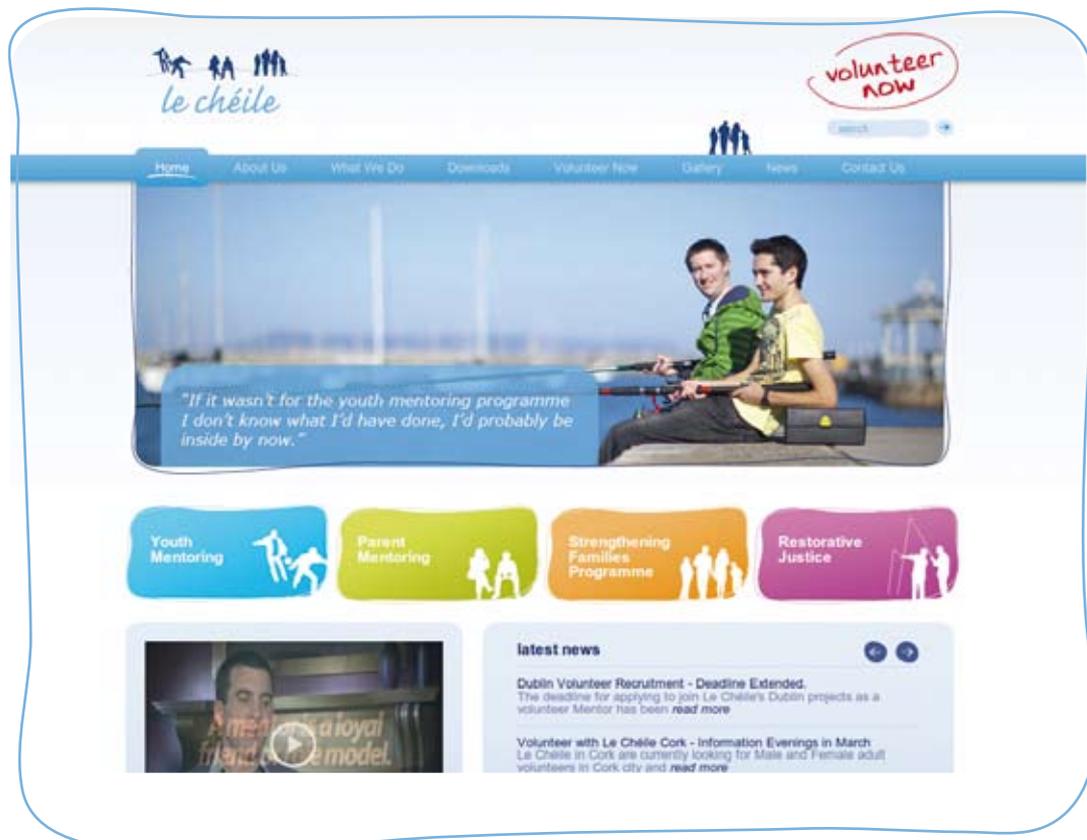


Le Chéile News

SPRING 2011 VOLUME 1 ISSUE 3



From the CEO

Welcome to the Spring issue of Le Chéile News! It's packed with all our latest news and interesting articles from both Staff and Volunteers.

My thanks to all of the volunteers who took part in our Volunteer Strategy Day, your contribution to the development of our 3 year strategy was very valuable. Our new strategic plan will be published in the coming months a copy of which will be available for all volunteers.

I hope you enjoy this issue and be sure to complete our Volunteer Survey and you could win a fantastic hamper!

Alison O'Reilly

CEO, Le Chéile

Le Chéile Launches New Website

Le Chéile launches our new and improved website, with sections dedicated to all of Le Chéile's services and to volunteering with us, we hope you find the website interesting, informative and easy to use.

We've created sections for all our projects, each with detailed information for referrers, volunteers, young people and families. We've also created a photo gallery for all our volunteers' training days and social events. You can also check out our short video on our youth and parent mentoring project, which gives an idea of how these projects work.

Finally, we now have a news section to keep you all up-to-date with Le Chéile's news and events! All our newsletters, leaflets and reports are available online to download. Have a look around and tell us what you think!



Win an Easter Hamper!

You could be in with a chance to win this gorgeous Easter Hamper by simply filling out our Volunteer Survey and returning it to us in the envelope provided.

Le Chéile runs volunteer satisfaction surveys every year to ensure that all volunteers are happy and supported in their role in Le Chéile and to ask for feedback. For this reason, it's really important that as many volunteers as possible complete this survey. This is your opportunity to let us know what you think about Le Chéile! Closing date for receipt of survey is Friday 29th April.

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Around the country...



Volunteers were busy around the country, making up for December's snowy weather with many regions like Cork, the South-East, South-West and Midlands having their Christmas parties in January and February. Only Dublin North and Dublin South managed to brave December's bad weather with a joint celebration!

