



### **Live Well 2024 attracts record crowds**

### **Google helps puts Live Well on the Map.**

Record crowds attended LIVE WELL information event at Portlaoise College on 4th April 2024 for the largest Health and Wellbeing show in the Midlands .

The Live Well Expo held at Portlaoise College on April 4th, 2024, was a resounding success, drawing record crowds and establishing itself as the largest Health and Wellbeing show in the Midlands.

Organised by Healthy Laois and Age Friendly Laois, the event aimed to showcase the wide range of supports and services available across Laois to help people improve their health and wellbeing.

Age Friendly Laois & Healthy Laois provided information for attendees at the entrance to the college , including the Guide to services and supports to older people in Laois, The HSE directory of services, Eircode stickers, ICE ( In Case of emergency cards) and Age friendly newsletters. These proved very popular with attendees.

Live Well 2024 featured over 100 exhibition stands, providing attendees with access to valuable advice, information, and resources under one roof. The event emphasised the importance of prioritising health and wellbeing in our lives, reinforcing the message that making time for our wellbeing now can prevent future illness.

An Cathaoirleach, Paschal McEvoy, was on hand to commence proceedings and said **“As Cathaoirleach, I welcome this Live Well Event to Portlaoise as a space to discuss and understand local needs and issues. Together, we can work, to promote and improve the health and wellbeing of everyone living in Co. Laois and achieve the greatest possible impact on the health and wellbeing of everybody young and old in Laois in the future”**.

Anna May McHugh, Managing Director of National Ploughing Championships expressed support for events that bring communities together and promote living life to the fullest. Anna May is the Age Friendly Ambassador in County Laois and gave an inspirational talk to open the event where she said, **“Age is just a number and we all need to make the most of today”**. She called on

**everyone to take a minute to chat to your neighbour and the person sitting beside you today and discussed the importance of being part of a community."**



The event was structured to cater to a variety of interests and needs:

The Main Exhibition Hall had over 100 exhibitors where attendees had the opportunity to explore a wide range of health-related products, services, and information which catered to a variety of interests and needs



**"We need to make time for health, or we will be making time for illness." This message lies at the heart of our collective purpose here—a gentle yet powerful reminder to prioritise our health and well-being despite of how busy our lives are" said Emma O Connor the healthy Laois co-ordinator.**

**"Today's event is not just a standalone event, it is a part of the Healthy Laois programme here in Laois and the exhibitors here today are working collectively to form an experience aimed at improving our physical, mental, and emotional well-being."**



Tom Curran is the Age Friendly co-ordinator in County Laois and said **“The Age Friendly programme is committed to recognising the great diversity among older people and promoting their inclusion in all areas of community life. Working to make Laois an Age Friendly County ensures respect for older people’s decisions and lifestyle choices and responds to related needs and preferences”** He also noted the ongoing contribution of older people to their communities and pointed out that a number of the Older people’s Council were acting as volunteers for the Live Well event.

Following the success of 2023 where Healthy Laois and Age Friendly Laois came together to host the first Live Well Expo and the positive feedback we received, we decided we would have to run it again this year. Once again, we wanted to bring as much information as we could under one big roof and to present it in a fun way to the people of Laois. Portlaoise College have been a great support to us you could not ask for a better venue.

The Stage Area held a non-stop series of Talks and demonstrations covering topics such as nutrition, road safety, and preventing falls scheduled throughout the afternoon. Rory’s Travel Club which has a big following in Laois, started the program of talks showing how to travel more and save money along the way.

**“We work with 100’s of travel partners to secure exclusive offers for our members. Whether that’s a discount on a night stay or a package holiday – our goal is to always get our members the best prices”** said Rory and praised the organisers for a wonderful event.



Rory was joined by Lynette McEaney, who had not been on a holiday for a long time as she did not like to travel alone. She now avails of the group travel offers and has made numerous friends along the way. She highlighted the benefits of her trips including combatting loneliness, and the connections she has made to people, who she remains in contact with.

Rory was followed by Janice O'Brien from the Laois Offaly Education and Training Board (LOETB) who hosted a highly anticipated cooking demonstration.

Nicola Walsh from the Road Safety Authority was on hand to help us travel safely and reduce accidents on the roads. She focused on improving the visibility of pedestrians and cyclists. More than two thirds of fatal pedestrian collisions happen at night. Although you can hear a car coming and see its lights, the driver may not see you and certainly won't hear you. It is a good idea to wear your high visibility clothing during the day too, at night it is the reflective strips that are picked up but during the day the bright colour will be noticed very quickly. Nicola also highlighted the importance of car seats and advised that when driving, before setting off, always plan your route and check for weather and traffic updates. Always drive at the appropriate speed for the prevailing conditions. Always use daytime running lights and slow down or even cancel your journey in severe weather conditions [rain, fog, high winds, ice, -or snow] . And of course, never drink and drive. Even one drink can increase your risk of being in a fatal accident. **“The more you drink, the more your brain functions are affected and the less able you are to drive safely,”** said Nicola. **“There is no safe level of drink driving, and even when you are below the legal limit you are twice as likely to be involved in a collision.”** Nicola finished her presentation by outlining the latest road statistics, updated on the day.

Next up was the highly popular Men's Shed Choir who played and sang to a packed audience.

This group, which was formed during Covid, was the brainchild of Nuala Kelly from Laois School of Music, who with Healthy Ireland Funding has expanded the group across the county. Some of the members also starred on the Portlaoise Men's Shed Exhibition which showcased the work going on in the Men's Shed. A beautifully made model railway was the focal point accompanied by hand carved wooden sticks and a recently made beehive(empty)!



