

CHANGING IRELAND

AUTUMN '04

ISSUE 12

The National Newsletter of the COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME - funding 170 community projects

*If your health is
your wealth,
the poor
are very
poor . . .*

Why do
the
poor die
younger?

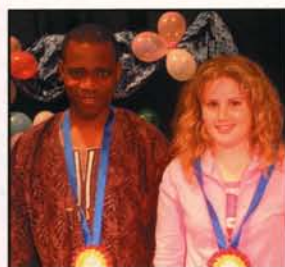
Inside



Minister Ó Cuiv
takes the hard
questions



Ireland's worst
drug - alcohol



New Ross
hosts first local
Intercultural
Awards

Who's the big baldy man?



THE big baldy man on our front cover is An Bui Bolg, a member of the Wexford Community Arts Group. Along with three Wexford CDPs, he took to the streets to promote a new community health programme funded by the Combat Poverty Agency.

Our cover photo shows An Bui Bolg explaining to a group of youngsters on the streets of Wexford the importance of skin-care. The 'Building Healthy Communities' programme has involved CDPs in various parts of the country - in this issue we look at work in Wexford and in the north-west.

Speaking on the street to 'Changing Ireland', Paul O'Brien, (former) co-ordinator at the FAB Project (a CDP based in Coolcotts, Wexford) explained: "The idea for the Health Fair came about because we wanted to publicise the programme to people who might be just passing up and down the street. And we wanted

to get across a clearer idea about what is meant by a RAPID Area."

He continued, "It was a way of getting across to people that health is more than about going to the doctor but is about how you feel about yourself, your family and community."

The Health Fair featured information stands set up by three CDPs - Wolfetone's Women's Group, FAB, The Men's Development Network. There were also stands from a range of other projects working to improve health in the surrounding areas such as the Health Promotion Unit from the SEHB, The Cornmarket Drug Addiction Counselling Service, The Sli Challenge, FDYS, the RAPID Communities, and the Community Drugs Initiative. **See pages 10/11 for more.** In our next issue, due out in early December, we will look at work by CDPs and other agencies on the issue of community health in the north-west.

4-to-a room is no life

CDPs prove their worth to local communities and the country at large time and time again. Some excel at highlighting hidden problems within communities, involving lead agencies and proposing workable solutions.

Take Clondalkin CDP in Dublin. They knew from hearing stories from locals that over-crowding in homes was a problem. How big a problem nobody knew. So they commissioned researchers to survey the situation. Now a report has been produced highlighting an issue that up to now was not officially acknowledged - when there are a dozen people or more living in a three-bedroom house, the home and the family fail to function properly. Youngsters cannot do their homework, teenagers hang out on the streets at night because there is no peace in the home, parent(s) never get a rest after their day's work. School performances decline, youths get into trouble on the streets, parents lose their peace of mind. No wonder so many people take pills in a desperate effort to forget their problems. Is this the Clondalkin, or the Ireland, any of us want?

Overcrowding in family homes is a commonplace problem - in poor communities throughout Ireland, not only in Dublin's disadvantaged suburbs. In Clondalkin, at least someone cares. Someone is doing something about the problem. Identifying it. Attempting to measure the size of the problem. Highlighting it. Proposing solutions via national government and the local authorities. This is the kind of work that CDPs are excellent at. They are in touch with locals - they are the locals. Congratulations to Clondalkin's management committee and staff for taking up the cause of overcrowding in Irish homes. Up to now the problem has been largely ignored.

Housing, anti-social behaviour and poverty are three of the biggest issues for local communities in small towns and in our cities. They are issues which CDPs can highlight, but they need the co-operation of many agencies to deal with.

When a local issue is fought in a developmental way, involving others, including all responsible agencies, it can serve the good of all people in disadvantaged areas in the state. We look forward to seeing Clondalkin CDP go far with highlighting the overcrowding problem and with selling the solutions. It is an issue for many CDPs to also consider investigating.

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DISCLAIMER

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Wexford service a year old

By LORCAN BRENNAN

In Co. Wexford, West Coast Way Transport, through government support provided by Area Development Management was officially launched a year ago this month, writes Lorcan Brennan.

West Coast Way Transport, (or, West Coast Wexford Rural Transport Initiative) provides weekly services to New Ross and Waterford from all over the catchments area. There are also regular trips to the popular seaside resort of Tramore and trips for shopping and sightseeing to Kilkenny.

The project developed their service to include links to nearby training and educational facilities.

It is a vital link for a number of people in the area, offering a community based service, which responds to the needs of the local community. Jacinta Cruise, contact person for the service says "The weekly transport service has a strong customer base that allows people, otherwise isolated, to access appointments, facilities and services as well as visit friends and family spread out across the surrounding region".

For information on the Wexford service contact, Jacinta Cruise, tel. 051-389418 / 087-2281535

People with cars presume everyone has one

Erin Cotter, co-ordinator of the Rural Transport Initiative (RTI) spoke at the launch of a new transport scheme some months ago to 'Changing Ireland'.

"Rural transport is a very hidden need. People with cars presume everybody has a car.

"RTI is a pilot programme that began a few years ago from a huge interest on the ground. There were loads of projects in rural areas that couldn't survive/work without rural transport. Now, there is at least one scheme in nearly every county.

"We thought there should be a lot of community-based management of the services, that is to bring the suppliers and the users of the service together. (The services could have been managed, for example, centrally by a government department).

Dept of Transport officials boarded one bus with Erin to check out the service for themselves and were struck by how many passengers had their hair done, their make-up on and put a big effort into looking well, for what? For a bus journey. It showed the officials the pride and joy people had in the service.

"The real impact is that many people are using their free travel pass for the first time ever," said Erin.

