

AgeingMatters

in Ireland

Lifelong learning for active citizenship

Creative & productive

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■ Cover photo: Ray McGrath, member of U3A Waterford, pictured at Cheekpoint, Waterford
Photo: Aileen Drohan

Opinion

Preparing to raise the roof



Paddy Connolly

Age Action, motivated by intergenerational solidarity, is joining the Raise the Roof campaign to tackle the continuing housing crisis that is affecting people of all ages. People are being mobilised, through trade unions and community organisations, to stage a major national rally on the housing crisis under the banner of Raise the Roof, in Dublin on Saturday, 18th May.

When people take an interest in what is happening in their local community, seek solutions to problems and initiate improvements they are being active citizens. Community is the foundational building block of society and housing is fundamental to community. Ireland's housing crisis is rightly dominating public discourse as it undermines our ability to live with dignity as part of a community. Ireland's changing demographic brings with it a changing demand for homes that meet the needs of an ageing population.

The Government's failure to deliver on a whole of government approach to ageing and provide good quality social housing to meet demand has resulted in older people feeling subjected to negative, ageist language about their needs and wishes for suitable housing and health supports as is evidenced in the narrative on 'down-sizing' or 'right-sizing'.

Lower incomes and housing

In the 60s and 70s the State implemented policies to support owner occupation of housing. People on lower incomes were able to buy their own homes, which went some way to addressing wealth inequalities. According to Professor Tony Fahey, writing in *Social Justice Ireland's* book *From Here to Where?*, by the year 2000 even low-income households owned substantial housing wealth and were less disadvantaged by inequalities in housing wealth than they were by inequalities in income.

Most of the growing population of young private renters today grew up in homes that were owned by their parents. Prof Fahey identified the essential features of secure long-term housing as being affordable, and having secure tenure. As he says: "Today's private rented housing has neither of these features."

Looking at the future needs of an ageing population, for those aged 50-54 almost 10% were renting from private landlords at the time of Census 2016. It can be assumed that these people will continue in the rental market beyond their working years which leaves them in a vulnerable situation.

I encourage any and all of you who can to be active citizens and march with us on Saturday, 18th May in a show of intergenerational solidarity.

Finding your **Ikigai**

Active citizenship, the key to brain health and happiness

A Japanese proverb says: “Only staying active can make you want to live for a 100 years.” ‘Ikigai’ is the Japanese term that describes how some people achieve this, writes Dr Sabina Brennan.

Ikigai is a Japanese concept that roughly means a ‘reason for being’, the ‘thing that you live for’ or the ‘reason you get out of bed in the morning.’ Ogimi, a rural town on the Japanese island of Okinawa, boasts the highest life expectancy in the world. They don’t just live longer; they have fewer chronic health conditions than older people elsewhere and many of their centenarians exude vitality and health.

Friendly and joyous

By all accounts, residents of Ogimi are friendly and joyous to the extent that they laugh and joke almost incessantly. One key factor that underlies their happiness is their sense of community.

From an early age they help one another and operate as a team.

They also live by a principle of ‘ichariba chode’ which translates as ‘treat everyone as a brother even if you don’t know them.’ Of course, their diet coupled with exercise, good sleep habits and firm friendships play a significant role in their health but their ikigai



▲ Dr Sabina Brennan (PhD, CPsychol, PsSI) is a psychologist, neuroscientist, award-winning science communicator and author of the No 1 best seller *100 Days to a Younger Brain*.

seems to be at the heart of their love of life.

There is no word in Japanese that directly translates to mean “retired”. In fact, many Japanese people never really retire. They remain active, doing what they love as long as their health allows.

Having a purpose in life is so

important in their culture that the idea of retirement is alien. I doubt that I will live to 100, but I know that I never want to retire and can attest to the fact that having a clearly defined ikigai brings happiness, satisfaction and meaning to my life.

Continued on next page



▲ Ikigai is a Japanese concept that roughly means a 'reason for being'.

Photo: Mare Kuliasz

You will find your ikigai at the intersection of what you love, what you are good at, what the world needs and what you can get paid for.

I love talking and writing, I'm good at communicating neuroscience in a way that is easy to understand and I am on a mission to reduce the number people living with dementia by sharing practical advice to boost brain health and reduce dementia risk. I get paid for doing these things, but I also do them for free out of passion and the need to make a difference. I discovered my ikigai in my late forties and feel so fortunate to have purpose and meaning in my life.

I cannot tell you how wonderful it feels to be making a differ-

ence. I believe that great things can happen when lots of people do little things.

Ageism and enforced retirement can leave us feeling underused and undervalued by society and invisible in our community. With the media's incessant portrayal of older people as a burden on society, it is easy to forget what a valuable contribution we can make to our community and wider society.

