

Trav Times

Newsletter of Donegal Travellers Project • Spring 2021 • Issue 33



Precious memories of Frank "Elvis" McGrory (RIP), who was well known throughout the Fanad Peninsula, are the subject of a poem on page 8.

Wide range of supports on offer from DTP during Covid-19

DTP HAS continued to offer a wide range of safe, socially-distanced supports to the Traveller and Roma community throughout all levels of Covid-19 restrictions.

"The majority of DTP staff are working from home, but they are connecting with families on the telephone," said Ann Friel, DTP Primary Health Care Co-ordinator. "If there is a family that needs wraparound services due to Covid-19 or help with letter writing or form filling, DTP Community Health Workers are out on the ground to provide the support needed."

DTP support for anyone who needs to self-isolate (stay alone in a room) or restrict their movement (stay at home) as a result of Covid-19 includes the collection and delivery of essential groceries and prescriptions.

Other support available includes assistance responding to the Medical Card review letters that a number of people have received in recent weeks.

"It is very important if you get a letter in the post about a Medical Card review that you don't ignore it, even if your card doesn't expire until 2022," Ann said. "Ring us and we can help, including by getting a signature from your GP for the review."

DTP is also available to support families with homeschooling, such as by helping students who do not have internet access to download materials that have been posted online by their teachers. A recent Education Workshop that DTP ran successfully on Zoom for parents is to be followed by other Zoom programmes supporting fitness and stress reduction.

DTP support is available with Medical Card reviews

It is extremely important that any HSE correspondence about your Medical Card be dealt with ASAP

Ring (086) 145 3429 for info

DTP Support with Homeschooling

for students and parents, including with online learning and internet access

Ring (074) 912 9281 for details

Online Intercultural Training

is available from DTP for individuals and organisations

Details available at www.donegaltravellersproject.ie

DTP-managed St. Gabriel's Preschool

is registering students for Autumn 2021

Ring (074) 912 6693 or (083) 426 6221 for info

Support available for Online Learning

in subjects including job preparation and training

Ring (087) 130 5866 for details

Foodbank Services

available at locations all over Donegal can be accessed through DTP

Ring (074) 912 9281 for info

Donegal Travellers Project is a partnership of Travellers and settled people working for Traveller rights through the five principles of Community Development:

- 1) Collectivity; 2) Community Empowerment; 3) Social Justice and Sustainable Development;
- 4) Human Rights, Equality, and Anti-Discrimination; and 5) Participation.

HSE answers to FAQs about the Covid-19 vaccine

• **If I get vaccinated is there still a chance I could get Covid-19?** Yes, a small chance, but you will be protected from the severe illness that the virus sometimes causes.

• **Is the Covid-19 vaccine safe?**

Yes, all HSE-approved Covid-19 vaccines have gone through all the required steps to ensure their safety.

• **Am I required to get a Covid-19 vaccination?** No. The HSE strongly recommends that you do, though.

• **Do I need to be vaccinated if I have already had Covid-19?**

Yes, to avoid getting it again.

• **How much does the Covid-19 vaccination cost?** It is free.

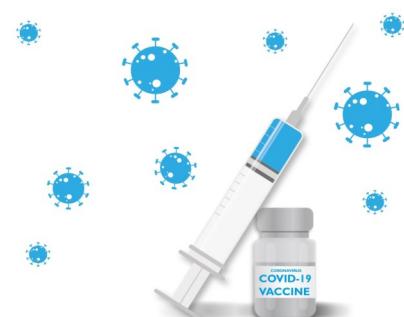
• **How is the Covid-19 vaccination given?** It is injected into your upper arm. You need two doses, three to four weeks apart.

• **What are possible side effects?**

Most side effects are short-term and mild to moderate, including muscle pain, tiredness, and headaches.

• **Do I need to continue social distancing if I have been vaccinated?**

Yes, you need to continue following all public health advice on how to stop the spread of Covid-19.



• **When can I get the Covid-19 vaccination?** A full list of vaccination groups is on the gov.ie website. You will be notified when it is your group's turn by your GP, on the news, or through public advertising.

What it's like to get the Covid-19 vaccination: Denise Delaney and Tammy Friel share their experiences

How did you decide to get the Covid-19 vaccination?

