

Laois Volunteer Centre News



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**We Wish All Organisations and Volunteers
a Festive Holiday**

Thanks for Your Support in 2024!

Caitriona & Emer

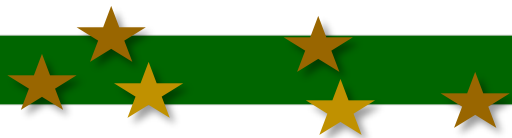


Caitriona Ryan
Manager



Emer Boyle
Development Officer

Highlights from 2024



In 2024 LVC facilitated six corporate volunteering events. LVC worked with six companies so that they could fulfil their environmental and team building goals. Each of the companies had a keen interest in supporting local bio diversity projects and they also wanted to build relationships within their teams. AIB, Fingelton White and The Midlands Park Hotel were just some of the companies who took part in LVC's corporate volunteering programme.

The LVC team collaborated with local environmental charities/not for profits such as Abbeyleix Bog Project, Mountmellick and Portlaoise Tidy Towns to devise suitable, tailor-made volunteering programmes. The volunteers did practical work such as the removal of invasive species of Rhododendron ponticum and Himalayan Balsam. They also painted fences and weeded around a newly planted native pocket forest. Both the volunteers from the companies and the local environmental projects were thrilled with the work done.

If you work in a company and would like to find out more about corporate volunteering, fulfilling environmental or social responsibility goals, please get in touch with:

Caitriona Ryan, Manager
Laois Volunteer Centre
087 24 99 659.

Are You an Organisation Looking for a Volunteer?

Laois Volunteer Information Service is a FREE matching service between organisations and Volunteers. Our role is to provide information and advice to people interested in volunteering and to organisations looking for volunteers. [Link](#)

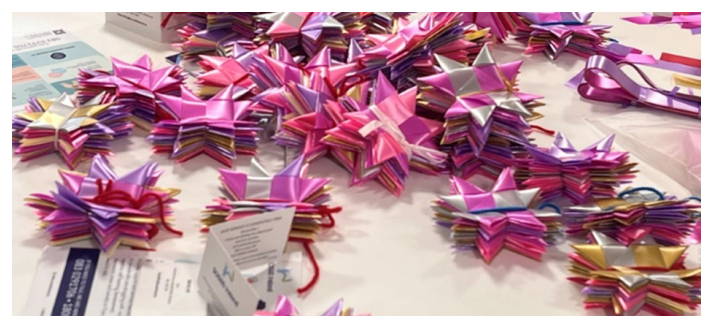
One Million Stars Ireland

This project is an inclusive community arts project connecting communities across Ireland in solidarity against domestic abuse and all forms of violence. Each eight-point star woven represents light, hope and solidarity against violence, promoting our project's eight points of healthy love within relationships. This was started in Ireland five years ago by the **Amber refuge in Kilkenny**. The Amber Women's Refuge in Kilkenny. They started holding workshops where Stars were woven from fabric and other materials. So many Stars were made that they decided to have an Installation in a local shopping centre. All materials are supplied free of charge.

LVC started the one million stars project in June 2024 with the first workshop in the Portlaoise Library. Since then we have been having this workshop every Tuesday in Portlaoise Library from 10am-12pm, everyone is welcome to come and join the group, make a star and have a tea or coffee and to meet new people.

In September 2024 we started our second one million star workshop in Rathdowney library. This runs every Wednesday from 12:30-2.30pm. All are welcome to come along and join in. So far we have made over three thousand stars. We are hoping to get enough stars to make an installation to display to the public in May 2025 for National Volunteering week. How to make a star:

<https://onemillionstarsireland.ie/star-weaver-tutorial/>



Highlights from 2024



Portlaoise Community First Responders

A group of volunteers from Portlaoise who have trained to a minimum level of basic life support in CPR and the use of an AED/defibrillator, who attends a potentially life threatening emergency such as a cardiac arrest, heart attack, stroke or choking.

SOSAD

Since 2007, SOSAD has worked to raise awareness and help prevent suicide in Ireland. We have worked tirelessly in our communities to help those in need feel supported and know they are not alone on their journey. SOSAD offer support and services for people who are struggling with suicidal ideation, self harming, depression, bereavement, stress and anxiety, or if you simply need to talk.

Upcoming Events

We are continuing to run the star weaving workshops in Portlaoise and Rathdowney in 2025. If you are interested in participating in star weaving in 2025 please contact: emer@volunteerlaois.ie. If you are in secondary school and want to get involved in Star Weaving, this is great for students in Transition year, all materials are supplied, please get in touch with us.

In 2025, we ran 6 very successful corporate volunteering projects, if your business would like to boost your team's morale/do some team building a day's spent volunteering is a sure fire way to motivate, inspire and cement working relationships. It can also help you achieve any goals your company may have in relation to the environment and sustainability LVC is also looking for some volunteer musicians for their float in St. Patrick's Day Parade. Please contact: info@volunteerlaois.ie or go to www.volunteerlaois.ie



Some Organisations We Have Supported in 2024

Community and Voluntary Awards 2024

Laois African Support Group

<https://laoisafrika.com/>

Malva Choir

<https://choirmalva.com> (coming soon)

Portlaoise Community First Responders

<https://www.facebook.com/portlaoisecfr/>

PATH

<https://www.path.org/>

SOSAD

<https://sosadireland.ie/>

Womens Shed Portlaoise

<https://www.facebook.com/p/Womens-shed-Portlaoise-61556442703179/>



Gallery



Caitriona manager and Emer Development Officer with LVC had a stand at the National Ploughing championships Sept 2024 with our funders Department of rural and community development (DRCD)



Supporting Laois County Council with the walkability audit in Mountmellick, May 2024



Corporate day in Linear park Portlaoise with the Midlands park hotel and Portlaoise Tidy Towns, May 2024.



