

## STEPS Annual Report 2022 – 23

- November 2022 – Amanda from Happy Minds Grateful Hearts was back providing resilience workshops for primary school aged children and their parents. Amanda has also been providing adult meditation classes, we have found since the pandemic there are high levels of anxiety in all age groups. STEPS hillwalkers were back out on the mountain this month. STEPS were invited to do an information stand at the Dry Arch Centre in Dungiven, it is good to be back out speaking to the community. A donation of £500 was received from Carina Quigg who ran the Dublin marathon and raised funds for our counselling service. In response to the community audit we ran taster sessions of Pilates with Aoibhinn Mc Glone to see if there would be an interest.
- December 2022 – The latest figures released by NISRA make for stark reading, NI has the highest rate of Suicide in the UK, even with the re classification of how suicides are recorded here. STEPS Hillwalking group were back out on the hills and have set up a whatsapp group to stay in touch between walks. Amanda from Happy Minds Grateful Hearts has been back to continue adult meditation classes. Donations have been received from Heron Bros., South Derry Solicitors Association, DTL Construction, Sperrin Scaffolding, Sole Touch and Specialist Group. We say goodbye to another challenging year for STEPS but thanks to the generosity of the community we are managing to keep the doors open to offer support to those most in need
- January 23 – Good to get classes back up and running but the joys of being a rural community we had to cancel a number of nights due to the weather. The safety of both our participants and tutor is paramount. Amanda was back to finish a number of adult meditation classes. A donation of £242.50 was made by the old Chinese towards our counselling service. STEPS have been reminding the community of the wealth of support available locally from St Vincent De Paul to AA it is so important people know there is always someone to turn to.
- February 23 – The hillwalkers had their first walk of 2023 on the 5.2.23. STEPS are linking in with the local foodbank to signpost anyone who may need to avail of the service in the strictest of confidence. The counselling team has been made aware of the referral process. Moyola Angling Club offered a few places on the introduction day at the lake at Tobermore, all attendees really enjoyed the day. STEPS have been promoting Workspaces warm Wednesday group and trying to encourage people to attend.
- March 23 – The hillwalkers were out on the 5.3.23. The class of 85/86 from St Pius's Magherafelt made a donation to STEPS and The Mary Anderson Foundation following their reunion. Cora Corry chair of Mid Ulster Council chose STEPS and Womens Aid as her chosen charity for her term in office and it culminated with a Seisun Mor in the Seamus Heaney Homeplace. Yoga and

Pilates are back and we are trying to promote greater Attendance within the community. STEPS were invited to do an information stand at the Irish National Teachers Organisation Conference in Limavady, it was a good opportunity to raise awareness of our service and hear from teachers the pressures they have been facing since covid and the cuts to the education budget. Karen attended the Safeguarding and Promoting the Welfare of Children and Adults run by SPWCA and organised by The Volunteer Centre.

- April 23 – The Hillwalkers were out on the 2.4.23. Following on from STEPS workshops with the pupils from St Colms, we were back today with Catriona from BOI to deliver a workshop on managing your finances that the pupils requested. Some the team from Tourettes Support NI delivered training to some of STEPS Committee, STEPS Counselling team and members of Draperstown Celtic and Glasgowbury also attended, it was very informative. STEPS have applied to Brackagh Wind Farm for funding towards our counselling service. Fiona Henry raised £1900 towards our counselling service from organising a raffle for a day at Galgorm Ballymena. Mairead Sheridan donated £1808.39 from a charity day and raffle she organised to support our counselling service. STEPS hillwalkers joined the annual Tirgan Community Associations Big Walk on the 30.4.23. Delighted to finally say we are registered with Companies House, it was a frustrating process with forms having to be submitted 9 times, we have made a suggestion that their processes need amending. Two groups, one from Sinc Kitchens and the other a group of local men are running the Belfast Marathon to raise awareness and funds for our counselling service.
- May 23 – Continuing to promote the foodbank as we know so many families are going through a tough time. STEPS did an information stand at the Womens Wellbeing Fair organised by Causeway Womens Aid, it was a great opportunity to remind everyone of our services. \The hillwalkers were out on the 21.5.23 STEPS took the opportunity on what was our 11<sup>th</sup> birthday to announce that we have been successful in securing funding from The Lottery, Community Fund. The committee have put in alot of work behind the scenes to get this application accepted. Changing from an unincorporated charity to an incorporated charity has meant many changes, such as re-registering with the Charities Commission, changing accountants, changing from a constitution to a memorandum and articles of association. Changes to policies and procedures, Changing our mandate with the bank and satisfying the obligations to funders. Our committee can not be praised enough.
- June 23 – Cora Corry donated £1000 to STEPS as one of her chosen charities from her term in office as Chair of Mid Ulster Council. The Plumbridge Players donated £500 from their annual show, they also donated the same amount to 11 other charities. The group of local runners who took part in the Belfast marathon

