

Mary Kennedy steps out with transplant children for family fun run

Broadcaster Mary Kennedy stepped out with two young transplant boys for a photocall to encourage the public to take part in the Irish Kidney Association's 'Run for a Life' family fun run and raise awareness about the importance of organ donation.

Members of the public, young and old, are encouraged to demonstrate their support of organ donation and the ongoing work of the Irish Kidney Association by taking part in the charity fundraiser at Corkagh Park, Clondalkin, Dublin 22 on Saturday, 18th October (www.runforalife.ie)

Being put through their paces by avid runner Mary Kennedy at the photocall were Darragh O'Haire (age 5) from Johnstown Bridge, Enfield and Hugo Turley (age 3 1/2) from Castleknock, Dublin. Both boys had suffered kidney problems since birth.

Hugo received a living donor kidney transplant from his mother Helen Turley in April this year and she joined Hugo for the photocall along with his baby sister Evie (15 months). Helen explained "I feel very lucky and privileged to have been a suitable match for Hugo thus allowing me to donate a kidney to him. The transplant operation couldn't have gone better for us and now we can all look forward to a brighter future." (*see footnote*)

Ruth Brennan, explained her son Darragh O'Haire was born with underdeveloped kidneys and had been receiving nightly home dialysis treatment from the time he was just one year old and up until he was called for his life changing deceased donor kidney transplant in February last year. Ruth said "Our extended family cannot express the immense gratitude we feel towards the family of the organ donor who we will never know but who has changed our lives in such a profound way." Darragh's sister and brother Siofra (*age 7*) Sean (*age 10*) also joined him for the photocall and the whole family including the children's father John are looking forward to taking part in Run for a Life on 18th October and help raise awareness about the importance of organ donation. (*see footnote*).

Mary Kennedy, ambassador for organ donation 2014, said, "as someone who enjoys jogging as a way of keeping fit, I believe that Run for a Life is a fantastic, fun and healthy way for the public to show their support for a very worthy cause. Being a native of Clondalkin, I relish the chance to return to Corkagh Park where I used to go running from a young age.

I have known people who have been touched by organ donation. I think most people have known somebody who has suffered organ failure and how it has impacted on them and their loved ones. It can affect people of all ages. Children like Hugo and Darragh, who prior to their transplant operations faced uncertain futures, can now look forward to a normal childhood thanks to organ donation. I hope that the general public join me and members of my family in Run for a Life on the 18th of October."

People signing up for the Run for a Life will have the option of walking, jogging or running competitively in either a chip timed 2.5km, 5km or 10km event in Corkagh Park, Clondalkin, Dublin 22 commencing 12 noon. The choice of events on offer makes it possible for all people, young and old, with varying levels of fitness to take part.

Race Organiser, Colin White explained, "Our annual Run for a Life which is now in its sixth year is a great day out for all of the family. We are inviting the public to join us in this celebration of life through sport. The Irish kidney Association sees this event as a positive way to promote organ donor awareness. We are looking to encourage the public to think about it, talk about it and make a commitment to organ donation. The support of Mary Kennedy in promoting the event is very much appreciated as she acknowledges the importance of showing solidarity with people living with organ failure. All of this is underpinned by the continued support of the event sponsor, Astellas Pharma Ltd.

Main sponsor of the Run for a Life is Astellas Pharma Co. Ltd. and its Sales and Marketing Director, Denis Fennelly said, "Astellas is proud to be once again partnering with the Irish Kidney Association in Run for A Life 2014. Astellas is committed to Changing tomorrow for patients in Ireland; and raising awareness for organ donation has the potential to really change outcomes for people on transplant waiting lists. We look forward to taking part in what should be a fun day for all!"

A large number of the members of the successful Irish team who participated in the 8th European Transplant & Dialysis Games in Poland in August this year, will take part in the Fun Run to play their part in raising organ donor awareness and showcasing the success of organ donation.