Active citizenship

With age come wisdom and knowledge, invaluable assets for active citizenship. Older people are also better at risk-assessment, decision-making and conflict resolution – all superb skills for addressing societal

challenges.

What would you like to see change in the world? Could you be part of that change? What makes you happy? What gets you out of bed excited to face the day?

Make a list of all the things you are and all the things you do. Circle the ones that you love doing, the ones that give you a sense of well-being and satisfaction. Be careful not to circle the roles you feel you should assume or the activities that you feel obliged to do. Can you discard some of your roles and activities to focus more narrowly and bring greater joy and purpose to your life?

Our own preconceptions and societal stereotyping can exert



an influence that makes us behave as we believe older people should behave and may lead to us ceasing activities, like engaging in stimulating occupations or taking physical exercise or taking on new challenges that could help to protect us from illness, disease and decline in our cognitive and physical functioning.

Time and belief

Active citizenship and ikigai both involve a commitment of time and belief. This can be to a cause, a community, or indeed to learning a new skill. Your ikigai should give you more energy than it takes away. It must involve personal growth and require you to acquire a skill or knowledge. Active citizenship and ikigai involve challenge and learning that are key elements of

a brain-healthy lifestyle.

Neuroplasticity

Challenging your brain stimulates the connections between neurons promoting neuroplasticity, which helps fight off decline in memory and may offer protection against dementia. Challenge will change your brain chemistry, positively impacting your mood and your brain function. Learning is like a powerful brain-changing drug generating new brain cells, enriching brain networks and opening new routes that your brain can use to bypass damage caused by injury, disease or stroke.

Lifelong learning reduces your risk of developing dementia and increases your chances of continuing to live independently in later life. The human brain was

built for learning and change. Active citizenship, just like ikigai, can change your brain, your life and your community for the better.

For more information, see Dr Brennan's website at www.sabinabrennan.ie and her YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/c/sabinabrennan. Or follow her on twitter: @Sabina_Brennan. Or see: www.linkedin.com/in/sabina-brennan-83139118/

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Age Action's Glór groups

As a rights-based advocacy organisation working to make Ireland a better place in which to grow old, Age Action emphasises empowerment of older people. Our work reflects the lived experience of older people in Ireland. Through engaging with, and supporting Age Action, older people can be engaged citizens.

Age Action Glór advocacy groups are a key part of how Age Action ensures the lived experience of older people directly informs our policy and advocacy work.

'Glór' is the Irish word for voice and the Age Action Glór groups were set up to empower and facilitate older people to make their voices heard amongst decision makers. The groups meet on a monthly basis in Dublin, Cork, Galway and Castlebar to discuss the issues impacting on older people in their community as well as to provide input to

Age Action national policy and advocacy activities. Examples of work undertaken by the Glór groups include:

- Each year the Cork Glór group arranges to meet with local TDs around the Budget and in the run up to elections to highlight the issues of importance to older people.
- The Galway Glór group published research which they conducted on the experiences of older people accessing outpatient services in the Age Action West region.
- The Dublin Glór group assist with queries from the media each year around budget time.

For more information, please contact Corona Joyce, corona.joyce@ageaction.ie or 01 475 6989.

— Corona Joyce,
Senior Policy Officer with Age Action



◀ Getting Started, Ciara and Jane

Lifelong learning — ‘a **seamless continuum** from cradle to grave’

Lifelong learning is about creating a society of individuals who are motivated to continue learning throughout their lives — both formally and informally. We can learn on our own, but for most of us learning happens when we interact with others. We are social beings and learn from each other, writes **Billy O’Keefe**.



◀ Billy O’Keefe, Lifelong Learning Manager with Age Action.

Trying to define lifelong learning is not as simple as it seems. The term lifelong learning implies education from cradle to grave, but for policy makers in Ireland and across Europe the definition is much narrower.

The Irish Central Statistics Office, and Eurostat, consider lifelong learning as the numbers of adults between the ages of 25 and 64 years of age who participated in learning activities within a defined time period. Age Action’s U3A network has several thousand learners who are aged 64 and over. Do they not count? Does learning cease at the age of 64?

International perspective

Lifelong learning as a concept achieved international prominence via two ground breaking reports by UNESCO; the Faure Report (1972) and the Delors Report (1996).

These reports articulated some basic principles of lifelong learning which have since informed policy within the EU and the OECD. Some of the principles of lifelong learning are:

- 1 learning occurs in a range of environments

including the home, the workplace and in civic organisations;

- 2 new technologies will usher in a new era of self-directed, or informal, learning;
- 3 the new globalised, technology enhanced, knowledge rich world will require all citizens to constantly update their skills; and
- 4 the primary role of governments in relation to education will be to build a culture of lifelong learning and encourage learning across the lifespan.

