

Tackling festive need

Lions Club prepares for hectic time of year helping city families for Christmas

BY BERNIE NÍ FHLATHARTA

THE newly-elected president of the Galway Lions Club says he is determined to continue the organisation's good works in the city through the involvement of new and younger members.

Solicitor Matt Molloy, who has been a member of the Lions Club for almost 10 years, is hoping to attract new members.

The charity sector in general has been under the spotlight in recent times due to some improprieties over funding.

But the Lions Club is unique as it does not spend any donations on administration. All members work as volunteers and, indeed, pay an annual fee to be a member. It is these fees that fund any outlay in the course of their charitable work.

Mr Molloy, a Renmore native who has been in the legal profession for three decades and now works with Berwick Solicitors, acknowledged the Trojan work of the Club helped by the generous donations from local people, individuals and businesses.

And though the Lions Club works quietly all year round and meets on a regular basis, the period leading up to Christmas is its busiest and probably

its most public.

Its biggest event is the upcoming charity auction, held in conjunction with Galway Bay FM on Friday, December 9 where listeners can buy anything from a car to a weekend away. The car is being donated by Tony Burke Motors in Ballybrit in the form of a voucher, which can be used against the purchase of a car.

"We work with the social services to ensure that we help those most in need"

This is the period when members use their networking skills and contacts to ask local businesses to dig deep and provide for the needier in the community.

All funds raised through this auction and other events during the year go towards providing vouchers for those who need it this Christmas.

"We work with other services in the city and charities to distribute these. We fill the gaps, I



Matt Molloy, President of Galway Lions Club: "The food vouchers are heartily received, which shows the grave need which prevails in many sectors of the city," he says. PHOTO: IAIN McDONALD.

suppose," says Mr Molloy, a quietly-spoken man who prefers to work in the background than take any of the limelight.

The Lions Club has existed in

the city for 44 years, during which time it has always worked alongside local charities. It is also working on the annual city-wide supermarket col-

lection and Mr Molloy says he is heartened by people's generosity.

He believes the template for the Lions Club is one that doesn't need to be changed much at all but he would like to see new members, possibly bringing in new blood from younger generations.

One of the pluses for the Lions Club is that there is no administration or staff outlay, unlike other charities which are paying salaries to CEOs.

Anyone who knows Matt Molloy knows he is a perfectionist in his work, where he specialises on personal injury and medical negligence, and he appears to be determined to bring that attention to detail into his Lions Club presidency.

"We work with the social services to ensure that we help those most in need. The food vouchers are heartily received, which shows the grave need which prevails in many sectors of the city. This part of our work is most fulfilling, especially when we meet people who appreciate a little extra given by us at Christmas.

"Throughout the year, we get involved in many other charitable projects, helping young and old. One of our big projects is bringing needy people away for a few days' holidays to give them a break from life's hard-

ships. We also try to work with young people in schools. We also spent some time doing visitations, namely visiting lonely people," he said.

Many join the Lions Club on a recommendation from an existing member and friendships are built and nurtured through the organisation.

"It is a club in the true sense of the word. We have great fun as a group. Members find our work meaningful. We always welcome new members, especially younger members as we are building up the Club for the future, which involves modernising it.

"It is a club that one can get involved in to the extent that suits the amount of free time available to you. It has an engaging social aspect and is great fun as we try to do our work in a jolly and positive way. Members tend to become friends. The club has a great reputation in the city and we all do our best to preserve this good name.

"Throughout the year, we provide for many unfortunate people who 'fall through the cracks' and need assistance because of illness, poverty or who otherwise fall on hard times. We have built up considerable expertise in dealing with this niche of need, and I hope this continues for many years to come," he added.

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