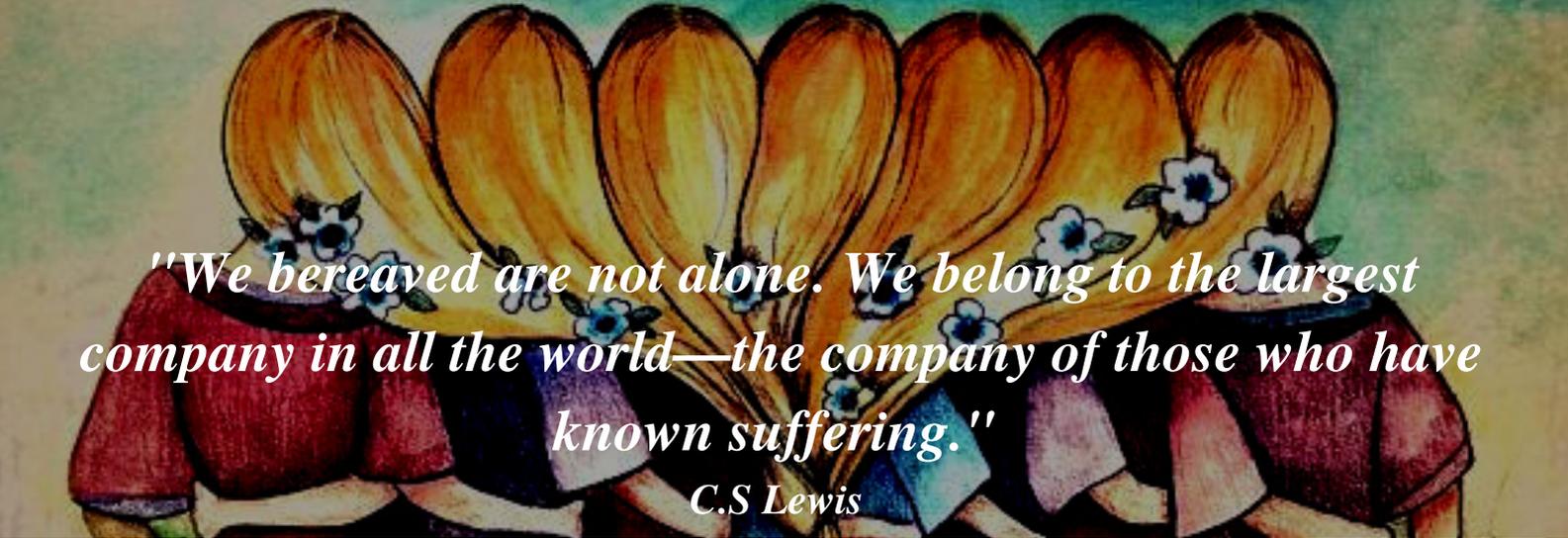


FIRSTLIGHT NEWSLETTER



"We bereaved are not alone. We belong to the largest company in all the world—the company of those who have known suffering."

C.S Lewis

MESSAGE FROM FIRSTLIGHT CEO

Dear families, friends and supporters of FirstLight,

It is more than five months since the Covid-19 Lockdown was initiated and considerable uncertainty remains concerning what restrictions will be required in the months ahead. We will continue to offer our bereavement support services via telephone and video channels, and where safe and comfortable for the family members concerned and for our therapists, the option of face to face counselling and therapy will be available.

This Newsletter features some articles on sisterhood, on the value of women coming together and the positive benefits derived from women friendships. Many women friends will be coming together between 1 and 10 October to complete the Vhi Virtual Women's Marathon. If you haven't already made plans, why not consider doing so now, register, and share what will no doubt be an uplifting experience with your women friends.

Feedback from people who are members of FirstLight's private members Facebook pages has been very positive; 3 groups have been put in place, one for Mums, one for Dads, and a third Group for those who do not wish to join the other two groups. If you are a Facebook user, you might consider joining one of these groups.

