



Supporting Parents After Bereavement

Winter 2025 Newsletter



It is thanks to the efforts of our whole community— parents, friends, staff, and supporters—
that we celebrate another year!

From left to right: Volunteer Parent Felicia Murphy, Founder Sharon Vard, and CEO Michelle Reynolds

A Light in the Darkness

Whether you are one who embraces the darker, cosier days of winter, or one who dreads the short days and endless nights, there is no denying the turn to winter has arrived. While the warmth of the sunshine may have left us for a few months, the spark of care in each of us can keep inner lights lit throughout the winter. I hope you'll bring your spark, and join us in ensuring that regardless of the age of a child, the circumstances of their death, or the time since bereavement, no parent across the island has to grieve alone this season. Here at Anam Cara, our vision is a society where all families who experience the death of a child are met with understanding, support, and compassion.

Lights of Love Campaign

SHINE A LIGHT OF LOVE THIS SEASON

Though it brings challenges, Christmas is also an opportunity to remember the lives of those we're missing— and ensure Anam Cara's support services remain free for all bereaved parents, as long as they are needed.

Donate a Light Today



National and Munster Remembrance Days

At Anam Cara, we are always seeking to make our services closer and more relevant to our community. Responding to feedback from years past, we were delighted to offer not just one but two Remembrance Days this year. On November 9th, we returned to the Hodson Bay Hotel in Athlone, accompanied by two musicians, a professional photographer, an art therapist, and two fantastic new volunteers from SMBC Aviation Capital — not to mention over eighty people from, joining together to remember their precious children. We were honoured to hear from mum Rebecca, dad Andrew, and sister Audrey, as they told their stories and reminded us that in speaking the names of those we have loved and lost, that love lives on. When Sarah and Ray sang "The Parting Glass," that vibrant love flowed as tears met raised voices. For all who came, thank you for your vulnerability, kindness toward each other, and bravery in showing up to each new day.



National and Munster Remembrance Days



Then, on Sunday, 16th November, families and friends gathered in the Meadowlands Hotel in Tralee for our Munster Remembrance Day. Led by Dee Regan from the Anam Cara Service Team, and Cora O'Brien – facilitator of our Kerry parents support group— the event offered a gentle and supportive space for connection, reflection, and the honouring of children who are no longer with us. In a heartfelt candle-lighting ceremony, individual candles were lit by parents from our Tipperary and Kerry parents' groups, each flame representing a cherished life remembered with love. We were honoured to have Luke read *Little Wagtail*, a poem written by his wife Shannon for their daughters, its words echoing with tenderness and hope. Shannon has shared the poem, below, for all of us, as a reminder of the connection and solace we shared across the island this November.

Fundraising Updates

Walking, running, and Christmas-feasting— there was no shortage of opportunities for our community to gather in support of Anam Cara this season.

Our ten runners for the Dublin Marathon braved freezing temperatures and wintry rain October 26th to run a combined 262 miles for Anam Cara— phew! While we hope frozen fingers and aching legs have long since healed, we are delighted to report that donations for each person's campaign are still rolling in, a testament to the strength of telling your story and inspiring your community. Does the idea of running for Anam Cara pull on your heartstrings (as much as your hamstrings)? For eager new runners ready to begin their training journey and experienced marathoners alike, we are also accepting [interest for the 2026 Dublin Marathon!](#)



Fundraising Updates

Our CEO Michelle joined ten intrepid trekkers along the Camino de Santiago for eight days of laughter around the dinner table, quiet chats along the trail, and tears held with love surrounded by new friends. Ranging from friends and supporters of Anam Cara to bereaved parents, each person walked for a different reason— but in each step found enduring community and new strength.

Mum [Tracey shared her story in outlets across the island](#)—

keep an ear out for her interview on the Oliver Callan show on RTE Radio One on Monday 8th December between 11am-1pm!

The Camino can be many things to many people – some participants walk in memory of someone, and we make space for reflection, as well as connection, conversation and laughter. Whatever sparks your connection to Anam Cara, our upcoming 2026 Camino is an opportunity to be surrounded by a supportive group who understand and respect everyone's journey. If these stories inspire you to join us next year, please fill out our [interest form](#)!



At a very different speed, but no less lively, we were delighted to welcome friends new and old to our lunch fundraisers in Cork and Dublin. Our deepest gratitude to board member Tony for orchestrating the luncheon in Cork, and to the Mullins family for allowing us to host the event in memory of our dearly departed long-time friend, John Mullins. His presence was sorely missed.