After a rousing sing along , Máiréad Power, who is a Chartered Physiotherapist from UPMC hospital group discussed how time does not stand still for anybody, and we are all getting older.

“There is absolutely nothing we can do about our chronological age. It’s there on our birth certs for evermore. Our biological age we can do something about” she said

Mairead also shared top tips on sleeping and how to mind your mood both of which can impact on health and wellbeing.

Biological ageing is how our cells and tissues (bones, muscles, organs etc) are ageing . Mairead prescribed a daily dose of exercise.

An informative talk followed by Martha Sweeney- Education Manager from Drinkaware and this was followed by an energetic series of dance exercise routines led by Moez & Susanna Toumi who bring their own brand of fun to help promote physical activity and well-being in County Laois. Moez is leading a series of free outdoor activities throughout Laois with funding from Healthy Ireland and in conjunction with Laois County Council. A sudden downpour of rain caused this Programme to be brought inside on the day but nothing would dampen the spirits of the crowd who were delighted to hear news of more classes in Portlaoise Stradbally and Abbeyleix.

Staying Safe Online with Fiona Casey of the LOETB was timely and informative and brought the talks and demonstrations to a close. The stage area was then cleared for Dancing with Martin Delaney who rocked the school for an hour before reluctantly bringing proceedings to an end.

This year the Climate action Team in Laois County Council provided free transportation from Portlaoise for attendees, demonstrating a commitment to accessibility, inclusion and to Portlaoise’s status as a low carbon town. Buses ran throughout the event, shuttling people to and from the town centre and meeting the scheduled trains as they arrived and departed.

Last visitor to Live Well 2024 departs by Local Link Bus with Brown Compost Bin. There were over 1000 compost bins given to those who attended the Expo by the LCC Climate Action Team.

Live Well also saw the launch of a new initiative where a set of Activator Poles for up to ten people will be available in Portlaoise and Portarlinton Libraries for Community Groups to borrow and use on walks in Laois. Activator poles can be used by people who need additional balance support or may be at risk of trips or falls. Caroline Myers from Laois Sports Partnership said” **Following the opening of Irelands first Fitstick Trail in Derrycastle, we identified a need for a safe space to leave poles for Community groups to access and borrow**". Healthy Laois co-ordinator Emma OConnor and Dermot

Egan in Healthy Offaly combined resources to purchase a set of poles to be based in Portarlinton Library. Tom Curran Laois Age Friendly also partnered with Healthy Laois to provide a set in Portlaoise Library.

Elsewhere, the HSE provided Free Health checks and there was a queue throughout the day waiting to avail of this service. There were many positive comments about the wonderful service provided by Nicola and her team who worked tirelessly throughout the day whilst Elaine, Helen and Siobhan were amongst several HSE providers available on the day to help direct people to health and wellbeing programmes available in Laois.

LOETB also joined forces with Google to host a technology information area where one on one consultations were held to help people use their phones and laptops.

This was a very popular area and was busy throughout the day. Google had hosted a large contingent from Laois in February 2024, who travelled to avail of their Community Engagement Day in Dublin with Age Friendly Laois and Healthy Laois. As a result, a team from Google travelled to Laois for the Live Well Expo and provided a link up with the LOETB to provide participants with help and advise using their technology. This section really added value to the Live Well event and the participants thoroughly enjoyed their time there and said it meant they could now "look up things on their phone".

Age Friendly Laois, Healthy Laois and Laois County Council would like to thank everyone who contributed to the success of the day by hosting information stands , giving talks and demonstrations and those who attended the event. This was a huge effort from everyone and your time and input were invaluable in creating the biggest information show in the Midlands and would not be possible without the enormous support received. We would also like to thank Portlaoise College staff who helped set up before and after the event and the champion tea makers who served nonstop refreshments all day long!

With a diverse lineup of exhibitors and activities, Live Well Expo 2024 was a celebration of health, community, and the vibrant spirit of Laois, leaving a lasting impact on all who attended and was a beacon for bringing our community together and promoting Health in Laois.

Quotes from attendees included

**"I had no idea that the Expo was going to be this spectacular and size! I did not attend last year, so was not prepared.**

**"I travelled with a few friends who were also impressed and we are making plans to return next year but arriving earlier so we have more time to experience all the areas. I hope it will be held again."**

**"Personally I spent all my time in the expo area, networking, doing business and making plans. I never got time to sit and enjoy the talks on stage, there was so much to see."**

**"It was the best organised event that I have ever been at and was so relevant and useful. We came away with great plans for our community (older age group) but wont jinx it by saying any more. We will let you know when our plans fall into place and actually happen. We have scheduled a planning meeting with a few key people after arriving home when we were still buzzing."**

**"Thankyou for organising the event. It was very enjoyable to be able to sit and have the cuppa and sandwich, that was a good idea. That school is a wonderful venue".**

Johanna Mc Donald Steenkist

Camross Tidy Town

**"Thank you for all the organizing. The shuttle bus was invaluable to our group. They all went home happy and a bit wiser".**

Veronica Canning, Portarlinton Active Retirement

#### **Related Documents**

- Document

[Exhibitor Layout.pdf \(pdf, 297.81 KB\)](#)

- Document

[Nutrition Tips for Healthy Ageing - Living Well Expo.pdf \(pdf, 8.29 MB\)](#)

- Document

[Falls Prevention and Healthy Aging.pptx \(pptx, 17.85 MB\)](#)

#### **Get in Touch**

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