380 new rural routes in 3 years

Under the Rural Transport Initiative (RTI), which was launched in July 2001, thirty-four rural community groups, covering almost all counties, are currently being funded to operate pilot rural transport services in their areas. Approximately 380 new rural routes have been established under the initiative and some 20,000 people are using the RTI transport services each month. €3 million has been provided annually for the scheme since 2002 and a further €3 million is being provided for this purpose in 2004. Existing local community groups, including in many instances CDPs, have been instrumental or helpful in getting the local transport schemes off the ground.

Natural for CDP to be involved in transport

MAURICE McCONVILLE reports

A new and innovative centre was opened by Minister Eamon O Cuiv in Kilnaleck, Co. Cavan, on June 25th. The Réaltóg Resource Centre is home to a number of new projects including South West Cavan CDP. The Minister arrived at the Centre on a bus run by the new Rural Transport Initiative (RTI) and he congratulated all the local people and agencies involved in setting up the Centre and the services it provides.

In warm sunshine, the Chairperson of the CDP and the Rural Transport Initiative, Geraldine Clarke, also addressed the large gathering outside the new centre. She explained that South West Cavan suffers from low population, high age dependency, high unemployment and low educational attainment. The new CDP is working closely with other agencies based in the centre. The CDP and the RTI cover the same districts - Crosserlough, Ballymaugh, Mullahoran, Denn, and parts of Lower Lavey and Ballintemple - so it was natural they would join forces.

Geraldine said, "Since 2003 we have been able to work on many community development projects, which has been a great boost to the area. We have assessed and responded to childcare needs and set up a parent and toddler group. We recently held a very informative drugs and alcohol awareness night for parents. We assisted community group training courses and the development of local women's groups. We have also facilitated the formation of a Community Development Umbrella Group in Mullahoran.

A committee of 18 local people from a cross



section of the local community organisations in the area are involved in managing the CDP and bring a wealth of knowledge to the table. Earlier this year, South West Cavan CDP appointed Hazel Leahy as its co-ordinator.

The Rural Transport Initiative Project Coordinator, Damien O'Neill also spoke at the rural transport launch. He said, "The project has been a great success, with 4700 passengers carried to date it has become an important part of the community. People say that it has given them a new lease. Our passengers not only have access to a new travel network but also a network of new friends."

The new centre is also keeping people in touch with the latest technology. As Peter Galligan, chairman of the Centre said, "The Réaltóg Centre has a suite of computers in its information technology office. The I.T. office provides computer and business training courses as a FETAC approved centre."

The new centre is a great resource in the South West Cavan community and it has benefited greatly from funding through the National Development Plan.

And now people can catch a bus to get to the community centre.

Strong CDP link to rural transport groups

THE link is strong, for example, between the rural transport initiative in east Clare and the local CDP.

Local, Nick McMahon, is both a member of the East Clare Accessible Transport (ECAT) committee and is a voluntary management committee member of East Clare CDP.

East Clare CDP provide one of the rooms in their premises to ECAT as a waiting room for people awaiting buses from Scariff. It has a coffee machine and is open from 8.30am.

Said Laura Ward, ECAT co-ordinator: "We

have been working very closely with the CDP and hope our service helps in getting people to meetings. A lot of CE scheme people would also be users of our service."

Laura herself was a volunteer with the CDP from 2000 to 2002. Being involved in ECAT and the CDP meant, however, that her workload - all voluntary at the time - became too much: "There were too many meetings and I was out nearly every evening over three years."

She is still very busy, but now she gets paid for her work which helps.

If you don't like hurling, try kurling!

IT'S not every day you see children playing Kurling, a gentle sport that involves concentration and restraint. However, in County Leitrim, children from Drumkeeran National School have been won over after their meeting with the local Active Age Club.

A cross-generational gathering took place in early summer, organised with the support of Lough Allen CDP, and the gap has narrowed since then between young and old. Such events, important in today's increasingly structurally divided society, are also organised by CDPs in other parts of the country.

The Drumkeeran meeting involved a visit to a local heritage cottage which is packed with old agricultural machinery, tools from another era and now-redundant domestic appliances. Kevi Harkin, a member of the active age club, explained how life was in the past.

There are not many sports it is easy to play after a meal, but Kurling is one, and the youngsters took to it easily, under the tuition of Active Age members who play it regularly (it is much like Shuffle Board with a sweeping brush - see photo). For the children's part, they entertained the group with music, tin whistle playing and singing.

So, hurling may not have quite taken off in Leitrim yet, but there's always a chance kurling will!



Kurling could be the big new thing yet in Leitrim!

CDPs in Finglas walk 10k for diversity

CDP staff and volunteers in Finglas are a fit lot. On Saturday, September 11th, Finglas for Diversity, a newly formed group, held a 10 kilometre walk, to raise funds for the Baleskin Refugee and Asylum Centre in St. Margaret's, Finglas. The aim of the new group is "to address the issue of racism in our community".

Finglas for Diversity includes three CDPs - Finglas South CDP, Parents Alone Support Service CDP and Project West CDP - along with Finglas Cabra Partnership, Dublin City Council's Community Development Section and the Northern Area Health Board's Community Development Section.

Internet assists in literacy tuition

THE power of the internet is to be utilised to support literacy learning and tuition following the official launch of www.literacytools.ie. This website is a resource for learners and literacy tutors and has been developed over the past two years under the auspices of the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA). It contains printable exercises, interactive exercises and games.

For more information, write to: NALA, 76 Lower Gardiner St., Dublin 1.
Tel 01-809-9195. E-mail: literacy@nala.ie

President visits Priorswood - first project with a Joy-Riding Taskforce

PRESIDENT McAleese visited Priorswood CDP, which is unique in having established the first Joy Riding Task Force. Her visit coincided with the local community centre's 10th anniversary celebrations on June 1st.