Three forms of Learning

In a 2012 report, UNESCO divided learning into three areas:

Formal learning takes place in education and training institutions, is recognised by relevant national authorities and leads to diplomas and qualifications. Formal learning is structured according to educational arrangements such as curricula, qualifications and teaching-learning requirements.

Non-formal learning is learning that has been acquired in addition or alternatively to formal learning. In some cases, it is also structured according to educational and training arrangements, but more flexible. It usually takes place in community-based settings, the workplace and through the activities of civil society organisations.

Informal learning is learning that occurs in daily life, in the family, in the workplace, in communities and through interests and activities of individuals. Through the recognition, validation and accreditation process, competences gained in informal learning can be made visible and can contribute to qualifications and other recognitions. In some cases, the term experiential learning is used to refer to informal learning that focuses on learning from experience.

Irish context

In Ireland Aontas is the organisation which seeks to increase the visibility, raise the voice of, and promote the value of adult learning and community education. Ireland lags behind the European average in lifelong learning, with a participation rate of approximately 6% to 7%. The EU has set a

target of 15% of adults in lifelong learning by 2020, whereas Ireland plans to reach the 15% figure by 2025. The National Positive Ageing Strategy commits to “promote access to a wide range of opportunities for continued learning and education for older people”.

Current debate on lifelong learning centres on the need for adults, regardless of educational background, to be continually engaged in learning to keep up with constant rates of change. An OECD business brief stated: “Being educated is no longer about how much you know, but about having the skills and motivation for lifelong learning so that you can learn new knowledge whenever you need to. Currently, there is no remit – and therefore no funding, programme places or data collection – for people older than 65 in national Governmental policies, such as the National Skills Strategy 2025, regarding training and skills.

As a result, policies and programmes often treat over-65s as a single group, with policy decisions often being made on assumptions as to need and preferences. In particular, there is a significant lack of data on older people collected concerning education, training and employment participation. This results in a significant (and growing) cohort of the Irish population being excluded from learning measures.

Role of the U3A

Age Action has been responsible for co-ordinating the University of The Third Age Network (U3A) since it was established in Ireland over 15 years ago and is one example of community-based non-formal learning. The number of Age Action U3A lifelong learning groups has increased by 75 per cent between 2014-2018 and continues to grow.

Keeping the brain active and engaged helps keeps the body active. We need to work together to keep our overall health and wellbeing in good shape. U3A is one part of the recipe.

If there is no group in your area, please make contact with the Lifelong Learning Team (u3a@ageaction.ie) and let's work together to expand the network.

Active citizenship and the media

Active Citizenship is about participation in and engaging with society. And it is about helping to shape society, writes Gerard Scully.



▲ Gerard Scully, Senior Information Officer Age Action

who govern it. It is generally accepted that the values of democracy are upheld by an informed electorate. Independent, fair, impartial and objective news and current affairs coverage is one critical factor to achieving this informed electorate.

A platform for the creation and delivery of cultural expression is another critical factor, as is a platform for the education of a diverse and disparate cohort. As active citizens, we have a responsibility to do our best to be properly informed and to be media literate. "By its very nature, media literacy is a life-long learning journey" according to the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI).

Elections and fake news

In May we are going to the polls in European Parliament and local authority elections. Elections and referenda are opportunities to be active citizens and are one of the privileges of being citizens of a democracy. Older people tend not to take this privilege for granted and to exercise their right to vote.

Older people tend not to be swing voters, but they are of course still open to persuasion. Many people, for instance, argue that the Brexit referendum was

You shape society by engaging in public discourse, and you do this every time you have a chat with a friend or neighbour. They affect the way you think, or you affect the way they think. Media literacy has become a key priority in educational policy. Education in media literacy promotes

citizens' skills in searching for information, interacting with the media and thinking critically about it. The fastest growing group of internet users is older people who, in particular, need this kind of education.

Finally, of course, you shape society by electing the people

carried by older voters who were persuaded by fake news or misinformation that went unchallenged during the campaign

Ironically, the term Fake News was coined by President Trump referring to media stories that he claims have no factual basis. And whatever your opinion of President Trump, he has identified a real problem faced by all of us: how do we know if what we are reading is true, or factual?

Be Media Smart

In March of this year, a public awareness campaign called *Be Media Smart* (at www.bemediasmart.ie) was launched by Media Literacy Ireland (MLI) to alert the public about the dangers of Fake News and to help them discern it from the truth.

"Media literacy is the key to empowering people with the skills and knowledge to understand how media works in this changing environment, to interrogate the accuracy of information, to counter unfair and inaccurate representation, to challenge extremist views and, ultimately, to make better informed media choices." (MLI Press release)

There is definitely an awareness and a mistrust of information sources on the internet. Prof Brian O'Neill of the Technical University of Dublin quotes Eurobarometer 2018, saying 85% of people think misinformation or Fake News is a problem, and only 47% trust online newspapers and magazines.

