saw the first 80's night in our centre which was a bring your own event, music was provided by Pado, the event consisted of two guest artists and a theme fancy dress, our centre was buzzing and it was great to see such a great community spirit back within the centre.

October seen our Halloween Extravaganza for all ages which consisted of a Halloween interactive disco thanks to 1<sup>st</sup> for Aldo, a magic show and some spooky Halloween treats i.e. slush puppies, candy floss and popcorn.

December was also a busy month within the centre which saw the return of our Christmas breakfast for residents' staff and volunteers. This was the 1<sup>st</sup> from COVID also in attendance were groups & statutory bodies who helped throughout the year within the centre. Our Christmas event was a hit which saw the return of 1<sup>st</sup> for Aldo with his interactive disco, a low up groto with santa and his elves providing a present for each child along with a photo opportunity. Throughout the centre there was a range of other Christmas activities including, Christmas crafts, cookie decorating and also a post box where notes to Santa could be posted to the North Pole. Sign language classes and Patrick's Wild Cats also takes place on Thursday evenings in 6-week blocks funding dependent. CHRA host a monthly breakfast and luncheon club on Tuesday and Friday mornings for our elderly residents. For those residents who are unable to make it to the centre our staff or committee members are on hand to deliver a meal to these residents.

Last year CHRA formed a partnership with Paul McCusker from The Peoples Kitchen, where food supplies are delivered every Tuesday morning to our centre where tables are then setup and all supplies displayed on them and made available to residents to who are finding it hard in these times of financial hardship. For those residents who are unable to make it to the centre to collect supplies staff and committee members make packs up and delivery them to residents. This is a well-used service within our centre.

Our centre activities throughout the year would not have been able to take place without the help and support we received from the John Moore Foundation. We received an award of £3,413.00 which helped alleviate the stress and costs for running our centre i.e. gas and electricity bills. Through this funding we were able to provide warm spaces to run activities within the centre and due to this warm environment, we seen an increase in the number of users of our centre.

Welcoming in the new year Carrick Hill welcomed a grant from Enkalon Foundation which enabled to use to purchase much needed after school's equipment, as the equipment we had was well past its sell by date. The new equipment has seen the numbers of children using our after schools service increase.

Throughout the year we have had a vacant post of a part time financial administrator within our organization, it has been advertised on numerous

occasions, however the post has still yet to be filled. Funding for this post and the Project Co-Ordinator has only been guaranteed to the end of June 2025 due to the political situation in Stormont with no Executive being formed. As of January, our caretaker who had been with us for over 30 years had to leave us due to health reasons, this post will be advertised within the coming weeks.

Throughout the year we have had numerous successful funding applications from Belfast City Council Micro Fund, Belfast City Council Revenue Grant, Belfast City Council Medium Grant, DfC, NIHE Cohesion Fund, Brian Mullan Community Fund. We currently have pending applications with Halifax TSB for a year's programmes within the centre and running costs.

Housing continues to be the most challenging for our housing worker, three sites that were already earmarked for the benefit of our community. Two sites for traditional family homes and the third site for a hotel, supermarket and nursery which would have served both communities at this interface. But Belfast City Council and DfC scrapped the plans and have now put the sites out to numerous housing associations, who will in turn consult with our association as to the put back on the sites.

Another site known Mandeville Development has a current proposal in for a 10-story high block, housing over 800 students. Our community have delayed this proposal by having it rejected at the planning committee at Belfast City Council, the development is now going through the planning appeals process, and again CHRA will make representation at this. The appeal took place in mid-January of this year and we are now waiting on the results.

CHRA are still pressing DfC for vesting on two more sites which we hope to see movement on soon. A vacant piece of land has been handed over by NIHE, it is our intention for a man shed to be built on this piece of land. Talks regarding this are in the early stages. The site has now been secured to stop any acts of vandalism taking place.

At present we are in negotiations with Belfast City Council, Choice Housing Association and the Housing Executive hopefully to bring a new play park for very young children as the nearest playpark is approximately ½ a mile having to cross major roads to access it. Hopefully we hope to bring this to a conclusion within the near future.