



Kerry Social Farming



Maura Sheehy of Maura's Cottage Flowers, Spa, Tralee.



Participants Vanessa Meehan, Ciara Corridon and Siobhan Quirke delivering homegrown flowers from Maura's Cottage Flowers to Kate Browne's Bar and Restaurant, Ardara.

'Everything about Social Farming is positive, there is nothing negative...'

I HAD seen a Kerry Social Farming video on Facebook and I was totally sold once I watched it. I did work with people with special needs in the past and when I saw that video the penny dropped as to how much I had missed working in this area. One of the advantages of Social Farming is that I am at home and onsite with my participants.

I have Ciara, Vanessa and Siobhan calling to me and they absolutely love it. Ciara follows me on Instagram and I can see from her pictures that she is doing some of the flower arranging

at home that she does with me, that side of it is wonderful to see.

The feedback from their Support Workers and families is absolutely massive and you don't really realise the value they're getting from Social Farming until you chat with other people in their lives. Social Farming really sparks their interest. The UCC course many of us are doing (Certificate in Practice Support in Social Farming) is very beneficial as it makes us more observant and aware. I feel I'm a better communicator now because of this experience.

For Tommy and I there is a huge benefit to being hosts as it's the highlight of our week. We enjoy the tea and great banter as well. We change their jobs around as well from week to week and going out on deliveries with the lads, and just being part of the community, is huge for them; it's the feeling of independence.

Personally speaking, Social Farming slows me down in a positive way. It also keeps me organised and overall it's the connection and sense of humour of the lads that is special. For us, Social Farming is a win-win situation and every benefit

the lads get from it, we get it as well. Everything about it is positive and there is nothing negative about it whatsoever. It's that lovely sense of being connected with nature. Social Farming brings us completely into the here and now and you live and enjoy those single moments.

I would encourage all farmers to try it. There is great support work involved in Social Farming so you will never feel alone as a host farmer.

Maura and Tommy Sheehy, 'Maura's Cottage Flowers', Tralee