According to Prof. O'Neill, this can lead to cynicism and a fragmentation of public discourse. This fragmentation leads inevitably



▲ Fake news is a problem for all and an obstacle to some people being active citizens.

to a move away from the centre towards the extremes. It is important then to give people the tools they need to distinguish between truth and Fake News. The framework for the BAI's Media Literacy Policy is based on three core competencies and a set of associated skills and success indicators. These competencies are centred on issues regarding:

- the ability to recognise different content types;
- making informed choices in relation to valuing and protecting personal data;
- the creation of media content for private and public use and the ability to engage in online learning opportunities.

A summary of the key guidelines in the policy have been developed by SpunOut.ie and are shared here.

1. Make informed choices around the media you use. This includes:

- Recognising different content types, such as advertising, editorial, opinion, and factual articles.
- Understanding context, how content is made, and if there's a particular motivation behind a piece of content.
- Evaluating the reliability and truthfulness of different sources.

2. Access and use media in a safe and secure way.

This includes:

- Being able to search for and find reliable media and content.
- Making an informed decision about where you share your personal data.
- Being careful about making transactions online.
- Using technical security features to keep your information safe.



▲ David Rowe is pictured with Gordon Lawson (right), who received the Community Champion and Golden IT Awards at the Silver Surfer Awards 2018. Age Action hosts the Silver Surfer Awards to raise awareness among older people of the benefits of being online and to encourage those who have not gone online to give it a try. Through our Getting Started Computer Training programme, Age Action trains over 4,000 older people each year in basic IT skills.

Digital literacy and lifelong learning

It is important that we learn how to learn, and how to have a meaningful and successful personal and professional life. This requires the ability to adjust to the ever-changing environment, and constructively react to the constant stream of new information, writes Corona Joyce.

Ireland is increasingly becoming dependent on Information Technology and digital based communications to function and digital literacy is now, more than ever a necessity. Older people in Ireland must be empowered and enabled to be fully-fledged digital citizens, to use the internet to access information and services, to communicate with friends and family, to pursue education opportunities and to do their business online.

The lack of digital literacy and poor access to Information Technology among older people simply

excludes a large group of people in society from educational, financial and commercial opportunities. Over half of Irish people aged between 65 and 74 have never used the internet which is a critical challenge for society given the pace of change towards doing most of our business online.

Digital exclusion

A move to online services may make sense from a commercial point of view for businesses or Government services but it creates barriers for many older people who are unable to carry out their day-to-day business online or are wary of doing so. In particular, this can result in an inability to access basic financial services or to an older person losing control over their personal finances. Certain lower cost deals (e.g. utilities) are only available online, denying older people who are offline the opportunity to avail of the best and most econom-

Internet use among people aged 65 to 74 (2018)

Percentage of people aged 65-74 who:	Ireland	Britain	Denmark	Finland	Estonia	EU28
Used the internet within last 12 months	45	82	92	79	60	58
Never used the internet	55	16	6	18	34	37

Source: Eurostat

ic services. In addition, use of the internet has the proven potential to deliver positive social and health related outcomes for older people, not least decreased feelings of loneliness and isolation.

Low rates of internet access

Ireland has one of the lowest rates of digital skills and internet usage by older people in Europe, a gap that is increasing yearly. We estimate almost 440,000 older people in Ireland have never been online, this represents over 70 % of the total population over 65.[1] In 2017, 50% of those aged between 65-74 in Ireland had never used the internet (in comparison to an EU average of 39%). By 2018, this figure had increased to 55%. During the same time the EU average decreased to 37%.

Poor training opportunities

Many older people wish to use the internet and information technology but cannot access proper training. There may be no computer courses available locally. The older person may also have restricted mobility or even be housebound. There is limited funding for digital skills training. In addition, the prohibitive cost of broadband (estimated at approximately €50 per month) is also a barrier for many older people living on a fixed income.

Getting Started programme

Other barriers relate to older people being anxious about trying to learn to use the internet, lacking confidence in their own ability to learn or having a fear of failure. Volunteer tutors with Age Action's Getting Started programme often report that their single biggest challenge is building up the confidence of learners. Once this initial reluctance is overcome, learners are as able to master online



▲ Corona Joyce, Senior Policy Officer at Age Action.

technologies as anyone else.

Since 2006 Age Action through its Getting Started programme has trained more than 35,000 older people with the assistance of thousands of volunteer tutors. During 2018, we provided 10 hours of one to one training to over 2,500 older people.

Age Action continues to call for increased funding for the Digital Skills for Citizens Grant Scheme to provide more training places, more one-to-one training and to improve the scheme's coverage in rural Ireland. In addition, support is needed for older people on low incomes to access the internet by increasing the telephone support allowance. We continue to call on the Government to develop and roll-out a national digital skills learning programme and to integrate it with existing community infrastructure, particularly libraries and post offices.



