AT the launch of the 25th Daffodil Day, the Irish Cancer Society revealed how demand for its free patient care services increased significantly last year.

The Society and Dell, lead partner for Daffodil Day, have called on the Mayo public to help raise the ambitious fundraising target of €3.5 million to celebrate Daffodil Day's 25th birthday on Friday, March 23.

Funds raised on Daffodil Day by thousands of volunteers across Ireland go directly to providing free cancer information and nursing services.

This includes the society's free home-based night nursing service to seriously ill cancer patients.

Irish Cancer Society night nurses provided over 8,000 nights of care to 2,014 patients in their own home across Ireland in 2011. This was an increase of nearly 13 per cent since 2010.

Daffodil Day also helps fund the Irish Cancer Society's flagship Cancer Information Service, including the National Cancer Helpline (Freefone 1800 200 700).

In 2011 cancer specialist nurses on the Helpline responded to 22,120 enquiries, an increase of over 900 enquiries from 2010. Over 142 calls were from people living in Mayo.

Speaking at the launch, John McCormack, CEO, Irish Cancer Society, said: "We have seen a massive increase in the demand for our services due to the ever increasing incidence of cancer.

"The latest figures from the NCRI show that there were 943 cases of cancer diagnosed in Mayo last year.

"Now, more than ever, the services we provide are crucial. The money we raise on Daffodil Day goes directly to support people with cancer and their families at every stage of the cancer journey."

Ireland's cancer rate is one of the highest in the world. One in three of us will be diagnosed with cancer in our lifetime and it is estimated by 2020, 43,000 new cases will be diagnosed.

These stark figures mean that the funds raised on Daffodil Day are essential if the society is to continue to meet the demand for its range of free nationwide patient care services.

Mr. McCormack continued: "This year we are asking communities across Mayo to join us in celebrating Daffodil Day reaching its 25th birthday and to help us reach our target of €3.5 million.

"We need people to show solidarity and support for people and families across the country affected by cancer so that we can continue to meet their needs in 2012."

In 2010 Dell Ireland became the Irish Cancer Society's lead partner for Daffodil Day for a three-year period until 2013.

How you can support Daffodil Day: volunteer on Daffodil Day, organise a Daffodil Day event in your community or workplace, buy a daffodil or Daffodil Day merchandise and Donate and plant a virtual daffodil at
www.gardenofhope.ie
.

For more information on how you can get involved, visit www.cancer.ie

All monies raised will go towards growing the society's direct patient care services, including the National Cancer Helpline (Freefone 1800 200 700), the night nursing service, oncology liaison nursing, financial aid, counselling and free cancer information literature.