

July 24, 2006

24:7 on the 24th of the 7th Gets Underway for Samaritans

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PRESS RELEASE

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24:7 on the 24th of the 7th Gets Underway for Samaritans

A specially decorated car was despatched at zero hundred hours today from Dublin branch of Samaritans by the newly elected Lord Mayor of Dublin, Councillor Vincent Jackson. Speaking to a group of volunteers from the branch The Lord Mayor said that he was pleased to lend his support to Samaritans. He congratulated the organisation on and thanked its volunteers for “the wonderful work” they do in being available to listen to those who are experiencing feelings of distress and despair.

On board the car endeavouring to get round all 20 branches from as far north as Coleraine to as far south as Cork within the 24 hours with a relay team of Samaritan volunteer drivers is Avril Halley, Regional Publicity Officer for Samaritans in Ireland and Jacqueline Sweeney a trustee of Samaritans. They will be met and welcomed at each of the 20 Samaritans branches in Ireland by local dignitaries, celebrities and local Samaritan volunteers.

The entourage is also carrying the Winter Olympic torch from the recent Turin Olympics, a symbol of light and hope. In many ways, Samaritans can often seem like a light in the darkness for many, who may be sad, worried or despairing because of a difficult time they are going through. That ‘time’ could happen to anyone, at any time, and that is why Samaritans are always there, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days of the year. “Open 24:7”char(180)

Samaritans have chosen today the 24th of July as their awareness and fundraising day. Think a little and you can soon see why we chose this particular day. We write it 24/7 and that’s as good a reminder as any that this is a registered charity that is there to offer confidential emotional support to anyone in emotional distress every hour of every day of the year.

Throughout the island of Ireland there are 1,958 volunteers. There are always volunteers on duty, i.e. throughout the day and night, ready to support those in need of confidential, non-judgemental emotional support.

In other events to mark 24/7, a flag day was held in Dublin on Saturday last and Walks, Barbeques and fundraising events at branch level are being held throughout the country. On Friday night, Gavin Friday performed a cover version of the Beatles song Help on the RTÉ Television programme The Irish Tenors and Friends and spoke about his work with Samaritans.

Samaritans in Ireland

Irish Press Releases

- o 1958 active volunteers
- o 289,098 contacts in 2005
- o 51% were male, 46% were female, 3% unknown
- o 274,464 hours of listening in 2005
- o 20 branches across the whole of Ireland
- o There are also 28 prisoners trained as Samaritan Listeners in various prisons throughout the country supporting their fellow inmates

It is the aim of Samaritans to make emotional health a mainstream issue. Samaritans' vision is for a society where fewer people die by suicide because people are able to share feelings of emotional distress openly without fear of being judged. Samaritans believes that offering people the opportunity to be listened to in confidence, and accepted without prejudice, can alleviate despair and suicidal feelings.

Some Facts about Samaritans in Ireland

1. Samaritans took its first call in Ireland on November 1st, 1961.
2. Samaritans was the first 24 hour telephone helpline to be set up in Ireland and have helped many of the other help lines that exist today through its experience and training
3. Samaritans has received calls from people as young as 9 and as old as 90 in its 53 year history.
4. In addition to its activities in Ireland and the UK, Samaritans supports information sharing between 200 affiliated centres in 38 countries and shares their combined experiences in the international arena. For more information visit <http://www.befrienders.org>
5. The ratio of volunteers to paid staff in Ireland is 653:1 one of the highest in the country.
6. Samaritans phone lines are busiest between 10.00p.m. and 2.00a.m. in the morning.
7. Our Festival group are particularly interested in young people attending the various music/arts festivals around the country. Face-to-face contact is made with young people seeking emotional support or wishing to find out more about our services
8. Samaritans is best known for its telephone support service, it has always looked at other ways of supporting people in distress and developed innovative services to suit their needs. Most contacts to Samaritans are made via the phone but it is possible to visit Samaritans branches to talk face to face, write to Samaritans and, in 1994, it became one of the first organisations to exploit the Internet as a method of support when its jo@samaritans.org email service was established. Samaritans are currently piloting a 24/7 text support service, 365 days a year, for anyone in emotional distress.

Notes to editors:

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Samaritans is a registered charity, founded in 1953, which offers 24-hour confidential emotional support to anyone in emotional distress.

You can call Samaritans on 1850 60 90 90 in Rep of Ireland 08457 90 90 90 in Northern Ireland for the price of a local call. You can also write to Samaritans at your local branch or e-mail jo@samaritans.org