▲ Ray McGrath is a lifelong learner who spends considerable time scrambling through local woods and sailing with his nine grandchildren. He has a weekly column in the Waterford News and Start called “Heritage Rambles of Gaultier” and is an active member of U3A in Waterford.

Growing **younger** with Waterford U3A

With my 81st birthday just around the corner, I have seldom felt so creative and productive as I do now, writes Ray McGrath.

Reasons? People, I suppose, first and foremost family, as well as friends that seem to be part of my extended family. Then come walking, eating well, gardening and learning.

And I can't discount genes.

The genes, I had nothing to do with, but I am very grateful for. The learning part is mine and it comes easily, and it's not necessarily sitting in a classroom – so many ideas to follow up on after conversations with friends, a new book, a line from a poem, a problem with the heating or plumbing, a suddenly raised INR or PSA, understanding a new ache in my hip – could it be arthritis? So many sources of learning – new ideas and

attitudes.

So learning is a huge part of what I am, and a lot of the motivation comes from being with people of all ages.

A robot from Star Wars

And now some of that contact is through U3A. When I first heard the name, I was reminded of a robot in Star Wars! U3A? – a little intimidating since I didn't have a science background! Then I was invited to join and

learned that it meant University of the Third Age.

Third Age I had heard of from my involvement in lifelong learning projects in Canada. Hey, I was in my third age! Almost out of the blue, the idea hit me with fresh vigour. The only contact I had with the blue rinse generation didn't appeal. I wasn't ready for the pasture. I was curious, so I went along to one of the monthly talks – an event more than a talk since the atmosphere and chat over a cup of tea afterwards was unexpected and very pleasant. The 'talk' was a hands-on evaluation of small heirlooms. Shortly afterward, I was invited to lead a walking tour of the Burren in County Clare. That did it. I was hooked.

Antennae for learning

I had experienced university several times and in different

places. I understood something of the medieval concept of univ-eristy – a gathering of like-minded people to learn from each other, not the frantic note-taking sometimes associated with the word. Gradually, I learned that Unviserity of the Third Age was a worldwide movement that valued and encouraged members' experience and wisdom. And I soon realised that this vision was shared by many of the people I met through U3A.

The more I became involved, the more the antennae for learning went up. I was invited to join the local Waterford U3A committee. We set about identifying what collective knowledge and experience we had and encouraged each other to share this at one of our talks.

We would meet in each other's houses and over cups of tea and coffee, and sweet things gave

free reign to our imagination. The conversation moved to possible interactive sessions as a way of engaging all of our members in the monthly events, and so some of our talks involved show and tell sessions – an object, a poem, a painting. And we had our annual Christmas concert of choral music and selections of readings by members.

And so I am now a fully engaged member of U3A and loving every first Monday at 2pm along with all the time in between, preparing and enjoying learning and feeling younger all the time.

First Monday

Come join us on the first Monday of the month except when that falls on a bank holiday – then it's the second Monday – at Carrigphierish Library in Waterford.

Talks are on a huge variety of subjects, from a Tour of Volunteer Duty in the Middle East to Music and the Brain. Often, the sessions are interactive with members sharing knowledge and interests. Also, there are summer outings and walks.

Do come and take part – no need to be a member although there is a warm welcome if you decide to join.

Contact Ray McGrath at 083-835-3673 or preferably at woodhouseduo@gmail.com. Ray McGrath lives in Cheekpoint Co. Waterford. His nine grandchildren live in different parts of the world but often spend considerable time with him in Ireland scrambling through the local woods and sailing from Waterford Harbour.



▲ Outings and field trips are part of the learning experienced in U3A groups, and here is the Rathmines group enjoying a guided tour of Iveagh House in 2017.

Improving the dignity of older people in the developing world

Age Action works in partnership with HelpAge International, promoting the AFFORD II programme, Accountability and Fulfilment for Older Persons to Raise their Dignity, writes **Billy O’Keefe**.

The programme, funded by Irish Aid, focuses on improving the dignity, income security and resilience of older women and men through improved social protection in old age, greater social accountability and stronger inter-linkages between relevant policy sectors. The programme operates in Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania and Ethiopia.

HelpAge International has a vision for a world in which all older people can lead dignified, healthy and secure lives. Their mission, which Age Action fully supports, is to promote the wellbeing and inclusion of older women and men and reduce poverty and discrimination in later life. This is a world where every older woman and man, everywhere, can say:

- “I have the income I need”
- “I enjoy the best possible health and quality of life”
- “I am safe and secure, free from discrimination and abuse”
- “My voice is heard”

Social protection in the developing world

HelpAge International passionately supports social protection for people in the developing world - whether in the form of cash payments, such as pensions, or insurance. Here’s why. Life in developing countries is full of risks and shocks, such as natural disasters or the deaths of breadwinners. And financial destitution can easily result. Social protection provides secure incomes for people



▲ Negash Tolla (left) and Hailegiorgis Azeze (right), both members of Adama Older People’s Association, with Age Action’s Annette Head (centre).

in old age and it provides long term benefits too. For instance, people often invest their payments in their family’s future by educating children or setting up businesses. As in Ireland, pensions are a crucial form of social protection - and HelpAge is working hard for governments to bring them in for all older people in developing countries.

