

FEATURE

General Election Candidate for South Kildare outlines a typical day

A Day In the Life of..... Fiona McLoughlin Healy

I WAKE in the morning between 6.30am and 7.00am, make myself a cup of tea and go straight to my computer catching up on emails and drawing up a list of jobs to do for the day. By 7.45am the children and Bernard are up. I prepare breakfast while Bernard prepares lunchboxes for Ryan (11), Erin (9) and Freya (8). I try to get a healthy breakfast into them like any form of eggs or porridge to kick start their day.

I developed a healthy eating programme called Food Rebels to tackle childhood obesity with a nutritional scientist 5 years ago. One of the four main elements of the programme is the importance of a wholesome breakfast. It's not always easy especially now that I'm in the middle of a general election campaign - but we try our best!

Part of what I love about being a public representative, a business owner and a Mum is that no two days are the same. The children need a certain amount of routine but they too have their own hectic lives of GAA, soccer, Leah Moran's stage school, Jujitsu and Panto school

School
Bernard drops the children to school at 8.30am while I get ready to go to my clinic office in Newbridge. All County Cllrs offices are not funded I have been incredibly lucky to have fantastic sup-

port and the office has been open 9.30-4pm Monday to Friday with the help of incredible volunteers - men and women, young and old from across the constituency willing to help at the drop of a hat. Before the election was called I would meet with constituents who would drop in looking for help with housing, or business or grant applications.

This morning I have a meeting with Karen Leigh founder of Sensational Kids, a voluntary organisation close to my heart. They provide voluntary services to children with special needs providing subsidised therapy services for over 800 children a month. We are looking at how to expand this much needed service nationwide. Other days it might be a meeting of the Council or of the Kildare Wicklow Education and Training Board of which I am a member. I have a special interest in both education and training of our young people. Education is one of the best routes out of poverty, the best way to maximise our children and our country's potential in the future. And a world-class apprenticeship training sector would increase our competitiveness internationally while spreading the recovery nationwide.

Nationwide
At the moment a lot of the afternoon is spent canvassing while fielding important calls

from the children like where their soccer gear is, can they go to a friend's house and other issues of crucial importance to them at that particular moment in time. We get to see very little of the children during canvass periods but I do try to get to see them for an hour at some point during the day and annoy them with my usual question of: what was the worst part of your day, and what was the best part of your day?. I have found over the years these questions reveal a lot about what's important to them. The children don't like when I'm away canvassing all the time but they are hugely supportive and know and understand why I am running and that Mammy is trying her best to make things better for them and their friends and their friend's families in the future.

Bernard is my greatest supporter and touchstone and later on in the day we catch up over a tea on what happened in our respective days. Bernard leaves me to work responding to queries on social media and I make it to bed sometime before 1am. I break a few best practice rules during election time by allowing the children to sneak in to our bed to sleep with us if they haven't seen me during the day. There's nothing like a cuddle from your children to keep things in perspective. It



also reduces blood pressure and heart rate - so it's medicinal! No matter what else happens in our careers - as long as the children are happy and doing well Bernard and I are happy!



■ Fiona McLoughlin Healy and Minister for Justice Frances Fitzgerald pop into the Hokey Pokey Restaurant in Newbridge while canvassing.



■ Karen Leigh (Founder and CEO of Sensational Kids), Tracy Piggott, and Fiona McLoughlin Healy



■ Fiona McLoughlin Healy with her husband, Dr. Bernard Healy and their children (L-R) Freya, Erin and Ryan



■ Newbridge Sarsfields GAA Under 10 Girls partaking in a blitz



■ Newbridge Town FC Girls Academy at which Fiona McLoughlin Healy coaches each Sunday.



■ Minister For Health Leo Varadkar cooking with Freya Healy and Fiona McLoughlin Healy