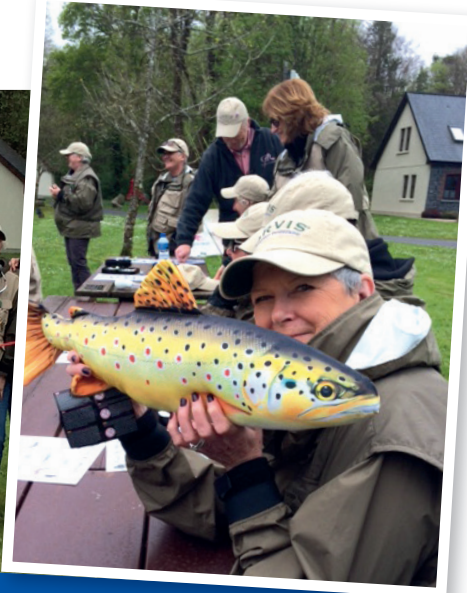


Casting for recovery

An unlikely initiative is helping breast cancer survivors all over the country



“I’ve been doing fly-fishing for 34 years and it’s hard to explain unless you’ve tried it yourself. Once the women start the fishing it’s addictive; they won’t come off the water and that happens at every single venue we go to. You get lost in it and it’s quite difficult to understand how it affects you. It’s hard to put that into words.

“I’ve been on most of the retreats over the years and I’ve seen the ladies when they arrive on the Friday and when they leave on the Sunday. The difference between them from when they arrive to when they leave is quite remarkable.”

Emma Corcoran, from Co Dublin, attended a Casting for Recovery retreat in April 2017. Here, in her own words, she describes her experience.

“As I began to ‘get better’ after eight long months of surgery, chemotherapy, radiotherapy and what seemed like endless rounds of hospital appointments, I wanted to take myself out of my comfort zone and experience new things. I applied for the Casting for Recovery retreat because it was something totally different to anything I had ever done before. It took me out of my comfort zone and it was a wonderful, life affirming experience.

“Prior to going I worried about the atmosphere of the retreat. Would it all be doom and gloom? But I laughed from the moment I got there and had such fun. It’s hard to describe just how amazing it was.”

www.castingforrecovery.org.uk

For over ten years Casting for Recovery have held free retreats in Ireland and the UK for women whose lives have been affected by breast cancer. The ladies who attend not only get the opportunity to learn to sport of fly fishing, they also get to meet other women who have been through similar experiences.

“It started in 2006. Sue Hunter, a friend of mine, had breast cancer twice and she was introduced to fly fishing as a kind of therapy,” says Sue Shaw, the retreat coordinator.

“She saw a piece in a fishing magazine about Casting for Recovery and couldn’t understand why it had never been brought across here. She wanted someone to help her move the concept forward and I agreed to run the charity with her soon after she had joined the England Ladies Fly Fishing Association, which I was already a member of. Jill Grieve and the Countryside Alliance were keen to support Casting for Recovery from the beginning and indeed paid for the very first retreat back in 2007.”

A weekend with Casting for Recovery can be altered to suit the individual. Some women prefer to focus on the sport while



Sue Hunter

others wish to speak to trained professionals, explains Sue.

“The women will enjoy a Getting to Know You session, along with fly casting instruction. They’ll also go through a session on entomology or what fish eat, so that they can understand what is underneath the water. That’s interspersed with medical advice, relaxation and counseling which can either be done as a group or during one-to-one sessions. The counsellors are there all weekend, so if anyone wants to talk, whether they want to increase their knowledge on fly fishing or if they want to understand their breast cancer issues from a medical or a counseling side, there’s always someone there.

“It took me out of my comfort zone and was a life affirming experience”

“We look after them for the whole weekend. It’s all about these ladies and them meeting like-minded people.”

The retreat is open to all, if you have been diagnosed, are going through treatment or are a breast cancer survivor.

“There’s no bar on anything; as long as the ladies have clearance from their doctors or oncologists to say that they’re okay to come along. Obviously we have quite a lot of form filling as well before the retreat and they do have to get clearance beforehand to make sure they’re well enough to attend the experience they’re going to go through. I haven’t had breast cancer so I’m very lucky, however I know what it’s like to be outside and to be at one with nature.