

## **FOSPA – AGM 30<sup>th</sup> May 2023 - Chairs Report 2023**

Another year folks and here we are sitting at our AGM once again. Hard to believe how quickly time can go. First – I just want to thank you all, not only for coming along to the AGM, but for all you do throughout the year. It takes many volunteers to make things work. I know the school and community appreciate the time you give – so do I – I really appreciate it because it means we deliver, sometimes against all odds, but we deliver. I also know how hard it can be to give up your own time, I know quite a few of you have had a lot going on in your own lives and yet you still show up. This is testament not only to you, as a volunteer, but to how our organisation has grown over the past few years and the fact that it has become more than just a fundraising group – we are active members not only in the school but in the wider community. For me, personally though, I think we have grown as a team – we help the school, we help the community, we help each other. In helping each other we are able to help the school and help the community. It really is a privilege to be a part of FOSPA.

### **Membership:**

Our membership has remained consistent over the past year. What is good is the fact we have secured some 'Friends' of FOSPA – those people who are willing to lend a much needed hand doing things like running the tuck shop at discos, putting banners up, face painting or tattoos and even taking responsibility for our VIP's like Mickey Mouse (yip – that friend of FOSPA is still friends with me [thankfully]). I reckon these 'Friends' of FOSPA see how much fun we all have doing what we do that they want to 'get in on the action'. On a serious note, though – I want to thank all these 'friends' whether it be that they are our 'bigger kids', husbands, siblings or close friends of some of us – their additional help and support has been invaluable.

Remember guys, we are always on the lookout for more willing volunteers so if you know someone 'tinkering on the brink of signing up' – encourage them! After all, more hands make less work, and we aim to ensure that the school always has a sizeable support network to tap into.

### **Grants/funding sources:**

Grants and sponsorship really do take the pressure off when it comes to delivering on the big community events. You see, the thing is, people now expect a big event – we have a reputation to uphold. They expect 'all singing all dancing'. This is due to our success in hosting events like 'Drive in Bingo', Santa Sunday, St Patrick's Day, the Colour Run and the 5K. Grants, sponsorship and donations make it easier for us to ensure that our fundraising events are talked about in the community and beyond.

Once again, this year we have been very lucky. Orlagh secured us two Council FAPP grants (thanks Orlagh) as we cleverly separated out the Santa Sunday and the Light Switch On. The additional funding then allowed for the pony rides and the 'snow globe' – remember the 'snow globe' Julie because I do – or rather I remember being half in/half out (some would call it STUCK) and Julie preferring to take a photo rather than launch a rescue mission. Seriously though, that funding lets us deliver and protect any funds we have raised thus maximising our ability to support the school.

We have so many other groups that have supported us throughout the year, and it is really appreciated. Playr-Fit and Thomas Moore sponsored the prizes for our 5K. We had lots of willing donations for our now legendary Christmas Raffle which raises more money every year – have to say Clare C can secure a raffle prize from anyone.

Barry Carville, a very good friend of FOSPA's, donated tickets for a Man Utd match for us to raffle and kindly offered support for the celebration on Thursday just because he saw our Facebook post – that says a lot.

Dee Mc Donald, Mc Donald's Ices, is a great supporter of all things FOSPA and never lets us down.

Lurgan Credit Union always offer support when it comes to the Leaver Hoody - the £250 really does make a difference to the price we have to charge to cover these - Janette kindly secures this for us and we really, really appreciate it.

SLNRA are always willing to lend a financial hand or even put forward another 'pot' in which we can secure funding from – the RTE Toy Appeal allowed us to put on our Summer Fun Day last year.

We had additional support from the TNL grant this year and thanks must go to Julie for securing this. It was a lengthy application, which involved us committing to building on developing community links following the success of our first ever St Patrick's Day and Summer Fun Day. Whilst these are community days rather than official fundraisers, FOSPA always takes the lead and has a prominent presence. This commitment to bring 'Derrymacash Together' has enabled us to acquire much needed event equipment. The arrival, and use of our first ever gazebo was a big day – for me!

And finally, the support we get from Ryan and BNL Productions adds another layer to our events and indeed our prominence on social media. Ryan kindly gives up his time, often at the drop of a hat, to support us in our craziness! I think he's used to us by now and the 100 (roughly) a day messages he sometimes receives.

I want to thank all those who applied for grants, secured sponsorship in any way or convinced people to agree to put up a prize for our raffles. Special thanks to Laura R for managing and controlling our money (and our spending) and ensuring all activity is accounted for. Laura thought getting out of PayPal jail was the hardest thing she ever had to do until she had to set up a separate but linked account for the TNL funding.

It is because of this massive effort that we are able to deliver for our school whilst bringing colour/life to our community. It is because of this effort that we can legitimately adapt our new tag line – Working Together To Make A Difference.

