

the IRISH NEWS

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Open up to someone: survivor of suicide bid

By Anne Madden
Health Correspondent

A BELFAST man who once attempted suicide but turned his life around has called on troubled teenagers to seek help before it is too late.

Adrian Green (35), right, took the unusual step of speaking about his own suicide attempt to mark International Suicide Prevention Day.

Northern Ireland is facing an epidemic of suicides, with 132 known deaths last year.

North and west Belfast have among the highest rates in Europe, with at least 10 people taking their own lives within eight weeks in the north of the city at the start of this year. One north Belfast help group has dealt with more than 200 suicidal cases since last Christmas.

The number of suicides now routinely runs at a higher level – north and south of the border – than the number of deaths on the roads.

Mr Green, who works for a transport company and teaches martial arts in the Ardoyne area of north Belfast in his spare time, said he had chosen to speak out in an effort to prevent further lives being lost.

"I think I was very fortunate to come out the other side," he said.

Originally from Clonard in west Belfast, Mr Green said he had left home at 16 and abused solvents and alcohol.

His life spiralled downwards into loneliness and depression and at 17 he tried to take his own life by cutting his wrists.



He was taken to hospital where he was treated for his injuries.

"Frustration and anger built up in me," he said.

"It was Christmas time and I didn't feel like I could go back to my family and admit that I was wrong."

It was years later when he was reconciled with his family that he told them about his suicide attempt.

"I was ashamed and embarrassed," he said.

"People automatically think someone who is suicidal is nuts – but people shouldn't be so quick to judge.

"It is very difficult to open up about problems but I have found that it certainly helps and there are a lot of support networks out there.

"I would say to anyone feeling hopeless, like I did, to open up to someone – a relative or close friend – and if you are a friend go and get them help."

Mr Green, who now has two children, called for improved services for people with depression or at risk of suicide.

"If someone has a terminal illness it is treated immediately but someone who is suicidal is also in danger of dying," he said.

He warned of the finality of suicide, saying: "Often it can be a cry for help – but if it goes wrong there is no coming back."

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Summit for training of the shrewd

ERUDITE: Andrew Learthe as William Shakespeare in Belfast's Linen Hall Library yesterday to help launch an accountancy conference in Slieve Donard Hotel on September 30. Topping the bill of guest speakers will be Richard Olivier, son of Sir Laurence Olivier, who employs the plays of Shakespeare to illustrate business techniques

PICTURE: Hugh Russell

OAP's feat of bravery lauded

By Catherine Morrison
Newry Correspondent

COASTGUARD officials have paid tribute to a Co Down man in his seventies who swam a mile to shore after his boat capsized on Carlingford Lough.

Frank McMullan, from Rostrevor, was out sailing with a relative when their 16 foot catamaran capsized.

He became separated from the vessel and began to drift away but reached the shore safely at Rostrevor.

His sailing companion, Eugene McMullan, used a mobile phone to

contact the coastguard and British army helicopters were brought in but Frank made it ashore unaided.

It is still not clear why the boat capsized as weather conditions were close to ideal.

Liam Colquhoun of Belfast coastguard said it was "no easy feat" to swim such a distance in the choppy waters of Carlingford Lough.

"Swimming for a mile is undoubtedly an achievement as the man was probably in shock and the water temperature would not have been warm," he said.

"He must have kept very calm and

just headed for shore. It would be a good idea if everyone who went out sailing could swim at that level."

Mr Colquhoun said the two men were lucky to have survived.

"It was a significant operation. We launched Killeel inshore lifeboat, tasked some helicopters from the army and we got the police and Newcastle Coastguard down towards Rostrevor where the incident happened," he said.

"They were definitely lucky because it could have been much worse. It was a very good, still day and we are still not sure exactly what happened."

Planxty planning return to Belfast

By Robert McMillen

ARGUABLY the best folk group Ireland has produced are to play in Belfast for the first time in more than two decades, *the Irish News* has learned.

Planxty, right – Andy Irvine, Donal Lunny, Liam O'Flynn and Christy Moore – will perform two gigs in the city in January, with tickets on sale next week.

News of the concerts is expected to send a wave of anticipation through the group's many northern fans.

Earlier this year 12,000 people – including many northerners – witnessed the reunited group play over 12 nights in Dublin and Ennis, Co Clare, in what has become known as Planxty's 'Third Coming'.

Irvine said the band members relished the occasions. "It was magical from our point of view," he said.

"We walked out on stage and the audience were so full of love and excitement. It was a humbling experience."

Planxty are widely regarded as



one of the Ireland's most influential bands, fusing traditional and folk music to revitalise its music scene in the early 1970s.

Their first eponymous album, referred to as the *Black Album* for its cover art, is seen as a landmark in Irish folk music.

The band also won acclaim in Britain and continental Europe with two other albums before splitting up and then reforming in 1979 for a further five years.

Moore now enjoys a highly successful solo career and performed a sell-out concert this summer during west Belfast's

Feile an Phobail.

Planxty play the Waterfront Hall on January 19 and 20. Tickets priced €35.50, €33.00 and €30.00 go on sale next Thursday from the Waterfront and Ticketmaster outlets. Call 0870 243 4455 for credit card bookings.



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