Denise: Even though I don't have any health issues and I may be able to fight a Covid infection, I have very vulnerable family members and would be afraid I could pass Covid to them and they wouldn't be able to fight it. Also, I believe if we want to get back to normality we need as many people vaccinated as possible.

Tammy: The first reason was because I am working as a healthcare assistant for older people, who are one of the most vulnerable groups. Second was to protect family members who have underlying conditions. And third was to avoid being at risk every time I go in to work.



Denise Delaney

Did you have any side effects from the vaccination?

Denise: I had a little bit of a sore arm that day, but I was perfect after that with no other effects.

Tammy: I had a wild pain in my arm the first night and was very tired the next day. My arm stayed sore for five days and was a bit red.

What benefit have you gotten from being vaccinated?

Denise: At the moment I'm continuing to social distance, wash hands, and wear a mask as I did before until I know the vaccine is effective in preventing me from getting sick and passing it on to loved ones.

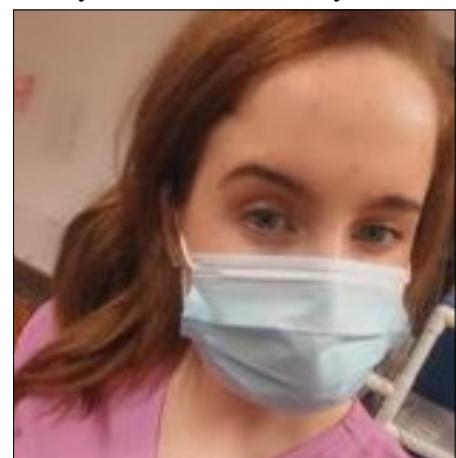
Tammy: Vaccination is a step toward getting our country back to normalisation. I'm only one person, but one person can stop others from getting infected. It's good to know I'm less likely to infect anyone else.

What would you say to people who are trying to decide whether to get vaccinated?

Denise: I've seen a lot of Facebook posts that have frightened people about the side effects of the Covid vaccine. Although some of these may be true, there are thousands

who have been vaccinated with little or no side effects. Hundreds of people were there when I got vaccinated and I didn't see anyone having a reaction. I think if we are to safely regain some sort of normal family and social life we should be vaccinated for ourselves, our loved ones, and to enjoy life again.

Tammy: I would say think of your family and don't be afraid. You might be able to deal with getting Covid, but you could pass it on to someone in your family who might not. Members of the Traveller community die younger than the settled community even without the pandemic, so please consider getting the vaccine to protect yourself, your family, and our community.



Tammy Friel

Parents share questions and concerns during DTP Educational Workshop on Zoom

A DTP Educational Workshop to address parents' questions and concerns about homeschooling and other impacts of Covid-19 on their children's education was run successfully on Zoom recently.

"This was the first Zoom meeting that we ever ran with the community and it went very well," said DTP's Ann Friel, who facilitated the meeting with DTP's Rose McDonagh. "Zoom will definitely be the way DTP runs programmes going forward. People gave us some valuable practical ideas about ways we can provide support around education during Covid-19. The ideas will help inform our work in the weeks and months to come."

During the hour-long workshop



participants broke up into small groups to discuss challenges they have experienced with homeschooling and other impacts of Covid-19 on their children's education.

"One of the concerns was around the apps used by schools and not having any proper instructions on how to use them," said DTP's Philomena McGinlay, who led one of the small groups. "There were also concerns about how to support

students with homeschooling in subjects parents didn't know well themselves, like Irish. Parents with large families had concerns about spreading their support equally among all of their children."

Educational supports available from DTP include photocopying, collecting assignments from school, bringing completed assignments back to school, and being a link between families and schools.

St. Gabriel's Preschool now accepting registrations for the Autumn 2021 semester

ST. GABRIEL'S Preschool is now accepting registrations of students who would like to attend the school this coming September.

"We are an inclusive, intercultural preschool with a beautiful outdoor play area that we also use as an outdoor classroom," said Margaret McConigley, a teacher at the school, which is managed by DTP.

Covid-19 safety measures at the school include dividing students into small groups, staggering drop-off and collection times, and daily temperature checks at the gate.

Students can enrol in either of two sessions, 9 a.m. to noon or 12.30 to 3.30 p.m. Both sessions follow the national AISTEAR early childhood curriculum and include a

healthy snack for all students.

