

## **PRESS RELEASE**

9<sup>th</sup> October 2007

### **CALL FOR GREATER SUPPORT FOR INNOVATION IN THE COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY SECTOR**

*Ireland's Leading Innovators Honoured at  
Annual Social Entrepreneurs Ireland Awards*

Innovation is a key factor for the long term growth of any sector in society. One of the richest sources of innovation within the community and voluntary sector is the social entrepreneur and these exceptional individuals need greater support to encourage more innovation in the sector. This was the announcement from Social Entrepreneurs Ireland as they acknowledged 36 individuals for their exceptional work in tackling social problems throughout the country at the **2007 Social Entrepreneur Ireland Awards**.

With the programme in its third year, SEI is now starting to show some demonstrable results and impact from previous year's award winners. Current Mayor of Portlaoise, **Rotimi Adebari**, himself a recipient of a Social Entrepreneurs Ireland Award was one of the guest speakers at the presentation and reiterated the importance and necessity of innovation in making change and progress.

"It is a great honour to be acknowledged as a Social Entrepreneur. As individuals it is very rewarding to know that we can make a difference. Our work is essential for many sections of our community who would otherwise get left behind. I would call on anyone who has an idea and is passionate about what they do to act upon it. Innovation is crucial if our society is to progress. The work of Social Entrepreneurs Ireland is therefore essential in recognising this and we need to value their support and commitment"

Rotimi, originally from Nigeria, was honoured by Social Entrepreneurs Ireland (SEI) in 2005 for his outstanding work with the socially excluded in the Laois community before going on to make history by becoming Ireland's first black Mayor earlier this year.

**Denis O'Brien** who was part of the interviewing panel selecting the award nominees also spoke at the event adding;

"Social Entrepreneurs are the mavericks and free thinkers who tackle some of the biggest issues facing Ireland today. In doing so, they benefit not just the community and voluntary sector but society as a whole. Their work needs to be encouraged by both the Government and funding communities to ensure they advance to the next level and their unique programmes of innovation and entrepreneurship are sustained.

"These awards have recognised some outstanding innovators; people that have made a real difference to their community. Tonight we are honouring 36 exceptional people including our speaker Caroline McGuigan and I would call on others to be inspired by their passion and commitment and act on their entrepreneurial skills and ideas" he added.

The winners, who showed outstanding innovation in their communities, were honoured at the ceremony where two levels of awards were presented. Of the 36 winners, 10 were honoured in level 2 (highest award) and 26 were honoured in Level 1 (early stages of development).

Among the Level 2 winners, guest speaker on the night **Caroline McGuigan** was awarded for founding *Suicide or Service*, an organisation which designs and runs an innovative suicide prevention group programme called the Eden Programme. Also awarded was **Bob Seward** founder of the *Cork Academy of Music* which has trained over 600 people from socially excluded areas of Cork of which one-fifth have gone on to third level education and **Paul Mooney** who established *Jobcare* in 1994 and who now has developed an innovative employment support programme to break the cycle of re-offending among ex-prisoners.

Level One winners included **Caroline Carswell** founder of *Irish Deaf Kids* which promotes inclusive education for deaf children at mainstream schools; **Clare Muireann Murphy**, a professional storyteller, who launched a pioneer project, *Community Storytelling*, which works with marginalised communities in Galway and **Mary Nally** who received her award for the *Failte Isteach* project in Meath, which sees older people volunteer their time to teach conversational English classes to non Irish nationals.

Speaking at the awards, Sean Coughlan, Chief Executive of Social Entrepreneurs Ireland said;

“Social entrepreneurs are by definition entrepreneurs; innovators who are passionate and resourceful, who are prepared to take risks and who apply their energy, drive and ambition to effecting social change in Ireland. It is now time for Ireland to recognise its unique and vital role within our communities and provide the encouragement and practical support as well as the much needed funding that social entrepreneurs need in order to grow and thrive”.

Social Entrepreneurs Ireland, established in 2005, is a privately funded, not-for-profit organisation that believes that innovation and social change in Ireland will be driven by exceptional people with exceptional ideas. They have developed a support model that helps these social entrepreneurs grow their ideas from concept to reality and have, to date, committed in excess of €2.1m in direct funding to these innovators and leaders through an annual awards programme.

Examples of past achievers include, Paul Kelly (2006 Level 2 winner) whose *Console* counselling service has already been used by 50,000 people. Carmel Dunne’s *CEOL* (2006 Level 2) has taught music to over 2,000 primary school children in Ballyfermot alone and as a result of SEI encouragement and support is now launching a unique music programme to schools across the country. Among it’s many achievements, Tara Cunningham’s *Release Communication Intervention* (2005 Level 2) has resulted in over 10 children, who prior to joining Release were non- verbal and are now speaking for the first time.

**ENDS**

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## Notes to Editors:

Biographies on all 36 recipients are attached in a separate document

### Level 2 Awards

The awards are suitable for applicants who have proven their model, have already fully launched their project and who are now looking to significantly grow its scale and impact. Level 2 awards consist of €70,000 (€80,000 for partnerships) over a period of 2 years plus technical support, training and access to the Social Entrepreneurs Ireland network of social entrepreneurs

### Level 1 Awards

Level 1 awards are suitable for applicants who are at the early stages of development of their project, typically at proof-of-concept/pilot stage and consist of an award of €5,000 over a period of 12 months plus technical support, training and access to the Social Entrepreneurs Ireland network of social entrepreneurs.

## 2007 Social Entrepreneurs Ireland Award Winners

### Level 2 Award Winners

Bob Seward	Cork Academy of Music
Caroline McGuigan	SOS Suicide or Survive
Ciaran Hayden & Eamon Stack	Enclude
Elizabeth Garrahy	Arts for Peace Foundation
John McCarthy	Mental Health & the Law
Ken Boland & David Egan	Red Branch
Louise Oppermann	Community Timebank
Paul Mooney	Jobcare

### Level 1 Award Winners

Alison Darcy	UPR-Online
Ann Francis Murphy	Tilt Versatile Crockery
Anne Doran	Mainstreaming Mediation Initiative
Bernard Sweeney	Travellers4Travellers
Carol Doyle	BelleEtik Clothing Company
Caroline Carswell	IrishDeafKids.ie
Cherif Labreche	Hanine Media Development Agency
Clare Mulvany	One Wild Life
Clare Muireann Murphy	Community Storytelling
Colm Olwill	Assistive Technology Ireland
David Dunn	Media Forum
Evelyn Grant	Cork Music Works
Golden Anikwe	Co-operative Support Services
Helene Hugel	Freddie & Friends
José Ospina	Carbery Housing Association
Martin Dier & Claire Oakes	Living Democracy
Mary Nally	Failte Isteach
Monika Sapielak	ArtPolonia
Paul Mooney	Resilience4Enterprise
Robert Mulhall	Lucca Leadership
Stephanie Fitzgerald	Saoirse Family Support Services
Tina Schmill	Pegasus – Horses Help People
Tonia Custers	Support for Caring Communities
Tania Zhinzina	The Immigrant Newspaper
Zoë O'Reilly	Súil Eile