The Chairperson of Priorswood CDP, Kay Callaghan said, "Priorswood CDP was unique in establishing the first Joy Riding Task Force, the only one of its kind in Ireland, it was set up in 1999 to tackle the problem of joy riding." The chairperson spoke of her concern over the continual struggle for funding and its effect on staff and community morale, saying this was a big issue for Priorswood, and indeed many CDPs. For instance, the Joy-riding Task Force's work was put on hold until future funding was secured.

The Centre is involved in such diverse areas as youth work, drug awareness, equality, anti-racism and community development arts, RAPID, Blue Drum, childcare, health care and literacy training.

The President said, "the phenomenal achievements of the Centre show that something really special is going on here". She continued "What a magnificent thing community effort is! Individuals who say 'we can do it' and have faith in themselves and

their neighbours. When a community is strong, the country is strong. And this community is strong."

President McAleese was especially interested in seeing the creative and artistic work by children, and Traveller and settled communities of Priorswood. She was presented with a unique bouquet made up of flowers from each of the five continents of the world and a cookery book by young people from the Youth Literacy Programme. One of the creations to greet the President was a 5 ft totem pole that took 18 children over 3 months to complete.

Other guests at the 10th anniversary were Dr Michael Woods, TD, and councillors Larry O'Toole and Sean Paul Mahon.

Priorswood CDP is located at the Outreach Centre, Clonsaugh Drive, Dublin 17. It has a total staff of 12 and is managed by a Mary Doherty and a voluntary management committee. It is funded by the Community Development Programme of the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. The Department of Education and Science support the youth projects, drug awareness group and Joy Riding Task Force.

Follow Bantry's example!



Bantry building wells from old mobiles

BANTRY people are helping build wells in Africa by recycling their old mobile phones through the Bantry Community Resource Centre and Oxfam. If you have ever dumped an old mobile phone in the bin, think again! A Nokia 8890, even when 'broken' is still worth 75 euro to Oxfam who can repair it and use the money raised through selling it to pay for the cost of a well that would provide water for a family of six.

The phones are passed onto Oxfam's recycling partner who refurbish and export them for sale to countries with developing mobile phone technology. All profits from the sale help fund Oxfam's work in Africa.

The recycling is promoted in Bantry CDP's newsletter, a colourful A4 production which is distributed throughout the local community.

• **Contact: Bantry CDP, Community Centre, Glengariff Rd, Bantry, Co. Cork. Tel. 027 51315.**

SICCDA hold Liberties culture festival

ROMANIAN, Irish, Africans and more nationalities mixed for the first time in a celebratory setting during the summer when the South Inner City CDP in Dublin organised an eclectic culture night, reports Catherine Reilly. The event included a small street parade.

"Last year with the influx of foreign nationals in our area, we decide that we should have a culture night," explained Liam Fenlon, chairperson of SICCD. "As you can see, all the locals are sitting on one side and our new friends are over here," he said, gesturing to the other side of the hall. "But we are trying to see that changed, and slowly it is coming."

A group of local women who have lived in the Liberties all their lives said the night was a good opportunity to get to know their new neighbours. "They're just the same as us," one said.

Valentin, from the north of Romania, remarked: "The Irish people are very very warm. They are the most warm in western Europe. This party is a very good idea because we will get to know each other."

As the cans of Guinness and Romanian wine were swapped around, entertainers from around the globe held the Meath Street crowd in awe. The event gave long-standing locals and newcomers alike an opportunity to share an evening with a neighbour who they may have silently passed on the street the day before.

Thurles Action for Community Development

THE long-awaited official opening of the first CDP in North Tipperary took place at the start of the summer. Thurles Action for Community Development (TACD) was wished well for its future by a host of people who attended the opening - local people, and representatives from other CDPs, the region's Support Agency, government agencies, social partnerships, and community and voluntary groups in Thurles and North Tipperary.

TACD's management committee comprise: Josephine Hogan (chairperson), Joe O'Regan, Tom Lyons, Jerry Ryan, Margaret

Burke-Costello, Julie O'Regan and Toni Gleeson. The project co-ordinator is Breda Ryan.

Launching the project, the chairperson made a dedication:

"We dedicate our work to all those who came before us, to those who walk this journey with us, and to those who will follow. May we learn from the successes and failures of our ancestors, as we try to lead the way for generations to come."

A Volunteer's perspective on anti-racism

THOMAS King, chairperson of East Clare CDP, is among those who has completed training on Race Equality (Anti-Racism) with the Mid-West Community Development Support Agency. The training Thomas and his management committee colleagues completed took two days. He was quite taken aback at what he learnt, and later wrote a piece for the Support Agency's newsletter:

"I (had thought) the term 'Anti-Racism' only came into being with the influx of so many different nationalities and differing skin colours into Ireland in the last decade. How wrong I was. Anti-Racism has been here since God was a child. After completing the course I could see so many instances around my own locality, going back as far as I can remember

of race and class inequality. It is only now that we are becoming aware of other people's cultures, for example, Travellers. Most of the subjects of people's conversations (gossip) were taken up by passing judgement on other people's living habits. Recently spates of sarcastic jokes, using the Travellers and black communities as the butt, are turning up as text messages on our mobile phones. Most of the senders withhold their phone numbers from the text which speaks for itself."

"I suggest that other groups avail of this training as our group expressed that it certainly helped to break a lot of barriers, not alone where we will be interacting with difference but it helped to bond the group as well," said Thomas.



Participants and facilitators involved in anti-racism training in Killaloe, Co. Clare (l. to r.): Teresa Hickey, East Clare CDP, Veronica McNamara, MWCD, Thomas King, East Clare CDP, Nick McMahon, East Clare CDP, Paul Kelly, MWCD, Kees Duseon, Ballina/Killaloe FRC, Pat McGough, East Clare CDP co-ordinator, and Sylvia Costelloe, Killaloe/Ballina FRC.

