

## ► Big screen a big hit for retirement home's movie night

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Breda Patterson sits patiently with other residents in front of the big front window in the reception area at Amberley Nursing and Retirement Cottages near Fermoy in North Cork.

There's a sense of anticipation and excitement.

Like all residents at Amberley, Breda has been cocooning since 6 March. It's a huge sacrifice.

Residents have gone without visits by family and loved ones. Contact with the world outside has been restricted to phone calls and FaceTime and WhatsApp.

Everyone bought in and the huge effort has been worthwhile: Amberley hasn't registered a single case of coronavirus - and residents and staff are determined to keep it that way.

A reward for the hard work has been on the cards for over a week: a movie night for Breda and her fellow residents - without having to leave the comfort of their armchairs in the reception area at Amberley.

Theatre company production manager [Scott Duggan first brought street cinema to his neighbours at Frankfield Villas in Cork City.](#)

It was a huge success, as Scott's neighbours enjoyed classics like Calamity Jane from the comfort of their front gardens. At the same time, vital funds were generated for the charity Age Action, through collections at each showing and donations on social media and fundraising pages.

Scott, who is volunteering his time, wanted a bigger challenge. He put out a call for a suitable nursing home; Amberley answered the call.

Scott packed a van with his projector, a screen donated free of charge by his theatre company, Cyclone Rep, and other equipment, and headed for the banks of the River Blackwater, close to Michael Flatley's Castlehyde Castle.

In the spring sunshine, the location was idyllic: birdsong was so loud, it almost drowned out the noise of hammering as Scott quickly constructed the screen on which he planned to project the 1952 musical rom-com, Singin' In The Rain.

As the screen was erected outside, Breda and her fellow residents sat inside, excitedly waiting for the movie to begin. Many enjoyed a glass of wine with some finger food and other treats as they waited.



Breda Patterson is among the residents who enjoyed the movie night

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Tonight was a well-deserved reward for the residents, after the cocooning efforts of the past seven weeks.

"A night like tonight makes a big difference," says Breda. "It's very hard not seeing your family.

"I was used to my family coming in every Saturday. My grandchildren, Leo and Archie, would come in and then, all of a sudden, it stopped.

"My sister used to come on Tuesdays and other friends used to come other days. All that stopped suddenly and it was very difficult."

Breda doesn't underestimate the scale of the achievement in keeping Amberley free of coronavirus since lockdown began seven weeks ago.

She pays tribute to the staff there for keeping the campus virus-free - there are currently 64 residents at Amberley, ranging in age from 70 to 98.

"The staff are absolutely fantastic -- we couldn't have managed without them," Breda says. "They keep our spirits up all the time. I think they're wonderful."

Neethu Thomas heads up the nursing team at Amberley.

She helped set up the movie night with Scott Duggan. She says excitement has been building for the past week since it was confirmed.

"We know it is lockdown season and I am pretty sure this is one of the safest activities that we can provide for our residents in this difficult situation," Neethu says. "Everyone is excited."



Amberley nursing team leader Neethu Thomas

Neethu revealed how Amberley has remained free of coronavirus: "From the beginning, we adopted all the guidelines from the HSE and HIQA.

"We followed all the protocols. All staff were using masks from the beginning, and many staff moved out of home and we provided them with accommodation.

"We did our best to prevent the virus coming into our building and so far it's a success. We do think it won't come to us - we will fight against it," Neethu says.

Breda Patterson says movie night was a nice way to celebrate Amberley's achievement, although everyone there knows the work has to continue.

"Just to sit there and enjoy it was lovely, especially at the moment with the virus around," Breda says. "We can't go out, so it's a great addition to us."

The screening of Singin' In The Rain ended at Amberley just before midnight and, as he dismantled the screen and drove home to Cork City, Scott Duggan was considering where to bring his street cinema next.

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