Our Saba lunch in Dublin hosted 119 people, with an exclusive tour of the Dublin Airport air traffic control tower, VIP tickets to Bord Gais, and signed golf memorabilia—and more!— on auction. From the bottom of our hearts, our thanks to all our supporters for their enduring commitment to Anam Cara, providing essential services to parents whose children have died— free of cost, as long as they need.

Wrapping Up 2025

SERVICES UPDATE

Since our last newsletter, our service team has been hard at work reaching out to new families and communities. We were delighted to host in-person Bereavement Information sessions in collaboration with Firstlight in Donegal. Expanding our core services to all corners of the island is essential to our mission of ensuring no parent has to grieve alone.

In addition to the family gatherings for our two Remembrance Days, we had some of our most successful Bereavement Information Evenings to date, with one parent writing:

"We found tonight's talk extremely helpful.

It has given us a greater insight to our grieving. We have discovered that how we feel is normal & can take the information we learned tonight to help us on our ongoing journey through loss.

Thanks for this."

For frontline professionals, we were able to host two training workshops with qualifying continuing education hours, bringing up to date, relevant, and evidence-based resources to all careers that encounter bereaved parents. From Gardaí and paramedics to family support workers and teachers, making sure the community is aware of how to support grieving parents and the resources that are available is a vital part of our work. Many professionals don't know where to direct parents in the weeks, month, and years following the death of a child. These workshops help us ensure professionals know where to turn, and no parent has to grieve alone.



2025 at a Glance



1,449

bereavement
information packs
distributed



67

attendees to
frontline
professional
workshops



192

new parents
engaged across all
services



1,017

attendees to
face-to-face peer
support groups



419

attendees to online
bereavement
information
sessions



10

parents referred to
1-to-1 counselling in
emergent Tusla/CTI
partnership

Oh Little Wagtail

By Shannon Brady

ANAM CARA



Winter Newsletter

**Oh little wagtail, soft and bright, You flit
through mornings, pure with light. Two
sisters watch, their hearts aware, That
you, dear bird, are something rare.**

**Your feathers gleam, a silver thread,
That binds the living to the dead. The
second born, who could not stay, Now
dances near in soft array.**

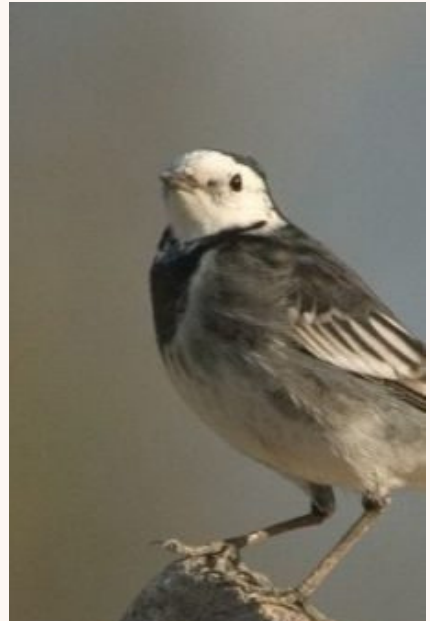
**You wag your tail by streams and stones,
And whisper love in airy tones. Each
flutter says, "I'm never far, I shine within
each shining star."**

**The eldest laughs, the youngest calls, And
through their games, your shadow falls. Three
souls entwined, through two may stand, The
third drifts close, a wing, a hand.**

**Oh wagtail sweet, your song is grace,
A memory they can't erase. In every
breeze, in every sky, You teach them
love will never die.**

**For thought the cradle once was still,
You linger yet, you always will— A
spirit light, both wild and frail,
Forever theirs, oh little wagtail.**

This poem was shared by Shannon, mum to Aoife, Maya, and Ellie. The little wagtail first appeared when they returned home without Maya, and still comes to play with Aoife and Ellie. This is their favourite to hear at bedtime, keeping Maya's spirit close at each day's end.



Have you written a story or poem, made a piece or art, or sung a song you'd like to have considered for publication in the Spring issue of Anam Cara's newsletter? Parents, professionals, and other members of our community are all invited to submit. All mediums very welcome. Please contact Elsie at i.wiessner@anamcara.ie

Submit Here!