East Clare CDP host Brothers of Charity

THE open door policy of management of East Clare CDP has seen a number of interesting developments take place in their Derg House premises.

They co-operated with ECAT, the local rural transport scheme. As a result, since last year, bus-passengers in Scariff can avail of a waiting room which was set up in the CDP premises. And this year, the Brothers of Charity opened an office in Derg House from which a new worker will administer the delivery of new services for the people in the area.

The latter arrangement came about through the

dedication of one volunteer in particular. A decade ago, the Brothers of Charity were contacted by a woman from East Clare who wanted to see disability services provided in the area. That person was Ann Malone, the current treasurer of East Clare CDP. Ann's management colleagues recently congratulated her on "her foresight". They further "acknowledged the timeless commitment that she has given to fight for the rights of people with intellectual disabilities."

The co-ordinator for the Brothers of Charity in East Clare moved into Derg House in July.

Next please!

Traveller men take the reins in project development

GETTING Traveller men to join in project committees and activities is like... well, as the saying goes, you can bring a horse to water, but you can't make the horse drink. Well, in Kerry, the horse has been the key to success. By setting up a horse husbandry course, Kerry Travellers' Development Project (KTDP) have succeeded in involving men in development work like never before.

The work was highlighted in the first edition of 'RAPID Review Tralee Together' which was produced in the summer at the end of a journalism training course held in Tralee CDP's premises. Local RAPID reporter, Nora Butler, penned the piece, as follows:

Traveller men are keeping their culture alive by learning more about horses.

Sixteen men aged 18-50 from Mitchel's Crescent and St. Martin's Park (Tralee, Co. Kerry) are attending a horse course run by Kerry Education Service and supported by Kerry Travellers' Development Project (KTDP).

As well as learning about horses, the men

also attend classes in literacy, art and personal development.

Annie Harrison, development worker with KTDP, explained how important horses are in Traveller culture.

"Some of these Travellers have been living in Mitchel's Crescent and St. Martin's Park for three generations," she said. "But they are not settled people, they are Travellers with their own Traveller culture which includes horses, trading in scrap and at markets."

Four horse owners in the area also sit on the board of management for this project. As it is illegal to own a horse in Tralee unless you have land to keep it on, they are negotiating for the rental of land with Kerry County Council, Tralee town Council and Tralee Garda Siochana.

"One of the main problems is people don't want to rent their land out to Travellers," Annie added.

It is hoped there will also be a Back to Education course in the future which will

cover stable yard management and farriery.

Annie hopes that the horse course will be as successful as the Primary Health Care course which is also being run in the area.

Both projects, Annie hopes, will go some way towards breaking down the barriers that Travellers face in society.

"I remember once a seven-year-old girl said to me: 'A lot of my friends are Travellers and they are nice people but I wouldn't want to be one because they are treated so badly.'"

Editor's note: Since Nora's report was first published, the men have set up a limited company, the Kingdom Curragh Club, they have secured land (rented for the time being) and horse-wandering is no longer really an issue in the area. Around now, the group are starting back at project work, including horse husbandry, literacy and, this time, artwork and calendar production.

• For more information, contact: Annie Harrison, KTDG, tel.. 066-7120054.

Research in Mayfield

THE Mayfield Community Education Network (CEN) in conjunction with Mayfield CDP is currently researching the needs, gaps and barriers in community and adult education, and in youth and health needs. Also involved are Health Action Zone, the Southern Health Board, RAPID and Cork VEC.

Arts in Mahon

MAHON Men's Arts Group, formed in 1998 as part of Mahon CDP and supported by them since then, held an opening evening of 'mixed images' - which displays the results of their artwork undertaken in a community setting. The exhibition took place in the Sirius Arts Centre in Cork.

Local newsletters

'CHANGING Ireland' is grateful to receive newsletters from CDPs and other projects/programmes engaged with CDPs around the country. Many CDPs produce their own local newsletters - to keep residents and target groups up-to-date on current local events, inform them of project work and to mark challenges and celebrate successes within communities. They are also often produced to counterbalance negative news emanating from mainstream local media.

For this edition, 'Changing Ireland' drew on material from a number of newsletters that were submitted, including: Metro Eireann, Summer 2004 Mid-West Words, North Clondalkin Buzz, Tralee Together RAPID Review, The Four Trees, TWRC Newsletter, CORI Policy Briefings, Community Connections News Update, Citywide Update, Bantry CDP's Newsletter, Voice of the Traveller, DCWC Community News.

The address to send newsletters to is: 'Changing Ireland', c/o Community Enterprise Centre, Moyross, Limerick.

KERRYMAN WINS REFUGEE AWARD

The Lord Mayor of Dublin bestowed a World Refugee Day Award on KADE Chairperson Paul Hanrahan.

Paul, a former CDP volunteer, was nominated by KADE for the award (in the category of community & environment) in recognition of his work within KADE and in an individual private capacity.

The World Refugee Day Awards is the main national event to mark World Refugee Day in Ireland. The Lord Mayor of Dublin launched the 2nd Annual World Refugee Day Awards on Thursday 17 June. Senator David Norris presented awards to the ten winners. These awards are presented to:

- asylum seekers and refugees who have positively contributed to the local communities in which they live;
- individuals from those communities who have extended a hand of friendship and solidarity to promote the inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers in their

communities.

Awards are made to 10 individuals in 5 categories: Community & Environment, Health & Welfare, Education & Youth, Arts & Culture, and Sports & Leisure.

The theme of World Refugee Day 2004 is 'A Place to Call Home'. Home, with all its associations of safety, warmth, neighbourliness and permanence, is a foundation upon which refugee families can construct a positive and hopeful future.

