

## = Students Harness Aid for the Relief of the Elderly =

Students Harness Aid for Relief of Elderly ( formerly Schoolboys Harness Aid for Relief of Elderly ) or SHARE , is a charitable organisation based in Cork , Ireland , dedicated to providing housing and other support for the elderly poor . One newspaper summed up that : " SHARE has brought help and hope , homes and happiness to the lonely old people who have been forgotten by society " .

The organisation was founded in 1970 by Brother Jerome Kelly and students of Presentation Brothers College , Cork , to deal with the social issues of the time . As it gathered momentum , other schools in Cork joined , and today students from 18 secondary schools collaborate in organising every aspect of the charity . Since its founding , over 200 custom @-@ built homes have been provided by the organisation .

Work by the members of SHARE is year @-@ round , but its most active period is the Christmas Fast & Fundraising Campaign , when over 1800 students collect in Cork city centre . The charity 's sole collection period lasts only ten days , which has made it a recognisable part of the Cork Christmas season . It has received recognition from the media , important Irish political figures , and the people of Cork ; but it is the involvement of students from all of Cork city 's secondary schools has made SHARE " a truly unique and effective organisation " in Ireland today .

## = = History = =

In 1969 , Brother Jerome Kelly returned home from missionary work and was made principal of Presentation Brothers College . He organised a series of workshops , in which the students of Presentation College were encouraged to think globally and act locally . The senior students were sent out to walk the lanes and side streets of Cork City and identify the major problems themselves . While the city centre 's main thoroughfares were bustling with " elegant buildings and fashionable shop windows " , there existed a different reality in the dreary alleys and decaying tenements . The students were " unanimous in their belief that the greatest single need was the plight of the elderly citizens ? apparently forgotten by their own people " .

In 1970 , SHARE was founded when a group of 12 students erected a makeshift crib on St. Patrick 's Street and fasted for thirty hours to attract attention to the plight of the elderly . At first they aimed to help the elderly by renovating the " depressing attic rooms and tiny basement flats , " until the uncaring landlords increased the rent . The students obtained the support of the civic leaders at the time for their project , getting " free land in key areas of the city , " and were then " faced with challenge of fundraising and ensuring homes for the elderly were built . " Through their work , they had sufficient funds by 1975 to begin building the first SHARE Complex .

In 1976 , twelve houses were built and furnished at Clochán Barra on Sheare 's Street and accommodation for thirteen people was provided at Grenville Place . Over the following two years , eleven homes were provided at Sheare 's Street , seven houses at Sunday 's Well , and 13 houses at Fair Street . The nineteen houses at Shandon were formally opened by the Taoiseach Jack Lynch .

Following the securing of these new homes for the residents , the practice of regular visits was begun to deal with the problem of loneliness . The enthusiastic support of the people of Cork ensured the organisation 's rapid development throughout the city , and the support of the students ' parents led to the establishment of " SHARE Mothers . " SHARE celebrated its 10th anniversary in 1980 , with the fifteen @-@ house complex at Abbey Street opened by President of Ireland Patrick Hillery . Complexes were also opened at Dyke Parade and Ardfert , Great William O ' Brien Street . In 1988 , President Hillery also opened a 32 house complex at Grattan Street .

" S.H.A.R.E. ' s efforts to provide a greater feeling of security and a more tangible sense of community led to the organisation adopting the " Sheltered Housing " concept with the opening of Dún Rís in 1988 and Mt . St. Joseph ( a gift from the Presentation Brothers ) in 1993 . The opening of the Day Care Centre in 2001 carries this concept a step further . "

## = = Organisation = =

Although originally made up solely of students of Presentation College , SHARE is currently organised by an elected Executive committee of 50 ? 60 , composed of students from the 18 secondary schools in Cork city . These students are typically fifth year or senior cycle students . Pres still maintains a strong presence on the committee , with the chairman elected from the school , in recognition of its role in founding the organisation .

The organisation 's sole collection period each year is the " Christmas Fast & Fundraising Campaign " , which starts on 14 December and spans the 10 @-@ day run up to Christmas . During this time , the members of the Executive committee spend as much as ten hours collecting in the city centre each day , with the focal point of the collection at The Crib in Daunt 's Square . Additionally , there is a separate Fasting Committee , which spends 24 hours fasting outside the crib at a time . The campaign is therefore linked with the Christian message of the Gospel and the significance and relevance of the Christmas Crib . There are also cribs in the city ? s main suburban shopping centres , in the Blackpool , Bishopstown Court , Douglas Court , Douglas Village , Mahon Point , Merchant ? s Quay and Wilton shopping centres .

