

A favourite haunt for the RehabCare Bike Club members is the Grand Canal Way, a pedestrian and cycle path that follows the Grand Canal in Dublin. Pictured enjoying the cycle path are tandem cyclists, Donna Hughes and Patsy Dunne.



On Yer Bike!

The RehabCare resource centre in Ballyfermot was a popular winner at the 2012 Rehab Group Innovation Awards. Determined to replicate their success, the group decided to use the prize money to fund another exciting new project.

REHAB HAS a proud history of developing innovative solutions to support the people who use its services. The Rehab Group Innovation Awards rewards examples of best practice and creativity, and highlights new and improved services in different parts of the organisation. Last year, staff and service users at the RehabCare resource centre in Ballyfermot were delighted to be presented with the award and a cheque for €1,000 for their participation at the 'Early-Drive' driving experience course at Mondello race track. Having tasted success, the group decided to use the prize money to fund an exciting new programme, one that they hope will see them scoop an Innovation Award again this year.

"I had recently acquired a bike as part of the 'Bike to Work' scheme and there was huge interest among the guys

when I cycled into work," explains Donna Hughes, Programme Facilitator, RehabCare Ballyfermot. "So, when we had a bit of a brainstorming session about how to spend the prize money, the notion of a bike club came up. At RehabCare, we are constantly trying to find new and exciting ways in which to promote the dignity and independence of the people who use our services and the bike club seemed like a great idea.

"We approached Rothar, a company that repairs and sells unwanted bicycles at affordable prices, and they provided us with a really fantastic fleet of bicycles including a recently refurbished tandem bike. The tandem was perfect for Patsy Dunne, a service user with a visual impairment who was particularly interested in getting involved in the new club. He pedals away in the back seat and I'm in the front."

"The bike club began in March and has proven hugely popular in the centre. We now have eight very enthusiastic members and it has also been a great way of getting out and about within the local community," says Donna. "We head out every Tuesday morning – rain or shine – and we're well-known now within the area. We regularly get friendly beeps and waves from tram and bus drivers as we pass by!"

"I joined the bike club in July and I'm really enjoying it," says Lorraine Wintzer. "I love being out and about and getting the fresh air. It's very relaxing and it's helping me get the weight down, which is really important."

The health benefits of cycling are something that tandem cyclist Patsy Dunne is also keen to highlight. "I love being out in the fresh air. It's



Members of the RehabCare Bike Club make sure to keep their bikes in tip-top condition by regularly maintaining them.

really great exercise and a fun way of keeping fit. I've lost weight since I started with bike club and people are beginning to notice. I'm getting lots of compliments!"

Road safety is a priority for the club and all the members completed road safety training before they ventured out on their bikes. "Safety is first. The golden rule is that helmets are worn every time we are on the bikes," says Patsy. "We have also learned all about hand signals and how to cycle safely on main roads."

The cycling enthusiasts have all named their own bikes and make sure to maintain them properly. "We take good care of our bikes," says Patsy. "We have a big tool box and all the necessary equipment like bicycle pumps and pliers."

A favourite haunt for the intrepid cyclists is the Grand Canal Way, a pedestrian and cycle path that follows the Grand Canal in Dublin. "The guys are flying up and down the canal bank now," says Donna. "The path is almost completely off-road and is therefore a really safe option for our cyclists. What's more, it's only minutes away from our centre here in Ballyfermot. The canal really is a fantastic local amenity. There's always something interesting

to look at, whether it's a barge that passes by or the beautiful flora and fauna that line the canal bank."

But, there isn't much time for taking in the sights with six of the bike club members working towards taking part in a 60km fundraiser cycle along the Grand Canal Way this coming November. The group has already been in training for weeks for the winter fundraiser, a relay that will see each of the cyclists complete 10km of a circular route between Kylemore Road and Ballsbridge.

According to Patsy, the prospect of bad weather doesn't bother him one bit. "I have a good, warm jacket, so I'm all set for the challenge," he says. The club hopes to raise just over €500 in the fundraiser which will go towards the RehabCare resource centre in Ballyfermot.

And while the Tour de France may not be on the cards, the members of RehabCare Ballyfermot's Bike Club have been well and truly bitten by the cycling bug. They are looking forward to many more hours and miles of happy cycling in the years ahead.

So, if on your travels around Dublin, you pass the bike club on an expedition, don't forget to give them a beep and a cheery wave to help them on their way! ■

WHO TO CONTACT



Donna Hughes
Programme Facilitator
 RehabCare Ballyfermot,
 Kylemore Road, Ballyfermot,
 Dublin 10

+ 353 (0) 1 626 9979
 donna.hughes@rehabcare.ie

The Rehab Group has a proud history of developing innovative solutions to support the people who use its services. This year more than fifty applications were received for the Awards, which were judged by the Innovation Awards Adjudication Committee. In total, ten projects were awarded Innovation Awards and a further ten were highly commended.

Details of the nomination process for the forthcoming Rehab Group Innovation Awards will be announced shortly.



RehabCare Programme Facilitator Donna Hughes pictured with Patsy Dunne on the tandem he's named Bluebird.