"It is very important that all students be toilet-trained," Margaret said. "This means being older than 2 years and 6 months."

Children born between January 1, 2017, and December 31, 2018, are eligible for a free year at St. Gabriel's under the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme.

Angela O'Leary named new Chairperson of DTP Board of Management

CONGRATULATIONS to Angela O'Leary on recently being named Chairperson of the DTP Board of Management.

Angela follows Martin Mongan as head of the voluntary committee which oversees the running of DTP.

"It was actually a shock," Angela said of being selected during a Zoom meeting of the Board in January. "I thanked the Board and told them I would do my best."

Angela has loads of experience working for the Traveller community, including as an Anti-racism Trainer, a Community Health Worker, and a Childcare Worker at St. Gabriel's Preschool.

"I know quite a few Travellers and have built up a lot of friendships, both in South Donegal and locally," Angela said. "I know a lot of the problems out there, especially now with the coronavirus."



National Traveller organisations call for Covid-19 restrictions on funerals to be strictly followed

TEN national Traveller organisations have called for all Covid-19 restrictions on funeral and graveside services to be strictly followed.

Pavee Point, Involve, Minceirs Whiden, and the National Traveller Women's Forum are among the organisations that recently issued a statement on the subject.

"The government and the Catholic Church have said that only immediate family members (up to a maximum of 10 people) should attend church and graveside services, and social distancing should take place at all times," the statement says.

"No post-funeral social gatherings are allowed, and the Gardaí have power to enforce this and other Covid-19 restrictions.

"The reality is that we don't know who has the virus and who does not, so it is vital that we take ALL precautions. We are all being asked to act as if we have Covid-19, and that's why we've been told to stay home as much as possible and not to meet in groups.

"Gathering at funerals is a sure-fire way to pass on the virus if any one person does happen to have it."

"We recognise that the Covid-19 crisis is particularly hard on Travellers, given underlying health conditions and overcrowded living conditions. But gathering at funerals is a

sure-fire way to make the situation worse and to pass on the virus if any one person does happen to have it. This puts the whole Traveller community at further risk. By following the restrictions, we can help to reduce the spread of the virus and prevent unnecessary deaths.

"To see a loved one buried without the usual ceremonies is very difficult. But it will be possible in the future to hold a church service for the loved one who has passed. In the meantime it is possible to express sympathy via Mass card, phone call, WhatsApp, or Facebook. Often you can watch a funeral service online at the church website. It is also possible to set up a book of online condolences at www.rip.ie."



Differences between self-isolating and restricting movement



SELF-ISOLATING means staying on your own in a room	RESTRICTING MOVEMENT means staying at your home
<p>Self-isolate if you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have symptoms of Covid-19 • Are waiting for a test or results • Receive a positive test result <p>Others in your household: If you are self-isolating, others in your household need to restrict their movement by staying at home.</p>	<p>Restrict movement if you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are a close contact of a Covid-19 case • Live with someone with Covid-19 symptoms • Arrive in Ireland from another country <p>Others in your household: If you are restricting movement, others in your household do not need to do anything <i>unless you develop symptoms of Covid-19</i>. If that happens, <i>you</i> need to self-isolate and <i>they</i> need to restrict their movement.</p>
<p>You can stop self-isolating when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you are self-isolating because of a positive test result, only stop when you have had no fever for 5 days and it has been 10 days since symptoms started. • If you are self-isolating because you had symptoms of Covid-19 but your test result was negative, only stop when you have had no symptoms for 48 hours. 	<p>You can stop restricting movement when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you are restricting movement because you are a close contact of someone with Covid-19, you should continue for 14 days <i>even if you have a negative test result</i>. • If you are restricting movement because you are caring for someone with Covid-19 who cannot self-isolate, you and the rest of your household should continue for 17 days.

DTP's Covid-19 Emergency Contact Numbers

Siobhán, (086) 174 1056 • Ann, (086) 145 3429 • Hugh, (086) 145 3426 • Rose, (086) 145 3428

Being a student during Covid-19: Shakira Friel, Shay McGinlay, and Philomena O'Reilly share their experiences

What are the main challenges of Covid-19 for students?

