

Public Statement

Jane & Brendan Mc Kenna – Founders of LauraLynn Children's Hospice

9th August 2016

When we set out to establish LauraLynn House, Ireland's first Children's Hospice in 2001/2002, we did so because of our own experience of palliative care, death and bereavement. Our two precious girls, Lynn & Laura both had different life limiting/life threatening conditions, and sadly died within 20 months of each other.

One of Lynn's last wishes was to die at home, as opposed to hospital, and thankfully for her and for us, that wish came true. Reflecting on our experiences, the Irish climate and the lack of choice for families caring for children with palliative care needs provided the impetus to fundraise to facilitate the establishment of a dedicated Children's Hospice. We shared the international vision for children's palliative care and aimed to build a 'Home from Home' for families living with palliative children, to provide 'In House' much needed care and respite for families caring for these children, together with special end of life care in a beautiful hospice setting, provided by trained palliative care nurses, when home is not a viable option for the child and family.

Having raised the funds to build our Children's Hospice, the opportunity for the *LauraLynn* Foundation to merge with Children's Sunshine Home came in 2007/2008, and we believed we had the perfect location on which to build the Hospice. In accordance with the terms of the merger, we put our trust in the Board, Management and staff to run and develop *LauraLynn* House, specialising in supporting families of palliative children, and with this goal in mind, *LauraLynn* House opened in September 2011. Over the years, it has become well known, and the fundraising and Hospice build is widely acknowledged by the public as our legacy to our brave girls, *Lynn & Laura*, whom we miss eternally.

For those not aware, my own work has always been voluntary, and our time and commitment throughout the years given with love and dedication in support of the Board, CEO and Management team. We ourselves do not hold any Management or Board responsibilities.

We now feel it is timely for us to take a 'Back Seat' in the future direction of *LauraLynn*, Ireland's Children's Hospice. After close to 14 years of tireless devotion, we feel we have realised our dream and worked hard to raise finances to build and run *LauraLynn* House. It has been a long, sometimes trying, and often difficult road, but ultimately a great joy to see *LauraLynn* House open. Our primary aspiration of establishing a 'Home from Home' for dying children will be a permanent legacy from our girls as a place of haven and shelter to many other precious little ones and their families, when we ourselves have departed this world.

We would like to pass on our heartfelt thanks to everyone who has been a part of *LauraLynn* throughout the years, before and after the merger. Most of all, our greatest thanks goes to our donors who deserve our sincere gratitude, as without them, *LauraLynn* would not exist.

We would also like to thank all who have shown us true kindness personally throughout the years, and for all the lovely cards and sentiments passed on to us. They have meant so very much and lifted our spirits greatly.

We will always view *LauraLynn* as a legacy to our two girls, and it will continue to hold a special place in our hearts. However, as we are now close to retirement, we feel it's time to step back and start living a less confined life outside of *LauraLynn* now. We hope all at *LauraLynn* and the public will understand and respect our decision.

We wish the Board, Staff and Supporters of *LauraLynn* House happiness, and good health always, and most of all we remember the precious little ones gone from us. We hope *LauraLynn* will continue to bring special care and comfort to the current and future families of palliative and dying children, making life a little gentler for them, and providing a shelter in which to make precious everlasting memories.

With our LOVE & THANKS
Jane & Brendan Mc Kenna