Many of you are in the course of completing your patch for incorporation in FirstLight's 2020 Remembrance Quilt. The deadline for return of completed patches is 28 August, so to those who have not yet sent their patches to us, please do so soon, and before the mayhem often associated with the post Summer period! We are very much looking forward to seeing the finished product, with the help of the very skilled Drogheda Quilters Group, and, Covid-19 guidelines permitting, we will arrange for the quilt to be displayed for all to see later in the year.

We have included in this Newsletter the Irish Hospice Foundation's call, which FirstLight supports, for a national series of mourning and remembrance events for all who have died since the pandemic, and the Foundation's further call for a national conversation on dying, death and bereavement in Ireland that our new Government should lead on. We will keep you posted on developments on these fronts.

In the meantime, my very best wishes for your good health and safety,

Yours sincerely,

Fionnuala Sheehan, CEO, FirstLight

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IHF Calls for COVID-19 National Day of Remembrance

FirstLight supports the Irish Hospice Foundation's (IHF) call on the new Government to put in place a process for remembrance and reflection in post-Covid-19 Ireland. The IHF submitted a paper outlining a series of proposals for Ireland to remember and reflect on the pandemic.

The recommended proposals included: (1) A national series of mourning and remembrance events for all who have died since the pandemic started in order to express our collective connection with the bereaved and to honour, comfort and provide support and, (2) Reigniting a national conversation on dying, death and bereavement in Ireland, led by Government, to be followed by an official process to make recommendations and put them into effect.

Sharon Foley, CEO of the IHF said: "Although we are not through the pandemic, we must begin to plan for a process of active collective remembrance, reflection and recovery as part of the recuperation in post-Covid-19 Ireland. The ongoing response to the crisis continues to challenge us all in how we confront and deal with dying, death and bereavement. Our collective experience over the past number of months has shown us that we can't afford to turn away from our collective mortality and we need to come together and learn how to face it, head on".

"We are calling for a national day or week of remembrance events for all who have died since the pandemic started in order to express our collective connection with the bereaved and to honour, comfort and support. This should be accompanied by a deeper engagement with Irish society on the reflections from Covid-19 and how we address dying, death and bereavement. We have already shared our recommendations with Government and call on our new government to lead this work in partnership with critical agencies."

Established in 1986, the IHF has for the past 35 years advocated for a more strategic approach to dying, death and bereavement and led various initiatives to get people talking about mortality.

Louth County Council Thanks FirstLight and Other Responders to the Louth Community Call Forum

As Chairman of the Louth Community Call Forum I would like to thank you most sincerely for the hard work, solidarity and active citizenship that you have demonstrated for the duration of this national emergency which has been a challenge for the whole of county Louth.

For the past four months, your organisation has been working to ensure that the residents of our county, who are vulnerable to Covid-19, have been in a position to receive support and encouragement where required.

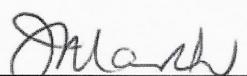
Indeed, for the many times that grocery, medicines and other essential items were collected and delivered, or people transported to medical appointments (facilitated), or support given at the most vulnerable times, there was always a reassurance that at the end of the phone was a friendly voice, or two meters from their door a friendly face to let them know that they were not alone at this time.

You and all who have been working with you in the Community Response have answered the call of our communities. You have made an enormous difference and as we slowly emerge from this pandemic, I am hopeful that your service will not be required again.

We do however, take some comfort in knowing that should matters deteriorate and we need to call upon you again, that you stand ready to answer.

We acknowledge and thank you all.

