

Golden week for St Mary of the Angels



Bernie O'Shea, Robert McCarron and Willie Riordan enjoying the St Mary of the Angels 50th anniversary celebrations on Tuesday.

St Mary of the Angels celebrates 50th anniversary

IT WAS a golden week for everyone associated with St Mary of the Angels in Beaufort as they celebrated their 50th anniversary on Tuesday.

BY AMBER GALWEY

Over 400 people - including dignitaries, past and present staff members, residents and family members - made their way to the vital Beaufort facility which provides a home for people with disabilities.

The facility was founded by the Franciscan Sisters in 1968 as a residential home for children with disabilities, the only one of its kind in Kerry.

Hundreds of people got to

see the important facility and the impact it makes to residents as they joined in their milestone celebrations this week.

"We are overwhelmed by the support," said Claire O'Dwyer, general manager of St John of God services in Kerry.

"It was a very special day and it marked the excellent work done by our team in Kerry and the support of our families. The reality is that we wouldn't exist without the support of the com-

munity in Kerry. They have continued to fundraise for us and have embraced us with such goodwill," she added.

It was a poignant occasion for all involved, especially for those who call St Mary of the Angels their home as well as their families.

The large crowd attended a celebratory Mass which was concelebrated by Fr Derek O'Connell and Bishop of Kerry Ray Browne. St Mary of the Angels residents also participated in the Mass as they performed a play for the large congregation and Killorglin's Pipe Band and local men's choir also performed.

The guests then moved to the grounds and the GAA's Micheál Ó Muircheartaigh, Aidan O'Mahony and Marc Ó

Sé planted a commemorative oak tree.

A video depicting the rich history of the facility and everything that has happened at the Beaufort service over the past five decades was also shown at the celebrations and it was a huge hit amongst the large crowd.

For the past half-century, the Beaufort-based service has supported hundreds of people.

Currently, there are 74 residents at St Mary of the Angels along with day service users as well as fifty children in St Francis' Special School.

In total, St John of God Kerry provides their service to over 300 people and there are currently 370 staff members across the county.



TOP: The management team at St Mary of the Angels at their 50th anniversary celebrations, seated l-r: Claire O'Dwyer, Nora Brosnan. Back l-r: Helena Cronin, Liam Healy, Sheila Fitzgerald and Dolores Parker. ABOVE: Micheál Ó Muircheartaigh, Sr Mary Rose and Killarney Mayor John Sheahan were special guests at the St Mary of the Angels 50th anniversary celebrations.



The organising committee for the St Mary of the Angels 50th anniversary celebrations on Tuesday, front l-r: Anna Hanafin, Sheila Murphy, Mary O'Leary, Caroline O'Reilly. Back l-r: Mike Cashman, Damian McCarthy, Claire O'Donovan, General Manager, Eddie Hanafin and Helen O'Connor.