

19<sup>th</sup> October 2009

## **SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS IRELAND ANNOUNCE 2009 AWARD WINNERS**

Thirty one social entrepreneurs receive €750,000

### ***CALL ON GOVERNMENT TO SUPPORT MORE INNOVATION IN THE SOCIAL SECTOR***

Social Entrepreneurs Ireland today (19<sup>th</sup> October) announced their 2009 Award Winners at a ceremony in The Exchange, the newly renovated former Labour Exchange on Dublin's Gardiner Street. Guest of Honour was President McAleese. Thirty one social entrepreneurs from throughout the country received Awards ranging from €80,000 each for Level 2 Awardees to €6,000 each for Level 1 Awards winners. Established in 2004, the annual Social Entrepreneurs Ireland Awards are supported by NTR and have disbursed over €3.44 million to over 142 people and organisations who have brought their innovative ideas to drive social change in Ireland.

The 2009 Awardees ranged across a wide variety of social issues, community and active citizenship; young people and children; education and learning; mental and physical health; new communities and travellers; environment and sustainability; disability and older people.

Singer Frances Black set up The Rise Foundation to help families of addicts understand the nature of the disease and the profound effects it has on relationships; following the death of her son Darius in 2005, Mary Desmond Vasseghi set up Sudden Cardiac Death in the Young to provide support and also preventative screening services nationwide; Jonathan Gunning and Miquel Barcelo are the Gombeens, two social clowns who through laughter spread the word about social justice and community involvement, while Dara Hogan has set up Fledglings Childcare, a not-for-profit social franchise that supports affordable education and childcare services.

Other Awardees this year included John Lawlor, who set up The Bridge to College (B2C) to support young people, particularly those in under resourced communities to raise their educational horizons; Helene Hugel saw the need to support children who are hospitalised and set up Helium, an arts and healthcare company; and in response to alarming rates of suicide and self harm in the Traveller community, Thomas McCann, a member of the traveller community and a qualified psychotherapist, has set up Traveller Counselling Service to provide much needed support.

Speaking at the Awards, Sean Coughlan, Chief Executive, Social Entrepreneurs Ireland, called on the Government to consider innovation in relation to society as well as business. "Over recent times innovation has emerged as a key driver of our growth and prosperity, with the Irish government believing it will be critical in helping Ireland develop as a smart economy. Social Entrepreneurs Ireland believes that not only does Ireland need a smart economy, it needs a just society. And, like the government, we agree innovation will play a key role in achieving this goal. However we believe it is essential that when looking at innovation we look at it not just in a commercial context but also in a broader societal context." he said.

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“It is not enough to create a Smart Economy, the government also needs to focus on establishing a responsible and fair society in order to protect the vulnerable” he added.

Congratulating the awardees, Jim Barry, Chief Executive of NTR plc said, “In keeping with NTR’s entrepreneurial heritage, the NTR Foundation recognises the importance of supporting organisations that address issues in an innovative and entrepreneurial way. Its partnership with Social Entrepreneurs Ireland and, through them, support for these exceptional people who are driving social change in our society, is an inspiration to us. Innovation will be a key driver of both social and economic progress and it is only by considering innovation in this way will we achieve both a just society and a sustainable and successful economy.”

Social Entrepreneurs Ireland, established in 2004, 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. For more information about Social Entrepreneurs Ireland, visit [www.socialentrepreneurs.ie](http://www.socialentrepreneurs.ie).

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