At Run for A Life Registration (a participant medal, as well as soup and a sandwich afterwards) will be €20 for adults and €10 per child and a Family of 2 adults and up to 4 children can register for €45. Chip timing and results will be provided by Precision Timing. For registration and further details log on to: www.runforalife.ie

Donations to support the event can be made via the IKA's website

<http://www.ika.ie/run-for-a-life-2014>

The Irish Kidney Association (IKA) is charged with the promotion and distribution of the organ donor card in Ireland. There are over 1800 people receiving dialysis treatment for end stage kidney failure. There are currently close to 600 people in Ireland in organ failure waiting for organ transplants including kidney, pancreas, heart, lung and liver. There are over 3000 people in Ireland enjoying extended life thanks to organ donation and transplantation.

The prime role of the IKA is to support patients and their families affected by end stage kidney disease and are either being treated by dialysis or have a working kidney transplant. As the only organisation representing the views of Irish kidney patients, the IKA continually lobbies at all levels on their behalf. The Irish Kidney Association also manages sports programmes for dialysis patients and transplant recipients and manages Transplant Team Ireland's involvement at international sporting events including the biennial World Transplant Games and the European Transplant & Dialysis Games which take place every alternate year.

*For an organ donor card **Freetext the word DONOR to 50050** or visit website www.ika.ie It is also possible to download an organ donor card on smartphones by searching for 'Donor ECard' at the iPhone store or Google Play Store. Your wishes to be an organ donor can also be included on the new format driving licence which is represented by Code 115.*

-ENDS-

For further information contact:

Colin White, Race Organiser and National Projects Manager, IKA, Tel. [01 6205306](tel:016205306) mob. [087 6843644](tel:0876843644) email colin@ika.ie

Gwen O'Donoghue, Publicity, IKA. mob. [086 8241447](tel:0868241447) email. gwenodonoghue1@gmail.com

FOOTNOTE:

Hugo and Darragh's stories :-

Hugo Turley (3¹/₂) from Castleknock received a living donor kidney transplant from his mother Helen Turley in April this year and she joined Hugo for the Run for a Life photocall along with his baby sister Evie (15 months). Helen explained "I feel very lucky and privileged to have been a suitable match for Hugo and to be able to donate a kidney to him. The staffs at Temple Street and Crumlin Hospital are terrific and took really good care of him since he was two days old. Hugo is my first child and was born a month prematurely during the snowy Christmas of 2010. Two days later he was rushed from Holles Street to Temple Street where he remained for three weeks and I stayed with him for most of this time. His kidneys were irreparably damaged because of an undetected blockage in the ureter during his development in the womb. He was treated for his condition until he was two years old and he then commenced home dialysis for 10 hours at a time, 5 nights a week with the likelihood that this would have to be increased to treatment 6 nights a week. My husband David and I were concerned Hugo wasn't eating and wasn't growing. In the three months since his transplant he grew 5cm which is more than what he had grown in the previous year. After giving birth to Evie last year, I immediately started to ask about being screened for living donation. I can't thank my family enough who have been so supportive. The transplant operation couldn't have gone better for us and now we can all look forward to a brighter future."

Ruth Brennan explained her son Darragh O'Haire (age 5) from Johnstown Bridge, Enfield, was born with underdeveloped kidneys and had been receiving nightly home dialysis treatment from the time he was just one year old and up until he was called for his life changing deceased donor kidney transplant in February last year. Ruth (a native of Stepside, Sth. Dublin) said, "prior to his transplant Darragh was always fed through a tube. The transplant has made a huge difference to him and he is now as active as any other five year old and he eats all around him. He started school last year and can now look forward to a normal childhood away from dialysis. Our extended family cannot express the immense gratitude we feel towards the family of the organ donor who we will never know but has changed our lives in such a profound way. Darragh's father John, his sister and brother Siofra (7) and Sean (10), and myself are looking forward to taking part in Run for a Life on 18th October and help raise awareness about the importance of organ donation."