Corporate day in Mountmellick painting the fence along the water way with Mountmellick Tidy Towns and another corporate company, April 2024.



Rathdowney Star weaving group making stars with Mary Outreach Officer, Nov 2024.



Laois Volunteer Centre at the St Patrick's day Parade Feb 2024.

Positive Effects of Volunteering

According to research from Volunteer Ireland on the Impact of Volunteering on The Health and Well Being of Volunteers; participant volunteers in their study reported on the effects of volunteering on their well being as:-

Feeling useful, purposeful and valued
Making a worthwhile and meaningful difference
Making new friendships, social interaction, meeting new people
Enjoyment, happiness, fulfilment and contentment
Feeling a sense personal growth and development,
An opportunity to learn and practice new skills/ professional development
Feeling connected to community and a sense of belonging,
socially included and being part of a team
Feeling an increased sense of self confidence
Feeling better mentally, feeling good about yourself, a sense of purpose and structure
Feeling fortunate, a sense of meaning and perspective on life, gratitude and appreciation for life's blessings
Feeling more tolerant and open to people and their diversity

Specific attributes of volunteering that contribute to the positive impact it has on participants cluster under seven themes

1. Contributing & Being Involved
2. Purpose
3. Making a Difference- Seeing Results
4. Enjoyment
5. Personal Choice & Preference
6. Self-Awareness
7. Being Valued and Appreciated

It seems that careful selection, matching, training and support all contribute to enhanced possibilities of a good volunteering experience and in turn a positive impact in health and well-being.

[Volunteer-Ireland-Report-FINAL.pdf](#)



Give the Gift of Volunteering this Season and Beyond!

Click on Christmas tree topper to read about getting involved as a Volunteer.



Ogra Living Well Expo Wednesday 20th Nov 2024 Mountmellick Community School

Laois Volunteer Centre had the pleasure of collaborating with Mountmellick Community School and Laois County Councils Laois Connects to present the very successful Ogra Living Well Expo to schools across Laois on the 20th November. The Expo was in response to the growing increase of mental health pressures on young people and aimed to show these young people tips on living well and the range of supports available to them in Laois. Over 50 not for profit charitable groups were represented on the day and provided information to the attendees. It was a marvellous opportunity for not-for-profit charities to promote their work and be a visible reminder of supports available in the community. Hopefully the young people attending came away with a sense of what volunteering can achieve and perhaps plant a seed of volunteering in the future in their minds.

We met with the school team organising the event and assisted in preparing goody bags for attendees and setting up the vast hall at Mountmellick Community School. What was very striking was the enthusiasm of Vice Principal Frances Kerry LaRossa, teachers Emma Cashin and Martina Harding. Three power houses of organisation and planning down to the last detail. Their enthusiasm was infectious and supported by a small army of students who worked diligently and enthusiastically to have everything ready for their guests on Wednesday morning. We were blown away by the dedication and obvious enjoyment of students and staff alike to make the day a success.

Along with the charities represented there were speaking events from organisations representing mental health and wellbeing, the world of sport and the arts. A full programme of entertainment was appreciated by all including the fabulous Ukrainian Choir, DJ, dance routines, Zumba, quizzes, aerobics demos and games. The hall was a sea of Laois volunteer baseball hats that the young people enjoyed having signed by participants and was lovely to see. The students involved are tomorrow's generation of volunteers and leaders and judging by their enthusiasm on the day the future of Laois is looking bright!

Photos on front cover:

Top - L, Malva Choir Manager Caitriona Ryan at the Ogra Live well expo Nov 2024. R - Ogra live well expo, Nov 2024, Bottom L - Caitriona and Emer with the Junior Volunteer of the year winners, Tommy and Sarah Doyle, R - Caitriona and Emer with Jason McEvoy from PATH, LVC delivering fruit to PATH.

We would like to thank all our Volunteers, Organisations, the Department of Rural and Community Development and Students, Staff, Vice Principal Frances Kerry LaRossa, teachers Emma Cashin and Martina Harding from the Mountmellick Community School. 2024 has been an exceptionally busy and rewarding year and would not have been possible without the input and support of our registered organisations and dedicated volunteers. We look forward to working with you all in 2025 and meanwhile from all of us here in Laois Volunteer Centre have a wonderful Christmas and best wishes for the New Year. Caitriona Emer and Mary



We are happy to introduce a new member to the LVC team, Mary who started with LVC in November. Mary's role is an outreach officer, Mary works with the organisations within County Laois, posting volunteering roles, supporting organisations to register. We at LVC are very happy to have Mary on board as Mary comes with great knowledge of the sector and will be an asset to the team. If you are a not for profit or charity organisation that would like to register please get in contact with Mary on Mary@volunteerlaois.ie or on 089-2318904

Laois Volunteer Centre

<https://volunteerlaois.ie/>

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An Roinn Forbartha
Tuaithe agus Pobail
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Community Development