



Frances Black among 'social entrepreneur' winners

by **Ailin Quinlan**

SINGER Frances Black, who established a foundation to help the families of addicts, was among 31 'social entrepreneurs' that received awards totalling €750,000.

Black set up The Rise Foundation, based in Dublin and Belfast, to help families of addicts understand the nature of the disease and the profound effects on relationships.

She joined 30 other winners, including Mary Desmond Vessaghi, who, following the death of her 18-year-old son Darius — whose heart stopped without warning in 2005 — set up Sudden Cardiac Death in the Young to provide support and also preventative screening services nationwide.

At the Social Entrepreneurs Ireland 2009 Awards, awards ranging from €6,000 to €80,000 were presented. The recipients range 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; envi-

ronment and sustainability; disability and older people.

Two awards went to the Cork region — one to Robert Fennell and John Kearney who set up the Bantry-based West Cork Rapid Response service. The service boasts a Rapid Response Vehicle, the area's first fully equipped mobile A&E unit.

The vehicle, staffed by volunteer doctors, can attend emergencies of all kinds and deliver life-saving treatment. Since it was established in March last the service, which is funded by donations locally, has had nearly 60 callouts and saved 11 lives.

A second award went to community drugs worker Catherine Buckley, from Mallow, whose Holistic Harm Reduction programme helps those affected by drug abuse.

Other award winners included Myles McCorry who formed BikePure to tackle the endemic drug use in cycling and Dara Hogan has set up Fledglings Childcare, a not-for-profit social franchise that supports affordable education and childcare services.

Social Entrepreneurs Ireland's chief executive Sean Coughlan 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," he said.



Frances Black: Foundation to help addicts' families.