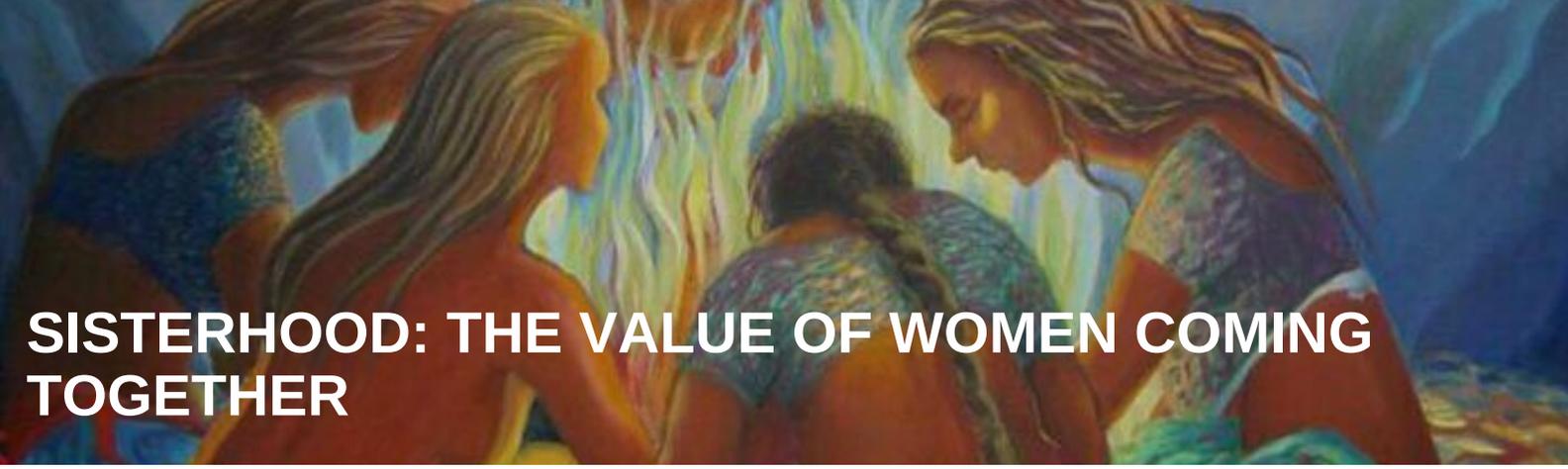
Yours sincerely



Joan Martin
Chairman of the Louth Community Call Forum

On August 8th FirstLight received the enclosed letter from Joan Martin Chairperson of the Louth Community Forum.

We would like to take the opportunity to sincerely thank Joan and her team at the Louth Community Forum for the acknowledgement and all their support these past six months.



SISTERHOOD: THE VALUE OF WOMEN COMING TOGETHER

A sisterhood is a social, ethical, and emotional pact between women. It's based on an understanding that together we are stronger than we are as individuals. That empowerment is only possible if we come together and treat each other as sisters, not opponents. It's a relationship based on our value as a collective, determined to make true change in the world.

We've been hearing a lot about this word lately: sisterhood. It is evermore present in our language. However, the term is actually over 50 years old. It was in 1970 that writer Kate Millett, leader of the feminist movement at the time, proposed the word. Her goal was to name the thing she was striving for every day as a ferocious activist. That is, social union among women regardless of class, religion, or ethnicity.

Sisterhood is an ethical, political and practical term of contemporary feminism. It gives a sense of female complicity that seeks to make social change. Under the motto, "Women of the world, unite!", Millet coined the word "sisterhood." It is an inspiring idea. And it isn't just an inspiring label; it seeks to actually strengthen us as a collective and push us forward. It envisions us making change in our everyday life.

Anthropologist Marcela Lagarde refined the concept a bit further. She spoke of a friendship between women who become accomplices in order to work together. A commitment to success by being free and strong together.

In the past, women shared a lot more than we do now. We lived as a firm collective focused on helping each other and nourishing each other, both emotionally and psychologically. Older generations gave wise advice to the younger ones. The jobs of raising children, harvesting and gathering were shared, as well as natural medicine.

Maybe we were all just a bunch of witches. Maybe we were artisans of nature and ancient wisdom gathering in the infamous "red tent" during menstruation. Sharing stories, synchronizing our cycles and planting seeds of affection into the soil of our souls to become, together, more valuable every day. Valuable to ourselves and to the world. Stronger as mothers, as sisters and daughters of life, building authentic sisterhood.