The World Refugee Day Awards is an initiative of the African Refugee Network, with support from CREATE, Dublin City Council, Integrating Ireland, KNOW RACISM, the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism, the Reception & Integration Agency, and SPIRASI.

• For further information please contact: KADE, 11 Denny Street, Tralee. Tel: 066-7181358, kade@eircom.net

Equestrian Centre in Clondalkin

A petition to get an Equestrian Centre opened in North Clondalkin, Dublin, was circulated in the area in the summer. People were urged to sign if they agreed with the idea and wanted South Dublin County Council to identify a suitable location for the centre.

- For further details, contact Niamh Carton at the Christy Melia House, tel. 01-457-5616.

Ahern: What if judges came from council estates?

By SENAN MOLONY

A GOVERNMENT minister has suggested that judges would treat anti-social offenders less leniently if more members of the judiciary came from local authority backgrounds.

Minister of State, Noel Ahern - who has coincidentally announced a tough crackdown on youths who plague estates with criminal and intimidating behaviour - said many local authority managers were deeply frustrated at the reluctance of judges to make exclusion orders against people guilty of anti-social behaviour.

"Local authorities spend a long time putting a case together but frequently find that judges are reluctant to implement the powers that have been there for the past 10 years," Mr

Ahern told the Irish Independent.

"Views have been expressed to me that if more judges lived on estates or were from local authority backgrounds, they would have a better understanding of what these problems are like."

He said that cases taken to court were based on "real-life situations" in which youths often were not terrorising just their neighbours, but even whole communities.

"We are talking about people being tormented by constant hassle and trauma inflicted on them by a young occupant of a local house."

It was "not just loud music", Mr Ahern said, adding that judges seemed reluctant to use the range of powers that had been given to corporations and councils by the Government over the last decade in response to worsening



Minister of State Noel Ahern.

social situations.

Mr Ahern has announced that exclusion orders will also apply to occupants of tenant-purchase homes.

The new power under the Private Residential Tenancies Act will be enforced to allow for the exclusion and eviction of offenders - even if they are in the process of buying their local authority homes.

Up to now, no cases have been brought for exclusion orders against offspring whose parents are in the process of buying their local authority homes - although tenants in the same house next door who are simply renting would be subject to the full rigours of the law.

About half a dozen successful cases are brought each year in the five Dublin local authority areas, but applications to the courts for such orders come at the end of a lengthy process that initially involves summoning occupiers to interviews, followed by a series of warnings.

The new powers could apply to up to 50,000 households, although only small numbers of offspring in tenant-purchase homes have been causing havoc.

"We will be giving the local authorities the right to go to court in these cases to seek exclusion orders," Mr Ahern said.

"Up to now these occupants - usually offspring and not the head of the household - can give you the finger, so to speak.

"Now the local authorities will have a big stick up their sleeves when they call people in for consultation. It will undoubtedly help to bring some order and end a lot of the grief that is going on," he said.

Mr Ahern said that an additional provision that will be enabled before Christmas will be designed to give local authorities the power to refuse when problem families seek the right to buy the local authority houses they have been occupying.

Householders living beside a private rented house whose tenants are causing trouble will also have the power to bring the landlord to the new Disputes Resolutions Tribunal, he said.

"At present they have to go to court, which is slow, costly, and cumbersome," he said.

Senan Molony first wrote this article for the Irish Independent.

Letters to "Changing Ireland"

Why is the midlands always left out?

Claremorris, Co. Mayo

Monday, August 24, 2004

Dear Editor,

Your map of community development projects around the country ('Changing Ireland', Summer 2004) was an interesting addition to the magazine, raising questions and eyebrows alike.

While many of the coastal counties are well represented in terms of projects, there appears to be a bit of a community development drought in much of the midlands. Consider poor old Laois. Apart from the rather mysterious pre-development work going on in Portlannington, there's not a red dot to be seen. Are that county's communities so well-developed and lacking in poverty and disadvantage that they don't require any CDPs? And, looking beyond to some neighbours, things don't appear to be a lot better - one CDP in Tipperary, one in Kilkenny, one in Carlow, one in Offaly.

Either I've been watching too many episodes of "24", or there's something afoot. Perhaps it's time to carry out some detailed analysis on the national distribution of Community Development Projects?

Yours,

Declan Weir

No mean feat

FAB CDP,

Coolcotts Shopping Centre, Wexford

Thursday, August 26, 2004

Dear Editor,

I am moving on from the Community Development Programme [to another job in the community and voluntary sector].

I could not go without thanking and congratulating you and the Editorial Team for producing 'Changing Ireland'. There are so many people who read it and you have managed to link the diverse work of the projects with the policies, no mean feat.

Projects do feel isolated and 'Changing Ireland' helps us all feel part of something bigger and more important than we realise at times. Thanks and keep up the good work.

Warm regards,

Paul O'Brien

(Former co-ordinator with FAB)

Part of the answer: CDPs in our suburbs

Clondalkin is one of the three satellite suburbs of Dublin, along with Tallaght to the south and Blanchardstown to the north. All three were originally villages, but they have grown at an incredible rate since the 1950s. Clondalkin has a population in the tens of thousands with the north part of Clondalkin being the most disadvantaged part. This is where North Clondalkin CDP (NCCDP) is based. There are also other CDPs in the area and they regularly work together on projects. Recently, NCCDP brought projects and government agencies together to highlight the officially little-understood problem of overcrowding in family homes.

In Limerick city, St. Mary's Park on King's Island, has been put under the media's dirty spotlight. Some of the coverage has been warranted as criminal gangs have made life unbearable for some residents who have been forced to move out. The atmosphere is sometimes murderous and outsiders are viewed with suspicion.