Ethiopia is one of the countries where the AFFORD II programme is active. It is home to Africa’s second largest population, with estimates ranging from 100 million to 110 million. Despite strong economic growth that has lifted many out of poverty, many challenges remain. Social instability

associated with a recently commenced political transition has manifested in some regions with violence resulting in 2.35m internally displaced people.

HelpAge Ethiopia envisions an Ethiopia where its 4.8 million older people fulfil their potential to lead dignified, active, healthy and secure lives. HelpAge's work in Ethiopia under AFFORD II includes capacity-building and awareness-raising training for Older Persons' Associations in 20 targeted urban districts (located in Addis Ababa, Adama, Dire Dawa and Hawassa) and evidence-based advocacy at national level. Activities are carried out in close association with its local partner, the Ethiopia Elderly and Pensioners National Association.

Training for older women

As part of the Irish Aid funded programme, two days' leadership training was held in December 2018 for older women in Addis Ababa and Adama. The training is to empower older women and men to be aware of their rights and entitlements and to actively participate in decision making processes. The training covers leadership skills, evidence-based advocacy, ageing and gender and social accountability topics. The training equips the participants with the skills that will encourage them to take a leading role in their local associations and promote effective and efficient ways of leadership.

Sofia, the senior programme officer says " We do such training for older women because our capacity assessment of older people associations revealed lack of leadership skills in general and specifically in older women. "

Asnakech Gechu is 67 years of age and is a cashier in Addis Ketema Older People's Association. She was one of the participants and said, "I have learnt a lot from this leadership training. The knowledge and the skills that I got will increase my involvement in the older people association. It enhanced my leadership capacity and will enable me to participate better in my association. "

64-year-old Engedaworq Eshetu is a member and secretary of Kolfe Keranyo, sub city's older people association in Addis Ababa. She



▲ Left to right-Amleset Tewidros (Head of Programmes-Helpage), Sisay Seyoum (Country Director-Helpage Ethiopia), Hiwot Mebrate (Senior Social Protection Programme Manager Irish Aid Ethiopia) Annette Head Age Action



▲ Group of older women at the Sukuma older persons forum 2016.

actively advocates for the interest of older persons in her Community.

Engedaworq says 'Our leadership knowledge is a key tool for our voice to be heard'.

If you are interested in learning more about the work of Irish Aid, HelpAge International and Age Action's role in development there is a workshop which we would be happy to facilitate in your area. Contact Age Action at 01 4756989 or email agein-ganddevelopment@ageaction.ie

Billy O'Keefe is Lifelong Learning Manager with Age Action.

Be our guest ... for Bealtaine Festival 2019

It's time to get creative no matter what age you are, writes **Anne Kearney, Communications & Marketing Manager at Age & Opportunity.**

With May comes Bealtaine, the annual month-long national celebration of the arts and creativity as a life-long journey. Now in its 24th year, the festival is a fascinating and ambitious programme of events around the country. The festival showcases the very best of Ireland's older artists, as well as working with artists of all generations to explore the collective themes of ageing and the importance of creativity at every age.

2019 Highlights include:

- **Intergenerational Bicycle Gang**, brought together by artists Michelle Browne and James Ó hAodha. On 17th May, this unique group of older cyclists from Dublin will take to the streets. Why not bring your own bike and join them?
- **Abair/Samaa**, an intercultural choral performance on 28th May at the Smock Alley Theatre the Kilcock Men's Shed Choir will be joined by Libyan singer Farah Elle for traditional music from Ireland and North Africa.
- **Dawn Chorus**. Every year thousands of people get up very early to join choirs to sing in the dawn and this year we are holding the event on the 5th of May at 6am. This year we also invite choirs to host a Dusk Chorus at sunset.
- **What Good is Looking Well When You're Rotten on the Inside?** Emma O'Grady has created a theatrical piece based on the musings of her late grandfather Paddy O'Grady which will tour Kilkenny, Mayo, Laois and Roscommon throughout May.
- **Nationwide Bealtaine Book Club**, reading Éilís Ní Dhuibhne's *Twelve Thousand Days*, which was nominated by libraries around Ireland.
- **If I knew then what I know now**. On the 16th May dance artist Joan Davis, traditional fiddle player Antóin Mac Gabhann, writer Éilís Ní



▲ Singer-songwriter Farah Elle and Chris of the Kilcock Men's Shed Choir, who are taking part in Abair/Samaa – an intercultural choral performance taking place in Kildare and Dublin as part of this May's Bealtaine Festival.

