**Laois CONNECTS**

**It’s time to get connected with our mental health**

The promotion of positive mental health and wellbeing has always been a focus of Laois CONNECTS Mental Health Week which takes place from Saturday 7th October, 2017 until Saturday 14th October, 2017. The week is organised by Laois Mental Health Collaborative Group, whose members include Laois County Council, Laois Sports Partnership, Laois Partnership Company, Mental Health Ireland, HSE, Laois/Offaly ETB and youth sector representatives. The week is now in its seventh year.

It is important for us as a community to learn more about our mental health and understand its impact in our daily lives. The overall aim of Laois CONNECTS week is to encourage our communities to talk about mental health, to reduce the stigma associated with mental health difficulties and to encourage the seeking of help at times of crisis. It is also important that we learn how to support a person experiencing mental health difficulties and minimize the risks of poor mental health.

The programme for Laois CONNECTS Week, boasts some returning favourites, such as community organised walks, art workshops and Library events throughout the week.

A 5K Park Run/Walk will launch the week taking place in Vicarstown on the Grand Canal Bank with special guest Laois Rose, Marie Dunne, hosted by Laois Sports Partnership. Saturday 7th October at 9.30am.

The Kathleen Gorman Memorial event takes place this year in the Community Centre in Timahoe, where we will welcome special guest Frances Black, Senator and one of Ireland’s most iconic singers, and part of the famous all-singing Black Family. Frances will speak on “*Alcohol & Mental Health*”.

HSE CAMHS *(Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services)* have come on board this year with a number of talk for schools, both students and teachers. CAMHS will also host an Information and Display Stand in Laois Shopping Centre during the week. The HSE Suicide Prevention Resource Officer will host a number of SafeTALK *(suicide alertness)* Programmes, which teaches the skills to become “suicide alert” and HSE Community Health Centre in Portlaoise are hosting the following talks, *“Bringing Lived Experience into Practice”*; *“Knowledge is Power”*; *“Living with Everyday Stressors”* and *“Living in the Now”*.

On the lighter side, Camross Adult Set Dancers invite you to join them for a special dance class where you will be shown how dance can lead to a healthy lifestyle, integrating the mind, body and soul and make you a happier person. Wednesday 11th at 8.30pm.

As part of the week, Mountmellick Community College this year are hosting a Film in the Balcony Cinema, Mountmellick called *“It’s Kind of a Funny Storey”* which will be followed by a Q and A session. Students from all Post Primary Schools across Laois are invited to attend this event. They will be invited to attend also a Public Speaking Event in Mountmellick Library.

The importance of the arts will be highlighted again this year by Mount Henry Art Studio, who will host *“Connect and Reflect through Creativity”* and, *“My Creative* *Side”* activities for children with disabilities. Laois Arts Office will also host a Workshop – *“Unlocking the Creative Self”* with writer and Portlaoise native Pauline Clooney.

Golden Egg Holistic has joined us this year with *“Complementary Therapies for Mental Health”* and *“Sound Meditation Class”.*

It is widely known that physical activity aids our mental health and in keeping with that theme, a number of sport related events will include a Gathering for Older Adults in the Community Centre, Vicarstown along with a Wellness Afternoon in the Heritage Centre, Timahoe.

Laois CONNECTS will take place between **Saturday 7th October and Saturday 14th** **October, 2017**. For full details of the Laois CONNECTS programme and for copies of programme of events, log on to [www.laois.ie](http://www.laois.ie), check out www/facebook.com/laoisconnects or contact Community Development in Laois County Council, Tel: 057 86 64107 or email : dce@laoiscoco.ie.

*#stayconnected #littlethings*