The sisterhood allows us to recover our power as women who nurture ourselves and others. We are givers of empathy, receivers of sorority. It's a bond where together we are better than apart.

The female conscience we delighted in centuries ago has been lost over time. Despite the fact that we positively value our friendships, that genuine bond doesn't feel like a collective focused on making change.

The concept of sisterhood goes much further than friendship. We're talking about a sisterhood, female complicity, an ethical, shared principle. It's based upon having a transformation mentality, as well as social awareness that isn't limited to just holding a sign every once in a while at a rally.

The sisterhood is a revolution that happens from the inside out. First, by getting aware of who you are, what you deserve and what is not right in a society that is unfortunately still a patriarchy. Then, this conscience should be shared with each woman we come across in our day-to-day lives. Supporting them, inspiring them, and repairing fragmented femininity with our eyes looking toward mutual empowerment.

Last but not least, it's important to point out that the sisterhood demands constant criticism and self-criticism. Sometimes we do things that actually harm the idea of sisterhood and feminism. Maybe it's by questioning other women. By thinking that a coworker got the raise by doing "something". Or by doubting that stranger who reported an assault. Sisterhood is solidarity. It means creating a network of support among us in order to help and claim real changes. Let's do it. Let's believe in it.



FRIENDSHIP FOR WOMEN IS DIFFERENT

Friendship for women is not the same as friendship between men. Female friendships are highly important to women. We talk about different things, deeper things. Time and distance don't matter to us; once a friend, always a friend. Even if it's been years since we've seen each other, the affection and trust we had for each other never really disappear. We form sisterhoods that make us stronger. We carry it in our collective DNA; it's always been there.

"Women's friendships are one of the reasons women live longer than men. We talk about different things, we delve deep, we go under — even if we haven't seen each other for years. There are hormones that are released when women are with other women that are healthy." Says Jane Fonda

A long time ago, women shared much more with each other than they do now. They took turns caring for each other's babies, ate dinner together, and shared a sense of intimacy that only comes from the bond of deep friendship. This shared life was a source of strength and comfort upon which they built their daily lives. Women learned from each other, took care of each other, could count on each other.

Today, women are much more isolated from one another. The opportunities to meet up are much more limited, but that doesn't take away the need to feel connected. In fact, women who don't spend much time with their friends, or who lose contact with them, feel a huge emptiness, which is hard to fill with anything else.

"Friendships between women are special. They shape who we are and who we are yet to be. They soothe our tumultuous inner world, fill the emotional gaps in our marriages (or partnerships), and help us remember who we really are." Gale Berkowitz

The real benefits of friendship are immense. Friends make life better. Studies show that friendship has a greater impact on one's physical and psychological well-being than any other familial relationship. Female friendships have a huge impact on women's physical and psychological well-being, since we share a special bond when our souls meet. Through these friendships, we find the support and encouragement we need to overcome our problems and limitations.

According to researchers, the release of the hormone oxytocin is, especially for women, the panacea of friendship, and by extension, health in general. "Female friendships that work are relationships in which women help each other belong to themselves." -Louise Bernikow-

Friendship, stress, and women

One important study found that women respond to stress differently than men, which has important implications for health. When people experience stress, the fight or flight response is activated, which releases hormones like cortisol.

Oxytocin is another hormone secreted by both men and women in response to stress. In women, it calms the fight or flight response and pushes them to protect and take care of their children and meet with other women. It works like this not only in human beings, but also in many other species. When women involve themselves in the care of their loved ones or in their friendships with other women, they release oxytocin, which makes them more capable of fighting against stress and calming themselves.

Men, on the other hand, release high levels of testosterone when they're affected by stress, which reduces the calming effects of oxytocin. That's why they're more prone to reacting angrily and violently. However, women produce estrogen, which enhances the effects of oxytocin and pushes them to seek social support to release this hormone.