St. Mary's is making a comeback, as was highlighted this summer by the much-looked-forward-to bus-trip to Paris involving youths, leaders, senior citizens and community Gardai. It wasn't a 'freebie' either; locals did major fundraising to make it happen, evidence of widespread support within the community for their CDP. The trip represented the high point in the first year of a three-year programme of action combating the lack of social integration in the area.

Life is crammed in North Clondalkin

By ALLEN MEAGHER

NORTH Clondalkin CDP held a Housing Conference in June to launch a research report titled 'Overcrowding among Families in North Clondalkin - An Unexamined Issue'.

The research found that overcrowding is "a major problem and it is not uncommon for three generations of the one family to be living in cramped conditions in one house."

One mother quoted in the report said, "I often feel I'm suffocating with so many people around me. There are always bodies everywhere. It's worst at night when they're all in one room, often killing each other."

Being a community project, staff and management had heard many a story of over-crowding, but no statistics were available. By documenting the impacts and suffering caused to families, the CDP hopes to find ways to address the matter.

The CDP stated: "This report convinces all of us of the seriousness of this problem and the causal links with the following issues: damage to family relationships, ongoing stress, serious effects on the life-chances of children and young people, impact on educational achievement, affect on people's



health and family isolation."

The report recommends, at national as well as local level, that "access to decent housing should be recognised as a basic human right, and responsibility must be taken at government level to provide it in accordance with people's needs."

There are 17 housing estates in North Clondalkin, 11 of which were built by the local authority and six of which were privately built. In 2003, there were more than 5,500 applicants on the South Dublin County Council Housing Waiting Lists.

According to the report, overcrowding was seen as effecting educational opportunities, employability, and health including psychological well-being. The report-authors had difficulty trying to establish how much overcrowding there was "due to a reluctance of families to report on extra persons living in

a house on account of fears about (financial) implications such as increased rent."

Perhaps, the best way to describe 'overcrowding' is to tell Beth's story. She lives in a three-bedroomed local authority house, has four daughters ranging in age from 10 to 20 years sleeping in one bedroom, three sons aged between 11 and 21 living in another bedroom and a niece aged 20 sleeping in the living room. Only Beth has a room of her own. The nine occupants have one bathroom/toilet to share between them.

Three of Beth's grown-up children are unemployed and she worries about them getting depressed: "They have no money and are stuck at home all day, they just stay in bed. They can't afford to rent their own place. At night there isn't the room for everyone to sit in, so the lads head out on the streets. There isn't anywhere to go around here but they just hang round. They're adults now and it's no way to live."

Beth was able to list off a number of families living nearby in a similar situation. She has enquired about getting an extension to the house. This has to go through a social worker, she has seen three of them come and go in their jobs in two years. Each time one moves on she has to start the process again. At the time the report was being researched, Beth was feeling the pressure and was relying on sleeping tablets to rest. She cannot understand how people like her are left wait, while families with only two children sometimes are allocated four-bedroom houses.

At the conference, held in Quarryvale Community and Leisure Centre, the issues raised in the report on overcrowding were discussed and recommendations agreed on.

• **The report authors were Phyllis Murphy and Jennifer Murphy. For a copy of the report, contact Andy Lane, NCCDP Co-ordinator, Christy Melia House, 24 Neilstown Park, Clondalkin, Dublin 22. Tel. 01-45705616. Fax: 01-457-5325. E-mail: cmelia@indigo.ie**

CDP action on overcrowding

Now the CDP is using new research findings on overcrowding in Clondalkin to lobby for better housing policies and practises at national as well as local level. Number one in their demands is that government recognise as a human right and take responsibility for ensuring everyone has access to *decent* housing.

The CDP is taking their case to the Health Boards, South Dublin County Council and the Government.

Armed with case-studies and the expert opinions of researchers on overcrowding in the highly-populated suburb of Clondalkin, the CDP is seeking:

- Transitional housing options should be available to recovering drug addicted people.
- The Traveller Accommodation Programme should be implemented as a matter of urgency.
- A local homeless accommodation unit in Clondalkin.
- There should be an enquiry into the issue of speculative purchasing in local authority estates.
- Policy-makers must recognise that overcrowding effects the health, psychological well-being, educational opportunities and employability of family-members.

D-Day for Limerick parish

- Tourism as a development tool

By SHANE MacCURTAIN and ALLEN MEAGHER

A BUS full of residents from the St Mary's Parish in Limerick, were present in Normandy, France, in June for the 60th anniversary of the D-Day landings. The trip represented a D-Day of sorts for the infamous Limerick parish too and it was part of a continuing social integration programme aimed at bringing senior citizens, youth and the community Gardaí together for a week of relationship-building based on respect and trust of each other.

"In recent years," said CDP administrator, Geraldine Reidy, "St. Mary's Park has received huge national media attention due to problems with drugs, alcohol, intimidation and violence. These problems have eroded a strong history the area had of solid family values, community spirit and support and the CDP has been to the fore in efforts to improve community life."

ST. MARY'S GO TO FRANCE

Development work is many things to many people and in this case development workers used tourism as a vehicle for increasing social cohesion. It seemed to work very well going by feedback.

"It was my first time going with a group and I never enjoyed myself so much. The old and the young got on great together. It was a great experience and if I was asked what I will always remember besides the group it was Paris," said Mary Mallard, senior citizen.

New friendships were forged in a community where splits usually receive the public's attention:

"I got a girl and I saw the Eiffel Tower and I had a great time. I made a best friend on this trip, his name is Stephen. he got a girlfriend her name is Joan. My girlfriend's name is Laura, I like her and she likes me," reported Sean Grenden, a youth on the trip.

NOT A TAXPAYER'S FREEBIE

Fundraising for the journey had been ongoing since last September when the St. Mary's One



Some of the older and younger people from St. Mary's in Limerick city in a World War I trench in Normandy.

Parent Family Support Group, with the support of the local CDP, decided to undertake the initiative.