Photo: Tony Kinlan

Dhuibhne, composer and performer Ronan Guilfoyle, and visual artist Annabel Konig discuss their significant and celebrated arts careers.

- **Bealtaine @ Temple Bar**. On 18th May there's a whole day of exploring what's on offer in the heart of Dublin's cultural quarter, made possible by support from Dublin City Council and the assistance of the Temple Bar Company.

Alongside these highlights will be a huge programme of local initiatives hosted by local authorities, arts centres, libraries, Active Retirement groups, care settings, community groups and clubs from all over the country.

The Bealtaine Festival is an Age & Opportunity Arts initiative, supported by the Arts Council and the HSE. For more information, visit www.bealtaine.ie.



▲ How much have you in your purse? Please let us know your budget priorities by filling in the enclosed survey.

Pre-budget survey for 2020

Even though the budget is months away, preparations have already started in some Government departments and Age Action's own consultation with members is taking place right now.

"We're asking all of our Ageing Matters readers to fill out the survey you should have received with your magazine this month and send it back to us" explained Senior Policy Officer Corona Joyce. "Tell us what you want to see in this year's budget."

Developing Age Action's pre budget submissions is only the start of the campaign. Once they are sent into the various Government departments, Age Action staff will be meeting with TDs, senators, ministers and civil servants to argue on behalf of older people in Ireland.

Political strength

Age Action's Head of Advocacy and Communications, Celine Clarke, said: "Our policy team is going to work with our members and supporters to make sure we're putting forward proposals based on what older people really need and want.

"But the real battle will be won or lost by our members. Every phone call, letter and email to your

TD telling them you're backing Age Action and that you want a fair budget for older people increases our chances of getting a result that will make a real difference for older people."

Last year Age Action Glór group members met with local politicians. Age Action organised a day of action in Dublin at the end of September, just before the budget. Alongside Active Retirement Ireland and ALONE, older people travelled from all over the country to lobby their TDs and Senators outside Leinster House on what matters to them. Many more Age Action members phoned or wrote to their local representatives.

This year it is hoped more older people will get involved and encourage their family members to join the conversation as well.

Ageing in Ireland Survey

As part of our ongoing effort to ensure that our policy positions properly reflect the lived experience of older people in Ireland, we are also asking you fill in a short second survey on what is like being an older person in Ireland.

Both the Age Action Budget 2020 survey and the survey asking for your views on ageing in Ireland are available at www.surveymonkey.com/r/62YGYWS.

Small acts of kindness — fundraising with Age Action

In our fundraising work, I am often reminded of the quote by Oscar Wilde: “The smallest act of kindness is worth more than the grandest intention,” writes Daragh Matthews.

This can be said of all our volunteers in Age Action. Each year volunteers give thousands of hours of their time in supporting our work in Care and Repair, Getting Started, Lifelong Learning, Advocacy and Policy, the Charity Stores and in all our fundraising activities.

These small acts of kindness can never be underestimated. They are valued by each and every one of us here, as without this support we could not deliver vital services to

people around the country.

We are conscious that we are not in every part of the country but we want to be with your help. As a national advocacy organisation for older people striving to make Ireland the best place in the world in which to grow older, we continue to try new and innovative ways of raising funds.

TESCO bag pack

Later on this year we have an amazing opportunity with a fundraising bag pack in Tesco Stores around the country. This initiative is welcome but with it brings many challenges as it won't happen without the support of many hundreds of volunteers.

This is the second time we have had this opportunity. In 2015 we had a national collec-



▲ Pat McGrath, volunteer fundraiser in Blackpool, Cork.

tion in Tesco stores and organizing it was like a 'military exercise', said Daragh Matthews in the fundraising department. We learned a lot about organizing a campaign of that magnitude but the commitment and professionalism of the volunteers was testament to the support people have for our organisation.

So we are asking again for your help. We would also like to ask for ideas in recruiting more people at local level. As members, you are one of the most valuable assets we have here in Age Action. Have you any contacts with groups or associations in your own area that could be contacted to help? We would really appreciate your input or any steer you can give us.

If you have any suggestions or ideas, please do share them with us. Contact anyone in the fundraising department at 01 475-6989 or email fundraising@ageaction.ie Daragh Matthews is Senior Fundraising Manager at Age Action.

Robotics survey winners

In the December issue of Ageing Matters we ran an article on a UCD-based study of people's attitudes to Homecare Robotics. People were asked to complete a survey, and their names were entered into a draw. Each winner received a One4All voucher

Here are the names of the 4 winners:

- Bernadette Noone, Dublin 6
- Chrissie O'Callaghan, Cork City
- Susan Ward, Dublin 6
- Patrick Trant, Dublin 12

Dr Naonori Kodate and Dr Sarah Donnelly at the School of Social Policy, Social Work and Social Justice in University College Dublin are working on the survey, and results should be available later in the year.