We wish Dublin North's Co-ordinator Ingrid Cooney a warm welcome back, as she returned in January from maternity leave and thank Lyndsey McCabe for providing cover for the region during last year.

Dublin North, South and West are busy recruiting and training volunteer mentors this month, with Limericks Mentoring and Restorative Justice Project finishing up training

their new volunteers. We're delighted to welcome on board all our new volunteers and we hope they have a great volunteering experience with us!

The Cork region has been busy, presenting an Information Day on the role of the YP and YPP-related services to all students on placement with the Probation Service in Cork. Speakers include Rosemary Fox, Senior Probation Officer; Maria Walsh, Linkage Programme; Judy O'Mara and Joanne Ryan, The Westview Day Centre; Carol Maricle and Fidelma Connolly, Le Chéile. Also in Cork, Rosemary Fox, Senior Probation Officer YPP presented a Training Event for volunteers on the 24th February. Topics included the genesis and development of the YPP, court orders, Risk Assessment, and changes in the role of Garda Management of young people.

Strengthening Families - A site co-ordinator's experience



I first heard of Le Chéile when I signed up to do their two day Strengthening Families training in June 2010 in Limerick.

The Cork Mahon Programme was scheduled to start in September and Le Chéile was recruiting a site co-ordinator. On

reading the job description I felt that I would enjoy the challenge and volunteered for this position. With Carol Maricle providing training and support around this, we began sourcing childcare, a venue, catering and transport. I also began contacting the referral agents and families and setting up our Welcome Night for early September. We also had to source facilitators and run training mornings to introduce them and set up our Parents and two Teenager groups.

With all the major ground work done we were nervous but excited to kick off. We had offered sixteen families an invitation to attend our Welcome Night, where we would have a chance for families to ask questions, meet the team and have a cup of tea! On the night twelve families attended .

Over the course of the fifteen weeks we had great fun but also huge learning for all involved. The team consisted of both professionals from different areas, and students who all contributed hugely to the great team spirit. They all gave of their time and skills willingly, and each brought something special to the mix.

Halloween, birthdays and even the dreaded snow and ice still didn't deter us from finishing with our long anticipated Christmas Dinner in mid December!

I think everyone will have most fond memories of our Graduation Night. We had awards for everyone in the audience! We also had the biggest Graduation Cake ever seen and every family was presented with a certificate and their family portrait. We also were delighted that all our hard work paid off as we finished with ten families.

On finishing the Programme I think everyone was suddenly at a loss having their Tuesday evening free once more! But I can say we all enjoyed Christmas even more for it!

I think that anyone partaking in any Strengthening Families Programme as a staff member will value the team spirit, the fun and laughs and most importantly what can be learnt from it. I would highly recommend it to anyone who is interested in helping families to build new positive relationships, and reconnect with each other.

"I will always be so grateful for the opportunity to volunteer with Le Chéile as it is the kind of organisation where you feel valued, respected, a sense of belonging and the chance for regular and ongoing learning and training."

I also have formed friendships which are a huge upside to the job!

Having been both Site Co-ordinator for Mahon Strengthening Families and Intern with Le Chéile in Cork, I grew both in my professional practice and confidence. The skills that I learned, the support and supervision I received also helped me to move forward professionally and as of December 2010 I now am Co-ordinator of another Probation funded service.

Aoife McCarthy

Being a Mentor *By Kate Glavey*

I first volunteered with Le Chéile in the summer of 2009 and was matched with a young person the following January. When I first found out that I had been matched I felt nervous and suddenly realized that I had no idea how to positively influence myself, never mind be a positive influence to someone else! I felt a little out of my depth!

Attending supervision at this time really helped reassure me in my role as mentor, as did the shared experiences of the long time matched mentors. My co-ordinator did everything to give me a more realistic understanding about the nature of the work done while mentoring.

One of the more experienced volunteers told me that 'the mentoring process is slow, and one of the main benefits it can offer young people is the break created when going to the cinema or having lunch with someone who knows very little about your past or family'.

That was 11 months ago now and I've recently had the final meeting with my mentee as the case was closing. Looking back, I feel that piece of insight relieved so much of the self-imposed pressure coming from what I thought was expected of me as mentor. It allowed me to really enjoy the process of mentoring.

I can now see that some of my achievements while mentoring were the more subtle, simple things like: being consistent in my contact, phoning when I said I would, being on time for my mentee, and genuinely enjoying our meetings and more often than not, having great fun.

"I also think that any organization is only as healthy as the motivation behind it and in this way, I believe that having such GREAT support from the co-ordinator, Heather, was paramount for the positive ways I was there for my mentee."

Victim Impact Panel Training

A key part of the work of the Le Chéile Restorative Justice Project in Limerick is providing victims of crime with a positive outlet to share their personal experiences of how crime has affected their lives. This is done by providing a safe and appropriate environment for victims to tell "their story" by going on a Victim Impact Panel.

