

PRESS RELEASE

5th July 2024

Annual Ring of Kerry Charity Cycle Event established to support Kidney Charity Celebrates Four Decades of Making a Difference

(photos available and more will be taken early Saturday morning 6th July from John Allen tel. 086 2162990 – no repro fee)

This weekend, the annual Ring of Kerry Charity Cycle event returns, marking four decades of dedication to supporting hundreds of worthy causes including the kidney community it was originally established to support.

Among the thousands of cyclists taking part, we have a team of nearly 50 cyclists flying the flag for the Irish Kidney Association and promoting the lifesaving act of organ donation for transplantation. The group includes kidney transplant recipients, living donors, and their families, an inspiration to us all and a great reflection of the wider kidney community in Ireland.

For those who can't join in person, it's not too late to support the Irish Kidney Association by participating remotely in their own way on the event day or throughout the month of July. Whether individually over a series of days, in relays with friends, or through gym classes, you can register and contribute through the IKA's **Virtual Cycle** iDonate link on its website page www.ika.ie/ringofkerry. Dialysis patients led by the renal physiotherapy team at Tallaght University Hospital are undertaking the charity cycle virtually in a novel way through intradialytic exercise during their treatment sessions.

Among the riders taking on the 170 km scenic circular route of the Ring of Kerry are inspiring individuals with personal connections to kidney health and organ donation **(listed below and links to profiles at end of press release)**.

Joan McDonald, a living kidney donor from **Oysterhaven, Cork** who generously gave a kidney to her sister Fiona nine months ago will join the cycle, embodying the spirit of giving and hope.

Also participating is Dubliner (Crumlin) native **Alan Cullen**, a kidney recipient living in Nurney, **Carlow**, who received the life-saving gift from his brother Ian, who lives in Newbridge, **Kildare**, just under seven months ago, showcasing the profound impact of organ donation.

To celebrate the 22nd anniversary of his kidney transplant, **Séamy McDermott** from Ballybofey, **Co Donegal** is taking part, for the first time, in the iconic cycle.

Tipperary man, **Francis Hogan**, is taking on the 170km cycle literally days before he commences dialysis treatment. A father of five living in Templemore and a Clonmel based businessman, his kidney function is at just 10%.

Ireland's first combined heart and liver transplant recipient, **Martin Malinowski** from Castleblayney, **Co. Monaghan** will also be donning his cycling gear in support of the

Irish Kidney Association for his first ever ROK Charity Cycle as will heart transplant recipient **Shane O'Connell from Castleisland, Kerry**. Both are shining examples of the impact of organ donation for transplantation.

Grandmother Una Flynn from Milltown, Killarney, Co Kerry is doing the cycle for the IKA and in support of patients like her four year old grandson Jack Richards who his family hope will receive a kidney transplant this year.

Taking on the cycling challenge together are **four Kerry ladies**, Eve Moynihan, Edel Lehane, Sinead and Karina Kelleher. They are raising funds for the IKA as their families were impacted by kidney disease. John Paul Lehane received a kidney donated by his brother in 2018 and they are grateful to the family of the deceased donor for the kidney transplant Donal Kelleher underwent in June last year.

One **woman, Liz Fenton, from Killorglin in Kerry** has set herself an **additional challenge on the same day of climbing Ireland's highest mountain Carrauntoohil**, inspired by a friend, a married father of three and nurse, who has kidney failure and is undergoing dialysis treatment.

Helping to raise awareness for the work of the Irish Kidney Association and organ donation is **Dr Colm Henry, Chief Clinical Officer, HSE**. Dr Henry said, "I'm looking forward to the Ring of Kerry Cycle as while a challenging route, it's one of the most scenic routes and it's a significant event in the Irish cycling calendar. I'm cycling for the Irish Kidney Association to support the fantastic work they do for patients and their families. They play a vital role in raising awareness of organ donation, encouraging and supporting people to have the conversation with their family to become organ donors. Organ donation has a significant impact on improving the quality of life for recipients and is a selfless act by those who donate and their families."