A total of 49 participants made the journey which brought them through Wales, England, Belgium as well as France. The mixed group included 27 children, nine senior citizens, two community garda along with an after school club co-ordinator and nine members of the St Mary's One Parent Family Support Group. Newly elected City Councillor and former rugby international Gerry McLoughlin also took part in the trip.

Since the week of activities coincided with 60th anniversary commemoration ceremonies of D-Day, at its core the trip aimed to develop a positive attitude to recreation and sports amongst children and raise awareness of healthy eating habits. Anti-drug and anti-racism issues were also approached informally during the week.

In preparation for the visit the children attended French classes. They were also involved in the fundraising, including a children's sponsored walk. A sponsored cycle by adults raised more money and funds were also granted by philanthropic and government agencies.

CAN WE LIVE WITHOUT FEAR?

At one of the fundraisers, Limerick's Chief Garda Superintendent, Gerry Kelly, welcomed the three-year programme: "A recent PAUL Partnership survey in this area found that residents' security, safety and their relationship with the Gardaí is very important to them. Everybody is entitled to live without fear," he added. "And integration between the gardai and the community is so so important. This project is going to move it onto a new step. It is right across the divide in relation to the elderly and youths and it is a stone on which a lot more will be built on."

If the coming two year's of the programme can build on the positive vibe created through the tour to France, St. Mary's is in for some good times ahead.

"The kids were very good," said Marie McGrath afterwards, "and they had good fun with the Golden Girls (elderly). I hope the kids and the Golden Girls keep up the friendship from now on."

A YOUTH'S POLITICAL AWAKENING

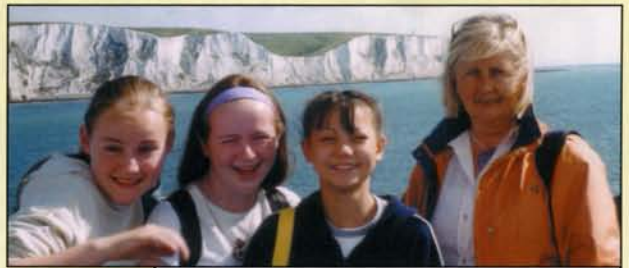
The learning was diverse:

"I learned to work as a group and to stay with your leader at all times," - David McKnight, a youth.

"I learned to treat people as you would like to be treated and never sleep at the back of the bus because it is uncomfortable," - Vanessa Ryan, a youth.

"I learned about WW1 and WW2," - James Keogh, a youth.

Some had a political awakening on the D-Day beaches, such as Clarissa Johnson who is 12 years old, "In Belgium (at Flanders Field Museum in Ypres) it showed how war is so evil. Today George Bush is saying to people that they should fight for their country and he says they will all come back,



Children from St. Mary's area of Limerick city with Geraldine Reidy of St. Mary's CDP in Normandy.

but it is all lies."

The only major trouble facing St. Mary's now is that everyone wants to go again next year, though it looks like the volunteers and workers who led the fundraising and organised the trip have not been forgotten. "I would like it if all the people that helped us out should come next year," said Stephanie Tracey, a youth who had such a great time she may quite well move to France someday.

• For further information on how the programme was devised and is working out, contact: St. Mary's CDP, 5 Verdant Crescent, King Island Limerick. Tel. 061-411076. E-mail: stmaryscdp@eircom.net
Shane MacCurtain is a CDP management committee member in St. Mary's.

O'Dea welcomes 'reclaim the streets'

MINISTER of State at the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, Willie O'Dea, blamed the media, the economy and the gangsters for the poor reputation which accrues to St. Mary's Park in the largely disadvantaged King's Island area Limerick city. While acknowledging that some of the criminals were "brutal", he said the work by community groups, including St. Mary's CDP, was the akin to reclaiming the streets.

"You (in the CDP and associates) are doing a great job. You are reclaiming the streets. Most of this is voluntary activity and none of this could be done without volunteers. Every euro contributed by the state to voluntary activity here is very well spent."

He also noted the Gardaí's success in securing convictions against Limerick's violent criminals and murderers.

On the community development work being carried out in St. Mary's the Minister echoed independent, Alderman John Gilligan. "He is right," said Minister of State O'Dea, "the loss of CE schemes in this area is a severe blow". He was hopeful of a solution to this issue.

The Minister of State was speaking at a fundraiser held earlier in the year to pay for the relationship-building visit by local residents to France in June.

Death rates far higher among poor

- New health report no shock to projects

LORCAN BRENNAN reports

DEATH rates among poor people are more than three times higher than among the richest. That's according to a recently published report which published by Public Health Alliance Ireland (PHAI).

The report findings, which should not come as any real surprise to CDP workers, highlights the fact that inequalities in healthcare mean the poorer people are dying younger and in greater numbers than those in higher socio-economic groups.

Titled, 'Health In Ireland - An Unequal State', the report notes: "In no other area is the impact of inequality on society as devastating as it is on health".

Male suicide, for example, occurs at a much higher rate in lower socio-economic groups and unemployed women are more than twice as likely to have low birth weight children. The report found that 40% of people identified financial problems as the greatest single factor preventing them from improving their health.

Other findings presented through the PHAI report were:

- Men in unskilled jobs were four times more likely to be admitted to hospital for

schizophrenia than higher professional workers

- Death rates from all cancers among the lower occupational class are over twice as high as for the highest social class. For example, the death rates are nearly three times higher for strokes, four times higher for lung cancer, six times higher for cancer.
- Between 1989 and 1998 the death rates for all causes of death were over three times higher in the lowest occupational class than in the highest.
- The incidence of chronic physical illness has been found to be two and a half times higher for poor people than the wealthy.