Philomena: I found it harder to concentrate in school during Covid as I was worried about being safe from the virus. Doing online school from home I found it harder to keep a routine and a good schedule. Also, not having the same support from teachers can be challenging.

Shay: When you're learning online all of the teachers post assignments at one time, so it's very stressful. I try to sort out the easiest ones first and then move on to the hardest ones. You miss meeting with friends, as well. There's less stress when you're actually in the school.

Shakira: I miss interacting with people and having some headspace away from technology. Your head's stuck in technology all the time... even interacting with your friends can only be done on the phone. Technology is great in a way, but it's not the same as seeing your teacher or your friends face to face.

Also, if your internet is bad you're not going to get into that day of learning. I had the experience myself of having trouble with the Wi-Fi at home. It didn't matter if the Wi-Fi was bad at school because we were there and could learn anyway, but at home it can cause big obstacles to learning.



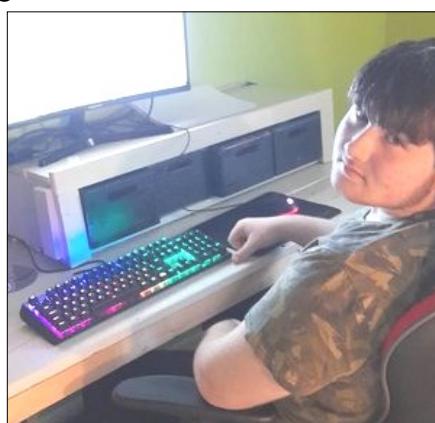
Shakira Friel

Have there been any positives about homeschooling?

Philomena: It gives you more time to work on schoolwork.

Shay: For the most part it is negative, but because the assignments all come in at once you can finish up your day earlier.

Shakira: My independence and time management have benefitted. Especially for going to college or university, where you won't have a teacher running after you to do the work. In that way it gives you a great taster for third-level education.



Shay McGinlay

Has studying for Junior/Leaving Certs been affected?

Philomena: I find it hard that I am doing my Junior Cert while we are not in school, but I know it will be worth it.

Shay: I did weekly grinds at DTP before the Junior Cert last Autumn because I felt like they would help me be better prepared. The tutors helped us...anything we needed to work on, we told them and they helped. They had up-to-date books to study from, and any questions they thought would be on the test they'd ask us. It helped me a lot.

Shakira: Before Covid you'd know what's ahead of you, like whether the Leaving Cert would take place in June. Now you're left stressed



Philomena O'Reilly

about whether exams are happening or not happening. I just do what I can and am hoping there's going to be a Leaving Cert. All of my teachers are giving me feedback that I'm doing well. I done the Leaving Cert grinds at DTP for a few weeks. I went from a C to a B in English and my Maths got better as well. Grinds do help...when you're with someone who's been through it, they know how to make it as easy as possible.

Do you have any advice for other students during Covid-19?

Philomena: It is difficult, but keeping a routine is important when you are doing online schooling. It is also important to go through your notes and past work. Having good internet access and support from your parents is important too.

Shay: Try to be ready every morning before they start posting at 9. Always get the work finished on the day, even if it's due the next day. Then you won't be as stressed about it...the weight is off your shoulders.

Shakira: Have a timetable and be sure to make some time to take a break, such as by going outside for fresh air. Also, get your assignments done during the gap between online classes. If you use that time you can get through all of the work by 4 or 4.30 and then be free after that.

Josie and Margaret McGinley make dreams come true for those they love

WHEN the first Covid-19 lockdown ruined their wedding plans for last May, Eimear Friel and Pat McGinley were devastated.

The cancellation meant the loss of both a ceremony at St. Mary's Church in Ramelton and a reception the couple had arranged at Downings Bay Hotel.

"We had over 150 invitations written and ready to send out, but three days before sending them the wedding was cancelled because of Covid-19," Eimear said. "We were left heartbroken."

When the lockdown lifted temporarily last summer and a chance arose for a very small wedding at the church on August 22nd, the couple grabbed it. They were joined by their 1½-year-old daughter, Margaret, and immediate family members only.



Their dream of celebrating at a beautiful reception afterwards, however, seemed gone for good.

Enter Pat's parents, Josie and Margaret McGinley, whose superpower is making dreams come true for those they love.

