

Transplant Children step out with RTE's 'Ireland's Fittest Family' to promote IKA's Run for a Life

(Photographer Conor McCabe tel 085 7057255 email info@conormccabe.ie -no repro fee)

'Ireland's Fittest Family', the Beirne's who run a farm in Leitrim, stepped out with kidney and liver transplant children for a photocall to encourage the public to take part in the Irish Kidney Association's 'Run for a Life' family fun run which will take place at Corkagh Park, Clondalkin, Dublin 22 at 12pm on Saturday 19th May. www.runforalife.ie

The Beirne family, from Mohill, Co Leitrim, who won the hard-fought coveted title of Ireland's Fittest Family in the RTE TV Series 2017, are eager to support the Fun Run, as it represents a cause close to their hearts, in aiming to raise awareness about the life saving importance of organ donation and transplantation.

Jonathan, Dearbháile, Keith and their father Michael Beirne from Mohill, Co. Leitrim gathered at Carton House Hotel in Kildare for the photocall and were joined by kidney transplant recipient Darragh O' Haire (9), from Johnstown Bridge, Enfield, and liver transplant recipient girls Tara Madigan (11) from Castleconnell, Limerick and Éabha Devitt (7) from Dunboyne, Co Meath (**whose mother Ciara Nolan is from Waterfall in Cork**) and their families.

The 'Run for a Life' family fun run is open to people of all ages and levels of fitness who can choose to walk, jog or run in the chip timed event, which offers prizes for winners in a choice of 2.5km, 5km and 10km distances.

The Beirne Family had no hesitation when asked by the Irish Kidney Association to support the fun run as a family friend and relative, Detta Holahan (58), a mother and grandmother, who lives just miles away from their family home, has been undergoing eight-hour nightly dialysis treatment for almost three years.

Jonathan Beirne, a primary school teacher at Bawnmore N.S. in Claregalway explained, "my family were delighted to be asked to support Run for a Life. When we were younger, our mother who is a public schools' nurse in Leitrim, gave each of us organ donor cards. She has always tried to instil in us the importance of consideration towards others. As a teacher, I try to live by this advice and I also try to teach my pupils to be socially aware and about the importance of consideration and trying to help others in need. We have been aware of Detta's kidney disease for some time now and we hope that she will benefit from a transplant soon. Organ Donation is a huge act of kindness and it's a wonderful legacy that after untimely death other people's lives can be saved and improved."

Colin White, Race Manager and National Projects Manager of the Irish Kidney Association said, "The Beirne family are a shining example to all of us on the benefits that can be achieved in keeping fit and active just like members of Transplant Team Ireland who will take part in Run for a Life and in the European Transplant & Dialysis Sports Championships

in Sardinia this summer demonstrating what can be achieved by transplant recipients and dialysis patients. Tara, Darragh and Éabha are also demonstrating that following their transplants they are leading happy and active childhoods and are enjoying taking part in sport. We are looking forward to another successful annual Run for a Life on May 19th which offers a great day out for all the family and with over 550 participants from throughout Ireland who registered for last year's event we are optimistic for another great turnout".

Tara Madigan (age 11), who underwent her liver transplant recipient at King's College Hospital in London in 2012, was delighted to attend the photocall with her father Sean and to meet her heroes, Ireland's Fittest Family, after watching their outstanding and gruelling performances on last year's TV series. Tara herself demonstrated the success of organ donation when she scooped 3 gold medals at last year's British Transplant Games in track and field events.

Éabha Devitt, now age 7, was just 2 years and 4 months old when she went into acute liver failure and within 10 days underwent a life-saving liver transplant in 2013. She attended the photocall with her mother Ciara and older sister Muireann (9). Ciara explained, "Éabha went from being a perfectly healthy toddler to suddenly becoming critically ill from a suspected viral infection. Ten days after first becoming ill and presenting at Tallaght Hospital she was recovering from a lifesaving Liver transplant at King's College Hospital in London. Her transplant is called an Auxiliary Partial Orthotopic Liver Transplant as only her part of her own liver was removed, and the donor liver supported her until her own liver recovered. Were it not for her liver donor Éabha would not be with us here today. We are delighted that she no longer needs immune-suppressant drugs as her native liver is now functioning fully. She enjoys a normal childhood and like her sister loves playing with their local Gaelic Football Club and running in our local Dunboyne Athletics Club where I run also. Our family are looking forward to taking part in Run for a Life."

Darragh O'Haire (age 9) attended the photocall with his mother Ruth and sister Siofra (11) and brother Sean (13). Ruth explained, "Daire was born with underdeveloped kidneys and received nightly home dialysis treatment from the time he was just one year old and underwent a kidney transplant from a deceased donor when he was four years old. Our family are immensely grateful to the family of the deceased organ donor who will never know how they have changed our lives in such a profoundly positive way. Darragh is a normal active nine-year-old boy now and enjoys playing football with his local Balyva GAA."

There are approximately 550 people in Ireland awaiting life-saving heart, lung, liver, kidney and pancreas transplants. Thanks to the gift of organ donation almost 3500 transplanted people in Ireland are enjoying extended life.

The Run for a Life Entry fee is €20 adult, €10 child and €45 for a family of up to 2 adults and 4 children. All finishers will receive a medal and entry fee also includes soup and sandwiches. **For more information on the event visit website www.runforalife.ie**

Organ Donor Cards can also be obtained by phoning the Irish Kidney Association tel. [01 6205306](tel:016205306) or **Free text the word DONOR to 50050**. Visit website www.ika.ie/get-a-donor-card or download the 'Digital Organ Donor card'.

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