



# President pays tribute to social entrepreneurs at awards ceremony

STEVEN CARROLL

PRESIDENT MARY McAleese has paid tribute to Ireland's social entrepreneurs, stating that the State needs their "drive, resilience and resourcefulness even more now than ever".

Ms McAleese said times have changed in Ireland, with unemployment rising and the economy struggling, but that she was confident the power of positive action could provide the capacity "to change again and make our country renewed and strong".

At the Social Entrepreneurs Awards 2009 in Dublin last night, Mrs McAleese said: "Their ability to be innovative is a powerful force for change and for the confidence that comes from facing into problems and dealing with them effectively.

"These are people who do not wait for others to tackle problems but acknowledge their own respon-

sibility and create their own opportunities not for selfish but for unselfish reasons and outcomes."

Thirty-one social entrepreneurs were presented with awards totalling €750,000.

The award winners were involved in areas such as community work and active citizenship, helping young people, education, mental and physical health issues, and disability. Each winner received an award ranging from €6,000 to €80,000, sponsored by National Toll Roads (NTR).

The Rise Foundation, established by musician Frances Black in 2006, was awarded for its work in helping the families of addicts understand the nature of addic-

tion and the profound effects it can have on relationships.

Mary Desmond Vasseghi, of the support group Sudden Cardiac Death in the Young, was awarded for her efforts in attempting to reduce the risk of the occurrence of cardiac arrest in young people.

Victoria McKechnie, who is attempting to reduce obesity levels and teach schoolchildren to eat healthily through her enterprise Kids in the Kitchen, was also among the winners.

Seán Coughlan, chief executive of Social Entrepreneurs Ireland, called on the Government to look at innovation not just in a commercial context but also in a broader societal context.

"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."

Publication: Irish Times

Date: Tuesday, October 20, 2009

Page: 18

Extract: 2 of 2

Circulation: 118.259

Author: STEVEN CARROLL

Headline: President pays tribute to social entrepreneurs at awards ceremony



Victoria McKechnie, a winner in the 2009 **Social Entrepreneurs Ireland Awards**, with Ana Coughlan (8) and Luan Ferriter (7) from Glasnevin, Dublin. Ms McKechnie won an award for providing cookery classes for children in underprivileged areas. Photograph: Dara Mac Dónail