Email: naonori.kodate@ucd.ie or sarah.donnelly@ucd.ie

U3A groups

📍 Active Virginians U3A

Patricia Price at (087) 235-0515

📍 An Cosán U3A Tallaght

Imelda Hanratty at (01) 462-8488

📍 Anovocare U3A

Swords, Co. Dublin
Inga Herman at activities@anovocare.ie

📍 Ballymun U3A

Peter Branigan at (087) 292-4001

📍 Ballyroan U3A

June Murphy at (01) 494-7030

📍 Blackrock U3A

Eileen Larkin at (087) 418-8607

📍 Blessington U3A

Carol Walsh at (086) 845 7668

📍 Bray U3A

Linda Uhlemann at (086) 045-1600

📍 Carrick-on-Shannon U3A

Linda Morgan at (086) 407 6312

📍 Club 50, Donegal U3A

Anne Gallagher at
Annegallagher60@yahoo.ie

📍 Dublin City U3A

Liz Ryder at (086) 363-6101

📍 Dun Laoghaire, Dalkey, Killiney U3A

Donal Denham at dldk@gmail.com

📍 Kiltipper Woods U3A

Amy Dalton at activities@kiltipperwoods.ie

📍 Limerick U3A

Cathie Chappell at u3alimerick@gmail.com

📍 Lucan U3A

Rosaleen Murphy at lucanu3a@gmail.com.

📍 Maynooth U3A

Maree Queeney at (086) 849-5613 or mareequeney@gmail.com

📍 Monaghan U3A

Eamonn Callaghan at (087) 918-6567

📍 Monkstown

Laraine at u3a.monkstown@gmail.com

📍 RAMS U3A

Newcastle, Co. Dublin
Matt Dowling at (01) 458-9007

📍 Rathmines

Ann O'Neill at (01) 496-0641
jphoneill@hotmail.com

📍 Roscommon U3A

Gertie McDermot at (087) 675-1842

📍 Rusheen Woods U3A Galway

Angela Glavey at rusheenwoods3a@gmail.com

📍 Sligo U3A

Kathleen Foley at katemf@eircom.net

📍 Sutton-Baldoyle U3A

Christine O' Flynn at (01) 832-3697 or u3asutbal@gmail.com

📍 Swinford U3A

Livvi Daly at olivierdaley@gmail.com

📍 The Bray Heads

Isolde Moylan at isolde.moylan@gmail.com

📍 Tramore U3A

Jean Kealy at (089) 443-8343 or jeankealy2307@gmail.com

📍 Waterford City U3A

Josephine Murphy at (051) 871-037

📍 Wexford Town U3A

Eithne Agar at (086) 190-6420 or u3awexford@gmail.com

For more information, email Carol, U3A Administrator, at u3a@ageaction.ie or call (01) 475-6989 (Tuesday to Friday).



▲ Last year over 550 events took place across Ireland. We are asking people to consider organising an activity or an event for PAW 2019.

A date for your diary – Positive Ageing Week

September 30th to October 6th 2019

Each year positive Ageing Week gives people the chance to celebrate the fact we are all ageing and successfully remaining active and engaged citizens.

Many of us have been raised on the traditional notion of a three-stage approach to our working lives: education, followed by work and then retirement. The benefits of living longer and getting older are immense, and they affect all parts of our lives: our finances, health and leisure.

Positive Ageing Week allows helps us to enjoy living longer and getting older. Events are organised by active retirement groups, nursing homes, community resource centres and many more.

Put the thinking cap on and plan an event in your area for this year’s Positive Ageing Week.

Annual membership application

I wish to join Age Action and enclose € membership fee, plus €..... voluntary donation payable to Age Action Ireland Ltd.

If you are already an existing Age Action member and wish to renew your membership, please write your membership number here

Full name:
(Block capitals please)

Address:.....
.....

Tel:

Email:
(Block capitals please)

Date:

FEES

- €20 Individual – retired/unwaged
- €40 Individual – employed
- €60 Voluntary Body
- €200 Statutory Agency
- €500 Commercial

STANDING ORDER

To the Manager
(Name of Bank/Building Society)

Bank Address:

Please pay annually to Age Action Ireland,
Permanent TSB, 70 Grafton Street, Dublin 2,
BIC: IPBSIE2D

IBAN: IE82 IPBS 9906 2587 7790 21
the following amount €

until further notice. Starting on: 1st day of
January 20

Name:
(Block capitals please)

BIC:

IBAN:.....

Signature:.....

Please return to:

Membership Development,
Age Action Ireland CLG,
10 Grattan Crescent, Inchicore, Dublin 8.
Email: membership@ageaction.ie
Tel: (01) 475 6989