"We set up a marquis for the reception at first, but then we were supposed to have bad weather that weekend so we moved everything into the shed," Josie said.

On a usual day the large metal shed next door to the McGinleys' Ramelton home looks like nothing special. For the reception, however, a spectacular white carpet lined with flower-topped columns led to the entrance.



Inside was totally transformed into a pink wonderland, featuring a glorious floral arch, elegantly decorated round tables and high-backed chairs for guests, and a gorgeous long top table with the initials "P" and "E" in lights for the bride and groom.



"They done everything," Eimear said. "I'd told Margaret I wanted a fairytale, and she and Josie made my fairytale wedding come true."



Fast forward a couple of months and Margarita, the 4-year-old daughter of Josie and Margaret's other son, Alex, announced that she had a special request.

"She asked could Santa bring her a wee house," Josie said. "They were going to buy a wooden one, but I said, 'Jesus, no, I'll build one.'"

Using a detailed design that Margaret had created, Josie first chalked an 8-foot by 10-foot rectangle at a spot on the driveway beside their own home.



He then laid a slate floor, constructed stone walls with three windows and a half-door built into them, and installed a roof complete with a chimney connected to a working fireplace inside.



The beautiful wee house was a huge success with Margarita on Christmas Day.

“She’s looking for a bed now!” Margaret said. “She’s going to move out there!”



Josie and Margaret’s inspiring teamwork, amazing skills, sheer hard work, and devoted love for their family mean the wee house will be a place for McGinley children to play in for years – and even generations – to come.

“The wooden house they were talking about buying her wouldn’t have lasted,” Josie said. “But the older the stone one gets, the better looking it will be.”



Wonderful new arrivals: Shania Samantha Gibson and Michael McDonagh



Congratulations to Letterkenny residents Maria Boyle and Raymond Gibson on the birth of their daughter Shania on 3rd December, 2020, weighing 6 pounds, 7 ounces.

Congratulations to Ballyshannon resident Kathleen McDonagh on the birth of her son Michael in December 2020.

Frank McGrory

by Fergus McAteer

The news it broke
On the midday stroke
A sad day news story
The passing from life
Brought grief and strife
The death of Frank McGrory

A man well known
From places he was goin'
Without care or worry
A sight on his bike
Or maybe a hike
On the road with Frank McGrory

His luminous coat
Zipped to the throat
A man in all his glory
Kerrykeel to Ballylar
Coast road to Glenvar
Well travelled by Frank McGrory

Reared on the road
A tent for an abode
For Frank was no furore
His Dad worked for a shilling
A farmhand he was willing
Watched closely by Frank McGrory

A man of tales
With wise details
Wit always in his story
A bottle of beer
Brought more than a cheer
For the irrepressible Frank McGrory

Proud of his roots
Stubborn when it suits
He was never in a hurry
A collection of bikes
Was one of his likes
For the cycling Frank McGrory



He was a familiar bloke
To the Kerrykeel folk
More than just a rover
Where he did feel
At home in Kerrykeel
A local legend was Frank McGrory

An obliging sort
With a real kind heart
And maybe a bit contrary
A man of places
No airs, no graces
Just simply Frank McGrory

And many the day
I would hear folk say
They had an interesting journey
With a bike in the boot
An intriguing commute
Giving a lift to Frank McGrory

And when his face
Turns up at the pearly gates
I hope God knows the story
He will need a bike he can paint
A luminous coat with a taint
Heavenly roads now for Frank McGrory

No more his feet
On the Kerrykeel street
The long road was weary
His life was brave
From cradle to grave
Rest easy Frank McGrory



DONEGAL TRAVELLERS PROJECT
Port House, Port Road, Letterkenny • (074) 912 9281
Monday-Friday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

Email: travcomdtp@gmail.com • Facebook: Donegal Travellers Project
Website: donegaltravellersproject.ie

DTP



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EUROPEAN UNION

Investing in your future
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Health Service Executive



Comhairle Contae Dhún na nGall
Donegal County Council



The Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) 2018-2022 is funded by the Irish Government and co-funded by the European Social Fund and includes a special allocation under the Youth Employment Initiative.

AN ROIÑN DLÍ AGUS CIRT AGUS COMHIONANNÁIS
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE AND EQUALITY