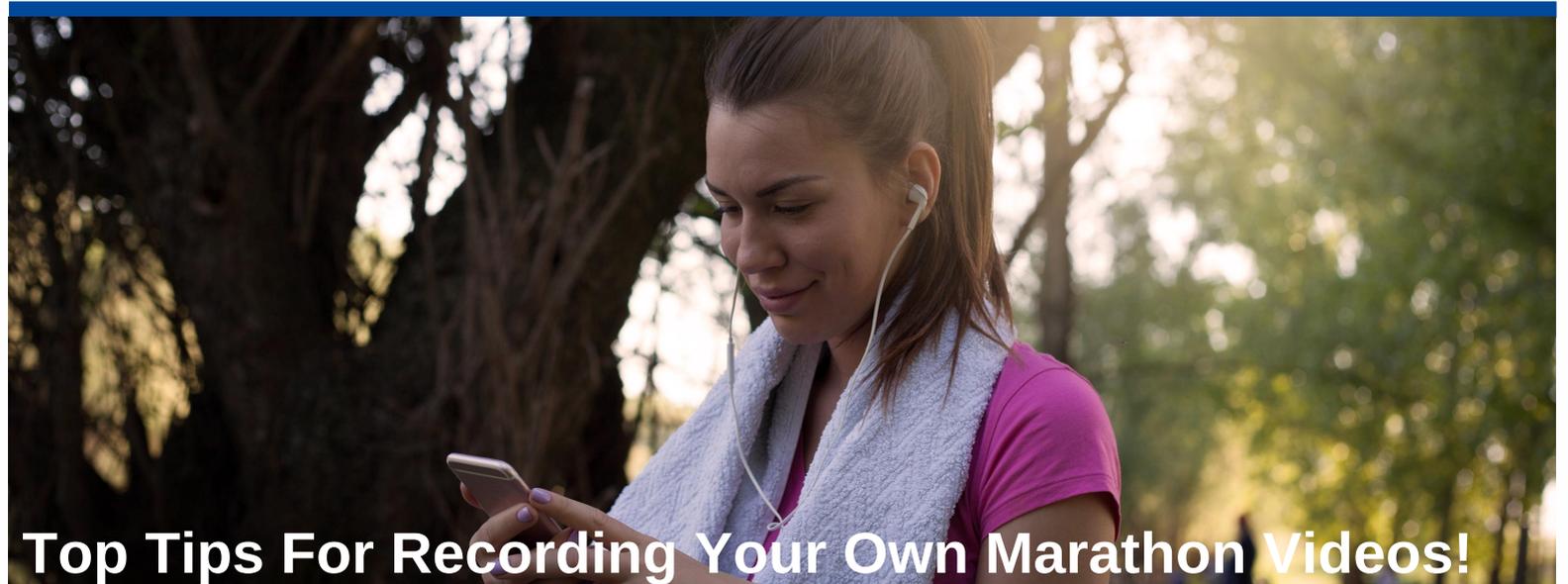
This is apparently the main way men and women differ in their responses to stress and also one of the main differences between male and female behavior in general. It's worth noting that one study on breast cancer found that women who don't have any close friends were four times more likely to die from the illness than women with 10 or more friends. Interestingly, the amount of closeness and contact the person had with their friends was associated with survival. Merely having friends was a protective agent against cancer!



Since its establishment in 1983, the VHI Women's Mini-Marathon has grown into the largest all women's event of its kind in the world, raising over €225 million for charity in those 37 years. The event is known worldwide, with women participating from Spain, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, Wales, Scotland, Belgium, Sweden, Denmark, France, England, Australia, New Zealand, United States, Canada, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Japan.

Due to the Covid-19 crisis, this international event was brought to a standstill on May 28th when it was announced that a physical event was no longer feasible. Plans were subsequently initiated to host the very first Vhi Virtual Women's Mini Marathon between the 1st -10th October 2020.

