**PRESS RELEASE**

**BALLINASLOE SOCIAL SERVICES AGM**

Ballinasloe Social Services held its Annual General Meeting on Wednesday 18th November. In her opening address, Chairperson Annette Lynagh Chairperson congratulated 3 people, associated with Social Services, who were nominated for Ballinasloe’s People of the Year awards recently. Sr. Alacoque, a long-standing committee member and a great supporter of the services for the Hall of Fame Award, Kay Cunningham for her outstanding work with Meals on Wheels for the Social & Community Support Award and Tom Quinn, nominated for the Hall of Fame award and came away with the trophy.

In the Day Centre report, Nurse Mary Martyn stated that this service takes referrals from Public Health Nurses, Social Workers and family members. Such is the demand that there is a waiting list at the moment. The daily programme includes bingo, quizzes, cards, word search, music, exercises, computers. People are transported to and from the centre by minibus or by family members. She thanked the contribution of the loyal volunteers, without whom the service would not operate.

Teresa Coughlan, Manager, in her report, appealed to the HSE to restore the annual grant to 2008 levels. Since this time, the grant has been reduced by €17,000 and this reduction is placing unsustainable demands on the services.

Meals on Wheels Co-Ordinator, Kay Cunningham was delighted to report that a new Meals on Wheels van was purchased this year due to an intense fundraising drive, along with the kind support of IPB Insurance. This will ensure the prompt delivery of meals into the future.

The Care and Repair service, which has its office in the Social Services Centre, carries out small jobs and minor repairs for the elderly. This service can be contacted at 090 9630630 from Monday to Thursday, 9 am to 3 pm.

The Pre-School and Therapeutic Learning Centre continue to grow under the stewardship of Childcare Manager, Elaine Murphy. This Childcare facility is the centre for early intervention in childcare in the Ballinasloe area and works in close partnership with statutory services. It is supported by the Katherine Howard Fund, Tusla and the ECCE and CCS pre-school programmes.

Oliver Nilan Auditor gave an account of the financial status of the group and stated that the accounts were a true and fair statement of the current state of affairs at 31/12/2014.

The committee for the coming year is:

**Chairperson:** Annette Lynagh, **Vice-Chairperson:** Padraig O’Ceithearnaigh **Committee Members**: Sr. Alacoque, Eamon Lally, Ann Kenny, Martina Staunton, Michael Lally, Margaret Oliver, Regina Power, Tess Raftery, Jenny O’Sullivan, Padraig Walsh

**Guest Speaker:**

The Chairperson introduced the guest speaker for the night –Dan Quaid, retired HSE Community Development Officer. His talk was entitled “To get to Heaven, raise Hell”. He began with an insight into the personal experience of the concept “To get to Heaven, raise Hell”. The role of the Community Development Officer within the former Western Health Board and now the HSE was explained and its importance to the working relationship with the Voluntary and Community sector was highlighted. The development of Health Policy and Social Services in Ireland from 1720 to the present was then outlined to those in attendance. The National Policy on Primary Care was discussed and the speaker urged the voluntary sector, such as Ballinasloe Social Services, to demand their place on this structure. He suggested that the Social Services Councils should come together a few times during the year and organise themselves into a cohesive representative group of the essential and underfunded work they provide to their communities.. He concluded by thanking Ballinasloe Social Services for inviting him to speak at their AGM and was delighted to be back again to a service that impressed him with the excellent services provided by a dedicated staff and committed Board.