

The Spectrum Centre

With help from The Ireland Funds,
a creative and delicious project
comforts those with dementia
in Northern Ireland.





The Shankill area of Belfast has achieved an unusual distinction in recent years. It is recognized as a “dementia-friendly” community. Thanks in part to advocacy from the local Alzheimer’s Society and Hemsworth Court, a unique supported living scheme for people with dementia in Belfast, The Shankill community, a traditionally Loyalist area, is changing the way people in Northern Ireland address dementia. Local businesses in the area have undergone voluntary training to learn how to ease and address the needs of their neighbors with Alzheimer’s and dementia, many living at Hemsworth Court. Businesses that display a small blue flower icon in their window or door indicate that they have had this sensitivity training that helps them offer a safe and understanding space to those with dementia. And so hairdressers, taxi drivers and shopkeepers now know how to take a bit more time with a customer who may have lost their way, or needs help making change, or remembering what they came in for.



The Bread 'n' Jam Project

These efforts to address the stigma and struggle of those with dementia in the Shankill area have extended to the Spectrum Centre, a large bustling community development space at the top of the Shankill Road which is supported by The Ireland Funds. With a grant from The Ireland Funds, the Centre collaborated with the residents of Hems-

worth Court on The Bread an' Jam Project. The project was a five-week joint venture that brought residents with dementia together to create a cookbook of favorite recipes. Over the course of those weeks, residents recounted recipes from their childhoods and earlier days, sang together, cooked each person's dish, told stories and tasted

their way across those shared memories, a vital exercise for those with Alzheimer's and dementia. Sally Young, Arts Development Officer at the Spectrum Centre explains how the stimulation of memory was key to the project. "An old-fashioned rolling pin would be brought in, or a potato masher. These were things that everyone





“It may seem small, but that germ of an idea just needed a bit of support. It was like a spark. The Ireland Funds was the fan that came in and helped grow that spark. Sometimes you just need to feed a fire to keep it going and this project was brilliant.”

— Sally Young, Arts Development Officer at the Spectrum Centre

in Belfast would have had back in the day. And the residents would recognize them and the stories would start. So they got to talking about the recipes, the war, how times were hard, how they made food go further when needed.” Those recipes and experiences culminated in the Bread

an’ Jam cookbook funded in part by The Ireland Funds. “We had a launch of the exhibition of the book and in the Spectrum Centre cafe folks came and everyone got three or so copies,” explains Sally. “The Ireland Funds have continued to help programs like this here. These programs are an

opportunity to give people a chance to actually do something on the ground. For many of the older people, this is their day to take control and do something interesting with their time.”