This new virtual marathon wants to offer participants a real alternative to their annual day out in Dublin with a Virtual 10k event. While participants are unable to be together physically, they can still do a 10k collectively, but safely apart. FirstLight is very fortunate to already have a large number of teams participating in this first-ever virtual marathon. As part of our support for these participants, we want to include some advice from the Vhi Women's Mini-Marathon around how people can fundraise and record their videos on the day to share online across the numerous platforms.



The VHI Women's Marathon team are always looking for great videos to feature on their social media channels. Why not send them a short video featuring you and some of your friends getting ready for the Vhi Virtual Women's Mini Marathon? You could either be filmed training for the event; sharing some of the fun ways you are fundraising, or simply talking about why FirstLight means so much to you as your nominated charity.

Here are a few simple tips to help you along the way with your video:

- Use a smartphone to record your video. (It's easy to make, send and post!)
- Film your video in landscape (horizontal)– it looks better, and it's easier for us to add subtitles to your video that way.
- Use an interesting background – for instance, film your video outside or in front of a colourful wall or backdrop. Just be wary of background noise on a windy day or from nearby traffic!
- If you're fundraising for FirstLight, wear your FirstLight t-shirt (you can pin FirstLight's logo on to a plain t-shirt), so everyone can know who you're supporting.
- Check your lighting – make sure your video isn't too dark or too bright.
- Avoid using zoom as this can make your footage shaky.
- Keep it simple, avoid using filters.
- Send your video to info@firstlight.ie and share with Vhi Marathon on Facebook
- Also send FirstLight's logo to Vhi Marathon on Facebook, so that they can include it with your video.

And make sure to have fun!

For further details visit <https://www.vhiwomensminimarathon.ie/>



10 ONLINE FUNDRAISING TIPS TO HELP GET YOU STARTED

In 2019 over €7.8 million was raised for hundreds of Irish charities via the Vhi Women's Mini Marathon and its participants. The very first Vhi Virtual Women's Mini Marathon will invite everyone to live life to the #Powerof10 – 10K, 10 days, €10 million raised for fantastic charities! And if virtual fundraising events are a whole new kettle of fish for you, don't panic! In addition the marathon team has teamed up with GivenGain, which FirstLight is registered on, to get you started with 10 online fundraising tips!

The first step is to decide how you are going to complete your 10K challenge.

With your friends, in your garden, in one go or spread over the 10 days – do it your way! Whichever you choose, you'll be joining thousands of ladies in completing something that's more than just a race.

Next it's time to create your own fundraising project.

Visit the marathon's official fundraising page on GivenGain and click on "Start fundraising" to register with your e-mail or Facebook login details. Search for FirstLight and click 'Select'. All the money you raise is transferred directly to FirstLight's bank account.

Remember to personalise your project.

Add a profile picture, a project photo and edit your fundraising story to highlight what you are doing and just how much it means to you.

Reach out to your chosen charity to find out more about the difference your fundraising can make.

If you don't have a personal story to share, visit the FirstLight website for details of the supports we provide and armed with this new knowledge, show your potential donors what you can achieve together!

It's all about getting the word out!

On your fundraising project page, you'll see GivenGain's easy sharing buttons and your personal project link, directing donors to the right place. In the next few weeks, aim to post on social media about your fundraising efforts, sharing the link to your project, as much as possible.

For your close family and friends.

Why not pick up the phone, send a text or even write a letter, and let them know what you are up to? Personal communications lead to more donations.

You might not be back in the office yet, but your colleagues can still get involved.

Send an e-mail to your favourite co-workers or post on your internal workplace channels to talk about the charity you are supporting and why they need help. Many organisations even offer corporate matching schemes!

Irish Sudden Infant Association AGM Notice

The Annual General Meeting of the of the Irish Sudden Infant Death Association t/a FirstLight will, due to social distancing requirements linked to Covid-19, be conducted electronically on Thursday, 17 September 2020 at 20h00. For additional information visit the FirstLight website www.firstlight.ie