raised £2022.70 towards our counselling service. Christchurch Womens Fellowships donated towards our counselling service. STEPS and Workspace in partnership ran a Health and Wellbeing Fair to remind everyone in the community of the wealth of help and support available locally. A big thank you went to the pupils from St Colms who helped out on the day and to Draperstown Celtic who covered the cost of the health checks carried out by O Kanes chemist. A great day was had by all. Darren Mc Kinney with great support from his wife Danielle took on a mammoth challenge to motorbike the length of Ireland and back in 24 hrs. Darren faced horrendous weather conditions but kept going to raise awareness of STEPS and to show when the going gets tough having great support around you will get you through. Darren raised an amazing £3510 The hillwalkers were out on the 25.6.23. Gerard from Sperrin Scaffolding has donated scaffolding boards to be used as raised beds in developing the new community garden at the polytunnel.

- July 23 - On the 1st July we had a good turn out from the community helping develop the new community gardening space. Funding from Deloitte and the generosity of local businesses we want this to be an inclusive space for all. Jackie and Sean Mc Ananey held an open garden on Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> July and raised £2322.75 & 2 euro towards our counselling service. Sinc Kitchens who took part in the Belfast marathon and our local branch of AA made donations towards our counselling service. As a committee we are gutted to lose Sinead and Bronagh as valued pupil representatives as they head on to university but thank them for their time, enthusiasm and energy they brought to our table. They were like a breath of fresh air and provided a strong voice for young people in what STEPS should be doing for their age group. Both girls were excellent at getting stuck into any situation from ideas at meetings to helping at events and engaging all age groups when helping out. The committee want to wish both Sinead and Bronagh the very best of good luck for their future endeavours. In July we had to put out a public message about our counselling service as people were not responding to messages or simply not showing up for appointments. As a voluntary run service with a continuous waiting list this is very frustrating. At STEPS we are continually trying to find ways to advertise our services in a bid to improve class numbers.
- August 23 – Massive Thank you to the staff and residents at Manor Nursing Home who made a donation in memory of Tony Woods their regional Maintenance manager. Pilates has been advertised again and so far uptake has been very positive. Thomas an employee of NFU nominated STEPS as one of the businesses chosen charities for the year. STEPS along with Marie Curie, Brain Injury and Larne Foodbank received £3221.50 each. STEPS donation will go towards the counselling service. Thanks to the lottery funding we could now advertise for the Project Coordinator Role. As STEPS is run by volunteers,

Georgina at Workspace agreed that their branch MYM Recruitment would handle the whole process. The job was advertised on the 21.8.23. Harry and Claire from HK Joinery and Building Contractors LTD made a donation of £1000 towards our counselling service. Martin Donnelly and all who attended the Captains day at the Manor Golf Club Kilrea, donated £210 towards our counselling service. On the 30<sup>th</sup> August we were delighted to announce that STEPS are now fully re-registered as an incorporated charity with the Charities Commission NI. Our new charity number is NIC 109688.

- September 23 – Sean from Copelands delivered a cheque for £600 from their staff health and wellbeing day, in which STEPS did a number of awareness raising workshops. STEPS Counselling team are continuing to work with Dolores at Sperrin Foodbank to ensure vulnerable families are not going hungry. On the 11<sup>th</sup> September the hillwalkers were out on the hills. Due to the many changes the charity has been through this year we advertised to encourage a new co chair to join the board, we asked for a submission of CV's and hope to incorporate the new person at our AGM. Barbara from the Volunteer Centre generously agreed to call to the hub to process the Access NI form for the Counselling team and our volunteers. After the independent recruitment process Karen Mc Guigan has been offered the role of Project Coordinator. The generosity in our town knows no bounds, when our Hoover recently stopped working we got 3 prices of hoovers for a committee decision but on returning to the local business Sperrin Electronics they donated the new Hoover. It may seem like a small gesture but it makes a massive impact on us as volunteers.