

## **Ireland's youngest kidney donor mum and her transplant child step out for charity family fun run**

A mother and son who hold a unique double record for living donor kidney transplantation attended a photocall at Corkagh Park, Dublin today (May 7<sup>th</sup> at 10.30am) to announce the Irish Kidney Association's annual Run for a Life ([www.runforalife.ie](http://www.runforalife.ie)). Ten years ago Cassandra O'Brien from Navan, Co. Meath donated a kidney to her son Jack when she was just 20 years old and he was only 26 months. They remain the youngest living kidney donor to youngest transplant recipient since the transplant programme began at Temple Street Hospital in 2003. Maisy, Jack's 3 year old sister, also attended the photocall.

The Run for a Life will be taking place in Corkagh Park, Clondalkin, Dublin 22 on Saturday, May 23<sup>rd</sup>. As well as offering an enjoyable event for walkers, joggers and runners, the Irish Kidney Association's annual event is an opportunity to promote organ donation and raise much needed funds for the Association.

Another person keen to show support for the IKA's family fun run is transplant recipient, and Clondalkin resident, Peter Pardoe. He attended the photocall with his daughter, Sarah-Jane Kavanagh, and grandchildren Ethan (age 6 months) and Joshua (age 2) who reside in Mountrath, Co. Laois.

On 7<sup>th</sup> February 2005 Cassandra O'Brien underwent an operation at Beaumont Hospital to have one of her kidneys removed by surgeon Dilly Little. The organ was then transferred to Temple Street where the now recently retired surgeon David Hickey performed the successful transplant operation on toddler Jack .

Cassandra, now age 30, explained "As this year marks the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our transplant operation, I think that Jack's participation in the Run for a Life is an illustration of how far he has come. He is now a happy healthy 12 year old enjoying a normal childhood. Jack was born with kidney failure and one of his kidneys was removed when he was just two months old. A couple of months later he underwent another operation to have his second kidney removed. As a baby he had to undergo nightly dialysis treatment for 14 hours at a time. From the outset I wanted to help Jack by donating a kidney to him and hoped I would be a suitable match. As he was so young we had to wait until he reached a certain weight and height in order to undergo a transplant. There was a rigorous screening process involved before I was allowed to donate one of my kidneys to him. It was a great relief when we got the all clear for the transplant operation to proceed.

Jack is a shining example of the difference organ donation can make. Jack will represent Ireland at the British Transplant Games in Newcastle this summer. He loves playing Gaelic football with his local Navan O Mahony's GAA Club in Navan. Earlier this year on the anniversary of his transplant, 7th February, Jack was honoured to be selected to represent his school, St. Paul's National School, to play at half time in the Meath v Kildare match. Jack has also recently taken up Pitch and Putt which he really enjoys. Last year he ran his first ever 5km race at the IKA's Run for a Life and completed it in 25 minutes and I crossed the line three minutes behind him. I was so proud of him that day and continue to be everyday for all that he has achieved. I am so glad that I was able to help Jack by donating a kidney as for some other children living donation might not be an option available to them. Organ Donation really does transform and save lives. Without organ donation Jack might not be with us today."

Peter Pardoe (60) from Clondalkin, who received a kidney transplant from a deceased organ donor in November 2013, said, "I am looking forward to coming back here to my local Corkagh Park for Run for a Life with members of my family. Before my transplant I was tired all the time with little energy and I faced an uncertain future. Thanks to my organ donor I now have the energy to do all the things I enjoy doing including spending time with my five beautiful grandchildren. Organ donation is a wonderful gift which touches so many lives."

People signing up for the Run for a Life on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 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 commencing at 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 seventh 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 families who have been touched by organ failure in helping us to promote the event is very much appreciated. 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.

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

*For an organ donor card **Freetext the word DONOR to 50050** or visit website [www.ika.ie/card](http://www.ika.ie/card)  
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 & National Projects Manager, IKA, Tel. [01 6205306](tel:016205306) mob. [087 6843644](tel:0876843644)  
Gwen O'Donoghue, Publicity, IKA. mob. [086 8241447](tel:0868241447) email. [gwenodonoghue1@gmail.com](mailto:gwenodonoghue1@gmail.com)

*Note: Last month Temple Street Hospital celebrated passing the 100<sup>th</sup> transplant operation since its transplant programme commenced in 2003. Last year was a record year for paediatric kidney transplants in Ireland with a total of 19 children receiving kidney transplants.*