## **Fund-Raising Efforts and Events June 2022/June2023:**

So – what have we got up to this year? Aah not a lot:

First up – our Summer Fun Day back in July. Although not a fund-raiser, it was more of a ‘thank you’ for all the support we get. Due to the RTE Toy Appeal the event did not cost FOSPA and we were able to work with other organisations (St Enda’s, Community Group, Evolve, Wolfe Tones). It was great to see the community out together and enjoying some Summer Fun. Whilst no money was raised it did enable us to network and raise our profile in what is sometimes a quiet time for FOSPA.

Our 60<sup>th</sup> Commemorative jersey was a ‘big hit’ in the school and the community. It is great to see the links between the school and community evidenced by the amount of people wearing the jersey and it was very well received by parents. Playr-Fit have ‘mirrored’ the jersey design in the school PE kit that will hopefully be launched in time for the new school year.

September to December saw us run a movie night, a 5K community event, our Christmas raffle and our now iconic Santa Sunday and Light Switch on. These events are embedded into our community and people actively look forward to them. All were great fundraisers and really well supported by the community.

Obviously not exhausted and still on a high from our Christmas events the lead up to March also proved busy. Our Fund-Raver, raffle for Man Utd tickets and school disco (as part of the 60<sup>th</sup> Birthday week) kept us busy and ensured we continued to cater for the much-needed financial support for the school. The culmination of our efforts being the ability to present the school with a fantastic £1000 to go towards developing outdoor facilities for the pupils.

In the middle of a busy March, we were also able to utilise the TNL grant and organise a St Patrick’s Day event – again linking in with other local organisations. This all started with a ‘crazy’ idea two weeks prior to St Patrick’s Day last year. I suppose the success of that sowed the seeds for the Summer Fun Day last year. The success of both events then inspired Julie to secure a community grant from The National Lottery. This grant has had a huge impact – enabling us to purchase much needed event equipment and top last year’s St Patrick’s Day event with this years. Added to that – we are planning an ‘End of Summer Fun Day’ on the 16<sup>th</sup> of September just because – well – just because we can!

### **So – with all that ‘busy-ness’ what have we been able to deliver for the school?**

Quite a bit is the short answer! Mrs B herself described us as the school’s ‘fairy godparents’: The list goes something like this:

September - £900 given to help offset the impact of cuts/rising prices/assist with training

October - £1200 for Sum Dog

October/November - £82 for refreshments following the 60<sup>th</sup> Mass and £40 for a new banner to mark the school being around for 60 years

November - £200 for a much-needed mic and speaker

December – treats for the Panto – thanks ‘mix-up crew’

February - £320 towards educational software licences

March – financial support for the birthday week - £170 for Aldo, £141 for Crème Eggs and Easter Eggs for the quiz

March – due to the success of our Fund-Raver and Raffle - £1000 to the school to help support requests from the School Council looking for outdoor seating

April – 2x£100 towards celebrations for those that made their Confirmation and Communion

May - £200 to help support the P7 trip

Money raised will also help enrich the P7 Leavers Celebration (decorations, treat bags, photobooth), Sports Day and the Blitz.

Phew – quite a year and I apologise if I have left anything or anyone out! But isn't it great to be a part of all that! What we do matters! We make a positive financial impact in the school and a positive social impact in the school and wider community.

**Additionally:**

On top of this we have a new logo which I know we all love, and we are the VERY proud recipients of not one, but TWO Parent Kind PTA Awards. In case you didn't know (and if you didn't know this – where have you been LOL). These awards are the PTA version of the Oscars. We are UK PTA Champion and NI PTA of the Year. Thanks to the words of Mrs Brown, the work put into the application by Julie and the magic of Ryan and BNL Productions we, and I quote, ‘blew the judges away’.

These awards are a testament to all we do and all we have done over the years. They are not just for us – they are for the community, the school, the boys and girls, FOSPA members past and present and the ‘friends’ of FOSPA who regularly support us. They are a clear reflection of what ‘working together to make a difference’ can actually achieve. Well done everyone.

**Finally:**

I want to thank all our supporters once again – those that sponsor events, those that donate to our events, the people that show up time and time again and all your families for supporting you in volunteering.

I want to thank Ryan for his technical support with EVERYTHING!

Thanks also to Catherine Nelson who has given us the use of her meeting room this year – initially it was for one meeting, now she has to ask me for the loan of her fob lol. I really hope we can ‘borrow’ the meeting room from ‘time-to-time’ next year.

I want to give special thanks to Mrs Brown. Her acronym of what FOSPA means to the school was lovely (this was for our Parent Kind Awards). Saying we were a force to be reckoned with, that we were open and approachable, the use of the word sincere, describing us as philanthropic and ending it with ‘all round amazing’ was lovely to hear! We have a lovely relationship with the school, the staff, the parents and the pupils – we value this and are so grateful for it. We will continue to foster and build on this in the years ahead!

And lastly, I want to thank YOU LOT. Thank you for your support all year. For turning up, for lending a hand and for giving up your time so freely. FOSPA wouldn’t work without YOU all. I know you are already looking forward to another busy, fun filled, energetic year and wondering what craziness lies ahead.