

Press Release

Economic Downturn Highlights Need for More Social Entrepreneurs

Social Entrepreneurs Ireland Calls for Applications for 2009 Awards

Dublin, February 1st, 2009, Social Entrepreneurs Ireland today launched its call for applications for its 2009 Awards Programme. Since its establishment in 2005 Social Entrepreneurs Ireland has provided over €2.8 million in funding to support a network of 116 aspiring social entrepreneurs, many of whom have gone on to develop innovative and highly successful programmes that are tackling serious social problems in our society.

Launching the call for applications, Sean Coughlan, Chief Executive, Social Entrepreneurs Ireland said that the current social and economic climate has created conditions that require more and more people to think and act creatively in order to address the needs and growing disparities in communities.

"We believe that new and innovative solutions exist to the myriad of social and environmental challenges we face today and that these solutions will be most effective when driven by individuals who adopt a highly entrepreneurial approach to their activities, i.e. by social entrepreneurs" said Coughlan.

"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. At the start of their journey they need support and that is what we provide. Today we are inviting those people to contact us and apply for funding and support" he said

The Social Entrepreneurs Ireland 2009 Awards are supported by NTR plc under a three year partnership as a practical means of injecting support for those people who are prepared to take risks for social change. "I would encourage people to apply for these awards;" said Jim Barry Chief Executive Officer, NTR plc. "There is tangible support at hand through Social Entrepreneurs Ireland for those who have a vision on how they can effect social change and these awards could help in many ways, from helping get projects off the ground or by bringing pioneering programmes to a new level."

To date social entrepreneurs are making a significant contribution to the economy by starting new enterprises and are filling an increasingly important role in solving social issues. They have stepped up to the mark, and are actively making a difference and igniting change and need to be encouraged and supported to do so now more than ever. The activities of last year's awardees alone have directly benefitted over 17,000 people and more than 165,000 have indirectly benefitted.

Tara Cunningham set up Release Communication Intervention to provide an accessible, affordable group therapy model for speech therapy to children with special needs. Since 2005 Release has provided close to 8000 hours of therapy to over 750 children, with over 50 nonverbal children now speaking and over 50 more transitioning into mainstream schooling.

Paul Mooney founder of Jobcare set up the Trasna programme to provide development and employment opportunities for ex-offenders. As well as providing training, mentoring and employment, in its first year, the programme has saved the state over €990,000 in prison costs alone.

Dara Hogan of Fledglings Childcare set up a franchise model for childcare to provide affordable quality childcare facilities in disadvantaged communities. Fledglings Childcare supports FETAC-qualified Early Years Educators to set up new, affordable childcare facilities in their local communities. With over 100 childcare places and 24 jobs created in 2009, Dara expects to open 10 sites by 2011.

Social Entrepreneurs Ireland offers two levels of 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. A Level 1 Award lasts for 12 months. Awardees receive €6,000 plus a comprehensive package of support and training.

Level 2 Awards are suitable for applicants have already developed a proven model and who are looking to significantly grow the scale and impact of their project. Level 2 awards consist of an award of €80,000 over a period of 2 years plus a comprehensive package of support and training, mentoring and coaching.

Application forms and further information can be found on the Social Entrepreneurs Ireland website www.socialentrepreneurs.ie. Closing date for completed applications is March 20th 2009.

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