Overall , 1800 volunteer students also get involved in this collection , bearing the organisation ? s " trademark yellow collection boxes and enthusiastic smiles " , regardless of the weather . SHARE always aims to have at least 100 collectors on the streets at any one time . While collection only occurs at Christmas , members of the SHARE Executive visit any resident of the housing schemes that desires visitation , on a regular basis . Although they are not obliged to continue to do this on a permanent basis ( as the executive is changed each school year ) , many develop a strong bond of friendship and keep in touch for years after .

= = Facilities = =

There are 167 SHARE housing units in total , located in clusters throughout Cork city : in Blackpool , Shandon Street , Sheare 's Street , Grattan Street , Abbey Street , Blarney Street and Sunday 's Well . These facilities are a mix of sheltered housing , apartments and small individual homes , each with " all the modern requirements " and fully furnished . Here the elderly enjoy " the freedom of their own comfortable space in a safe environment " , and are provided with a range of practical services ; including medical treatments , meals , laundry services and support networks as necessary .

Additionally , there is the Day Care Centre at Sheare 's Street , " a really homely centre for elderly people , with practical and fun activities . " Activities available include dance , arts and crafts , bingo , darts , quiz games , knitting , sewing , baking , card games , snooker and drama . Maintaining , managing and refurbishing these facilities requires continuous funding . As the Chairman of the 2007 Executive , Kevin Olden , announced :

= = Recognition and media coverage = =

Since the opening of the first SHARE homes in 1976 , complexes have been opened by Taoiseach Jack Lynch , President Hillery , President Mary Robinson , then Minister for Health and Children Micheál Martin TD , and the various Lord Mayors of Cork . On the opening of the 100th SHARE house , President Hillery said : " SHARE 's achievements demonstrate a generosity and dedication on the part of young people which is an inspiration and challenge to us all " . In 2002 , the SHARE Day Care Centre was visited by President Mary McAleese . Later , in 2006 , President McAleese acknowledged the work " which changed bad lives into good . "

Each year since Br . Jerome ? s death , the Br . Jerome Lecture has been held in his honour , on social issues and the involvement of SHARE in the community . Guest speakers in the past have included Micheál Martin , Pat Cox and Taoiseach Bertie Ahern . The Taoiseach described the SHARE project as " a model of active citizenship " , " character building " and " satisfying and empowering " :

" None of this would have happened without the pioneering spirit , activism and leadership skills of Brother Jerome . He was , truly , a man who was ahead of his time . I think it is particularly

appropriate that the Day Care Centre is named after him . Loneliness is itself a form of poverty and the Brother Jerome Kelly Day Care Centre and the social activities which the students organise around it do so much to alleviate this . Together , they bring a lot of joy to residents and visitors , which is a very fitting memorial to his life and work . "

The work of SHARE has also received significant attention in both local , national and international media over the years . The British newspaper The Guardian described the project as " Imaginative , courageous and exciting " , while Dick Cross of The Irish Independent labelled it as : " One of the most imaginative and practical projects ever undertaken in this country " . Tom McSweeney of RTÉ said the " exciting venture by Cork 's youth has brought new life to the old city " , and similarly Pdraigh O 'Morain of The Irish Times described it as " one of Ireland 's great success stories " . In 2005 , it was further acclaimed as a demonstration of " the magnificent generosity of the Cork people " .

In 2007 , the SHARE residents endorsed the organisation 's 38th Christmas Fast & Fundraising Campaign . During part of the collection , eight members of the Executive sang a version of " Winter Wonderland " in Daunt Square for Irish radio station 2FM .

= = List of recent chairmen = =

Marcus McCarthy ( 1986 @-@ 1987 )  
Peter Barrett ( 2003 @-@ 2004 )  
Stuart Cullinane ( 2004 @-@ 2005 )  
Rob Murphy ( 2005 @-@ 2006 )  
Bill Olden ( 2006 @-@ 2007 )  
Kevin Olden ( 2007 @-@ 2008 )  
James Cusack ( 2008 @-@ 2009 )  
Darragh Ó Drisceoil ( 2009 @-@ 2010 )  
Robbie Kidney ( 2010 @-@ 2011 )  
Colm Keena ( 2011 @-@ 2012 )  
John Higgins ( 2012 @-@ 2013 )  
Michael Mc Grath ( 2013 @-@ 2014 )  
Evan O 'Brien ( 2014 ? 2015 )  
Tony Cusack ( 2015 @-@ Present )