Victim Impact Panels provide a forum for victims of crime to tell young offenders about the impact of crime on their lives and the lives of their families, friends and neighbours. The Restorative Justice Project has recent trained and prepared a group of volunteers who have been a victim of crime to take part in a Victim Impact Panel. Senior Probation Officer John Brosnahan from Young Persons Probation in Limerick was a huge support to the project in the development of the Victim Impact Panel training programme. If you would like more information on Victim Impact Panels and are interested in going on a Panel, please contact Mary Henihan, Le Chéile Restorative Justice Co-ordinator on 087 0678336 or e-mail maryh@lecheile.ie.



Le Chéile Restructuring

Le Chéile underwent some restructuring in the last few months to allow for the development of staff regional teams. The South Regional Team now consists of Limerick and Cork staff and is overseen by Sean Kinahan as South Regional Manager. The East Regional Team consists of Dublin, Waterford and Postlaoise staff and is overseen by Julia Alexander as East Regional Manager.

The Dublin region has seen the introduction of a new project area – Dublin West. This new area, together with the already well established projects in Dublin North and South, means that the Dublin area will have greater mentoring capacity for both young people and their parents throughout Dublin. The Dublin West Co-ordinator is Lyndsey McCabe who previously provided maternity cover for Dublin North.

Due to the high level of referrals, Cork has increased its number of mentoring places and Carol Maricle will be joining Fidelma Connolly in co-ordinating the Cork project, having previously rolled out the Strengthening Families Programme countrywide to great success.

Strategic Plan - Consultation Day with Volunteers

On Saturday 29th January 2011, volunteers from all the regions were invited to Portlaoise to meet and discuss Le Chéile's aims for the next 3 years.

Facilitated by Siobhán McGrory, volunteers looked at our values and principles, and what Le Chéile should have in place to support volunteer development and management over the next three years. The recommendations from this meeting will be put together with in creating our organisation's strategic plan for the next three years.

Le Chéile would like to thank those volunteers who took time out of their weekend to attend the consultation. The Strategy document will be published in April 2011.



Focus on the Midlands Region

Le Chéile's project in the heart of Ireland is based in Portlaoise and is one of our newer projects. Helen McCarthy has been the co-ordinator since it was established in September 2008. Covering Laois, Offaly, Kildare, North Kilkenny, and Carlow, this is the largest project in the country at over 5,700km²!

The rural nature of the region can be challenging in terms of transport and in terms of finding interesting activities for young people to get involved with, but the region's volunteers have shown commitment and motivation in ensuring that mentees get opportunities to try new activities and work towards their goals.

It's been a busy start to 2011 with the region holding it's Christmas party on the 4th February in Portlaoise. The project is also starting recruitment of new Mentors with training due to start in April.

Recently the Midlands Probation team has been restructured and Helen is looking forward to working with new members of the team. Helen would also like to extend a warm welcome to new Intern Fiona Brennan. Fiona came through IBEC's Gradlink Internship Programme and will be helping out with all aspects of work in the Midlands region. Finally Helen would like to thank all the volunteers around the region for all their hard work, dedication and enthusiasm!

National Volunteer Committee

The National Volunteer Committee met on Saturday, 26th February in Portlaoise, Co. Laois. The National Volunteer Committee aims to provide a role for Volunteers in the decision-making process of Le Chéile, providing fresh insight on issues affecting mentoring around the country.

Two volunteers from every region attend the meetings, which are held three times a year. Topics discussed at February's meeting included: volunteer recognition, the volunteer strategy day, revising the structure and membership of the volunteer committee to make it more transparent and an update of the organisational structure. The Committee had a fantastic first meeting and Le Chéile would like to thank the members who attended and contributed that day.

If you have any recommendations or issues you'd like raised at the National Volunteer Committee, your Co-ordinator has the contact details for your two representatives. Equally, if you would like to apply to represent your region, please contact your co-ordinator.



St Vincent de Paul Christmas Collection

The Society of St Vincent de Paul would like to pass on its thanks to everyone who participated in our Christmas present collection for struggling families. As seen from the photo, everyone was extraordinarily generous! We're grateful to everyone who donated in this tough economic climate.

Joint Volunteer Training Programme in Limerick 2011

Le Chéile's Mentoring and Restorative Justice projects recently teamed up to carry out a joint volunteer recruitment campaign in Limerick. Seventeen successful candidates completed the training programme which consisted of 10 modules. The training modules covered in the course included Child Protection, Communication Skills, Policies and Procedures, Goal Setting, Values and Attitudes, the Probation Service and two new modules on Restorative Justice. The training course is aimed at preparing each volunteer to work with the young people referred to both the Mentoring and Restorative Justice projects.

The volunteers are from different backgrounds, ages and experiences and will bring a new and exciting dimension to both projects. Both the co-ordinators of the Mentoring and Restorative Justice Projects would like to thank each volunteer for their time and efforts in completing the training and are looking forward to working with them in the future.