Dialysis patients in Tallaght University Hospital in Dublin have already begun a novel way of taking part in the Ring of Kerry Charity Cycle. Organised by the hospital's Renal Physiotherapy Team, they are clocking up the kilometres during their intradialytic exercise sessions over the course of a week. Patients of all ages and abilities have taken part and have already reached their target of 170km, the charity cycle distance, and are still going strong. **Orlaith Heslin, Senior Renal Physiotherapist** in Tallaght University Hospital, "Our patients in Tallaght University Hospital participate regularly in our physiotherapy-run intradialytic exercise programme which has been running since 2021. Participants complete either cycling on a specialised Motomed bike or resistance training with weights. It provides an opportunity for our patients to exercise despite the challenges of regular hospital commutes and limited exercise opportunities and has significant benefits for physical function and quality of life. The IKA virtual cycle for the Ring of Kerry Charity Cycle has created great excitement over the past week for both patients and staff on the unit and we were delighted to take part!"

Volunteers have always been the heart of the Irish Kidney Association, and this year is no exception. Dedicated volunteers will be on hand, at the start/finish areas and at the official feeding station along the route in Caherciveen.

These volunteers will also join our cyclists later that evening for a celebratory reception for friends and supporters of the IKA at the Shire Bar & Cafe in Killarney, where the winners of the raffle organised by the Kerry Branch of the Irish Kidney Association — featuring fantastic prizes to the value of €8,000 will be announced. Online entries for the raffle will close at 6pm on Friday, 5th July and tickets can be purchased up until then through a link on the website www.ika.ie/ringofkerry

Supporters are encouraged to leave messages for the cyclists on the Irish Kidney Association's **Cycle Stadium** page which can also be accessed on the website page.

As part of the numerous supports the Irish Kidney Association provides, the IKA Munster Kidney Support Centre in Cork was officially opened by the newly nominated EU commissioner Michael McGrath TD last Saturday, 29th June. This centre, located just 200 metres from Cork University Hospital, offers overnight accommodation and a drop-in hub, staffed by three dedicated professionals, and provides this 'home away from home' facility free of charge to patients and their families and carers who travel to the hospital for treatment.

The Ring of Kerry Charity cycle event, which has now raised close to €20 million for more than 170 charities and worthy causes, **was initially founded by two Killarney stalwarts, Theresa Looney and Denis Geaney**, who set about raising funds to build a dialysis centre in Tralee for Kerry patients who had to travel to Cork for their treatment in the absence of a local treatment centre. Theresa's husband **Pat Looney cycled in the inaugural cycle and now four decades later will once again take on the challenge.**

Over the past four decades the annual Ring of Kerry Charity Cycle event has since gone from strength to strength and is now a massive sportive on the annual cycling calendar, both nationally and beyond.

This year's event continues the legacy of the Irish Kidney Association, which has been at the forefront of organ donation promotion and kidney health advocacy and support for kidney patients and their families since 1978. The funds raised for the Irish Kidney Association will go towards essential services and supports for kidney patients and their families and carers, research, and raising awareness about kidney disease and organ donation.

"We are thrilled to see such a remarkable group of participants this year," said ROKCC founding member and **Kerry IKA branch representative Theresa Looney "Their stories of generosity and resilience highlight the importance of our mission and the incredible difference that organ donation can make."**

The annual cycle event is not just a fundraiser; it is a celebration of life, health, and community. Participants and supporters are encouraged to join the event and cheer on the riders as they pedal towards a healthier future for all.

For more information about the event or to make a donation, please visit www.ika.ie/ringofkerry

Find out more about some of the ambassadors for the IKA in the ROKCC

Pat Looney, Kerry <https://www.idonate.ie/fundraiser/PatLooney399>

Liz Fenton <https://www.idonate.ie/fundraiser/LizFenton226>

Alan Cullen, Carlow <https://www.idonate.ie/fundraiser/AlanCullen535>

Bryan Duignan, Carlow <https://www.idonate.ie/fundraiser/BryanDuignan362>

Joan McDonald, Cork <https://www.idonate.ie/fundraiser/JoanMcDonald>

Francis Hogan, Tipperary <https://www.idonate.ie/fundraiser/francishogan>

Martin Malinowski, Monaghan <https://www.idonate.ie/fundraiser/MartinMalinowski678>

Una Flynn, Kerry <https://www.idonate.ie/fundraiser/UnaFlynn808>

Shane O'Connell, Kerry <https://www.idonate.ie/fundraiser/ShaneOConnell327>

Eve Moynihan & Kerry friends <https://www.idonate.ie/fundraiser/EveMoynihan618>

7-year-old Kerry Kidney patient Cíalan Walsh from Waterville who will need a kidney transplant <https://www.idonate.ie/raffle/IrishKidneyAssociationRaffle>

-ENDS-

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