

# THREE GENERATIONS OF SOCIAL FARMING IN WATERFORD

The Sullivan family in Co. Waterford have three generations of family members taking part in providing Social Farming placements on their farm near Lemybrien. Brian (The youngest of the 3 generations) took part in the Social Farming training back in 2018 having always had an interest in the concept of social farming from his work as a support worker in the disability and mental health sector since 2001. Brian has also studied widely in the fields of social care, disability studies, behavioral therapy, general nursing and Social Inclusion. His partner Niamh is also a holistic health therapist. Then in 2019 Niamh and Brian's mother Peggy took part in the training delivered by Social Farming Ireland so they could play a bigger part in supporting the participants on their farm.

The farm consists of a small traditional farm running a calf to beef enterprise. They keep a few horses and some poultry (Hens, ducks and Geese) and have a polytunnel where they grow some of their own vegetables. "The social farming day usually starts by feeding the poultry and collecting the eggs. Then we would usually move on to feed and check on the other livestock: cattle, horses and pony."

Establishing and developing relationships are at the heart of the social farming experience. One of the most important times of the day happens around the kitchen table where everyone gets together to chat about what is happening on the farm or at home or in the wider community. This time really enhances the social aspect of the placement. This is when another generation Granny Biddy comes to the fore where the kitchen of her thatched cottage is opened up and everyone is invited in to the tea.

"Tea-break was always taken in my Grandmother's cottage on the farm and usually my Mother Peggy and partner Niamh would also join us for the tea-break. Sometimes my brother and his partner who were often working with the horses around the farm would also come and join us for tea-break. Granny would always bake a cake of curran soda bread the day before the lads arrived and we would enjoy that with our teabreak. Granny loved to see the lads come on Social Farming days as it reminded her of the old days when work men and neighbours came to help on the farm at busy times."

"I look forward to seeing them coming. I like doing something for them" The wise words of Granny Biddy in her 95th year.

Social farming has also had benefits to the farm family themselves. "Of the three generations that live on the farm we are probably never together from one end of the week to another but on the Social Farming day we all sit down together and have the coffee and lunch together. It has brought great life back to the farm."

Brian's Mother also gets great satisfaction from Social Farming. "We look forward to it every week. We are really all great friends. We get time to get to know each other and find out about the different activities they boys are engaged in when they are not here. We have learned so much about their lives and their past, it's so interesting. And we have a good laugh during the day."

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Brian with Christy and Michael From Carriglea.



Brian, Niamh, Granny, Christy and Michael.



Social Farming group with John Hanlon from Carriglea Cairde Services.



Lemybrien Social Farming group with Michael Hale (Lismore Farmer) and Gillian McCarthy Social Farming Ireland