In conclusion the report makes a number of important recommendations:

- Address structural inequalities that are the cause of health inequalities.
- Introduce a free, universal health system that provides care on the basis of need rather than ability to pay.
- Carry out a health impact assessment as part of developing public policy in other areas.
- Improve data collection and research into health inequalities in Ireland.

One of the report's authors, Sara Burke, who is a member of PHAI, said the report brought

together an extensive range of health inequalities: "We are doing this to increase public awareness of these inequalities which are shocking, unjust and unnecessary and can be reduced."

She said some 4,500 fewer people would die on the island of Ireland each year if our death rates decreased to match those of Europe.

The Public Health Alliance Ireland seeks to promote awareness and action on reducing health inequalities. In the future the Alliance will promote policies to reduce current levels of inequalities, and policies which contribute to health improvement and greater equality in health service provision. The core values of their argument include viewing health as a human right, while improving equality and democracy.

The report is also of value to development workers who may use it for education purposes and even for researching funding applications.

**• For copies of the report, contact: Public Health Alliance, 5th Floor, Bishop's Square, Redmond's Hill, Dublin 2.
Tel. 01-478-6300. Fax: 01-478-6319.
E-mail:
info@publichealthallianceireland.org**

Wexford's healthy communities programme is RAPID success

By LORCAN BRENNAN

SINCE February 2003, those living in RAPID areas surrounding Wexford and in 12 other areas around the country, have been encouraged to join in a 'Creating Healthy Communities' training programme.

In Wexford, the Community Health Training Programme is funded by Combat Poverty Agency (CPA) under its Strategic Plan 2002-2004 and is part of the national initiative.

The CPA developed the programme to support disadvantaged communities in their fight against poverty and health inequalities. The programme's four aims include:

- promoting the practice of community development in improving health and well being for people in disadvantaged communities;
- informing and supporting policy initiatives relating to poverty and health;
- exploring mechanisms for effective, meaningful and sustainable community participation in decision-making relating to health issues;
- building the capacity for community health interests to draw out practice and policy lessons from their work.

Julie Howley from the Combat Poverty Agency said the health training course is part of the Building Healthy Communities Programme which was set up to explore new ways of combating

poverty through community development work.

"We believe in community development as a way of combating poverty and ensuring that people who are suffering inequalities in health can participate in making decisions about the health of their own communities," she said.

Dr Julie Heslin of the South Eastern Health Board said health was an investment in the future and encouraged people to get involved in the course and come up with ways of improving the health of RAPID areas.

Ger Doyle, Ireland's national swimming coach, who recently brought a team to the Olympics, said we all tend to forget that our health is our wealth. His own life experience presented a perfect example. Up to five years ago, he never contemplated what it would be like to be ill but then he was told he had Leukaemia. He went on to add that he was well at the moment but not cured.

The training course is part one of a two-phase programme aimed at trying to improve the health and well-being of communities in RAPID areas and it is expected that those taking part will become health activists in their own areas. In the Wexford area, it was initiated and organised by a group comprising two CDPs, FAB and Access 2000, along with the Wexford Area Partnership, the SEHB and other RAPID communities.

The course, which began running in March (one day a week) is proving hugely successful. One thing that helps is that there is childcare and

literacy support for participants.

Paul O'Brien (with FAB until recently) said, "It's very exciting, it's a programme that people have gotten very, very excited about. RAPID brought down the money and The FAB Project are administering it. Links between agencies are improving. What's really good is that Combat Poverty really want to know the reality of what's happening. They don't want made up truths. They are looking for what worked and what didn't, because they are pilot projects and the whole idea is to bring the 13 projects back together so they can share the learning."

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

The latest reports from Wexford, some months after the programme began, shows signs the successes will not be short-term. The Building Healthy Communities course attracted 14 people to participate, four of whom are now active on a multi-agency steering group responsible for the programme. An example of one of the activities they organised was a first-time community day out for older residents of the Wolfe Tone/Talbot Green areas to some beautiful gardens in Carlow.

The course participants are now looking at ways to further broaden the programme and involve more people. The South Eastern Health Board is expected from now on to work much more closely with the communities involved and a meeting between locals and the health board is due to take place shortly.

First conference on sex abuse against males

THE Male Abuse Survivors Centre (MASC) in Galway will host Ireland's first national conference on sexual abuse against boys and men on September 25th and 26th.

The conference, of interest to various groups, will address a range of issues: sexual abuse and male identity; male survivors and self-harm, suicide, addictions, survival strategies, impacts on sexuality, breaking the silence, shame and humiliation, cultural and societal influences on male survivors in an Irish context, male rape, and adult victimisation.

Titled 'Sexual Violence Against Males - Impacts, Identity and Survival Strategies', the key speakers will include:

- Mike Lew - international expert and author of 'Victims No Longer' and 'Leaping upon the Mountains';
- Colm O'Gorman, campaigner, activist and founding director of One in Four-Ireland;
- Ian Warwick - university lecturer in Human and Health Sciences;
- Bob Bailfour - survivor activist, founder of Survivors West Yorkshire and a founder of the Survivors Trust.

Other speakers will include: a mental health social worker, an expert on issues relating to male sexual abuse, and a rape crisis and survivor movements activist for over 20 years.

Workshops will look at stress, burnout and compassion fatigue, and also how to be a survivor.

Tickets for the two-day conference cost as follows: organisations (Euro200); individuals and Rape Crisis Centres (Euro150). Some reduced rate places are also available. Contact MASC, 3 Ruxton Court, Dominick St., Galway.

Tel. 091 - 534594 (Mon. to Thurs).
E-mail: mailto:mascman@eircom.net

'The Politics of Community Development'

A BOOK published earlier in the year offers substantial evidence of serious tensions between the state and the community and voluntary sector over poverty reduction, reports Lorcan Brennan.

The book, titled 'The Politics of Community Development', by Professor Fred Powell and Dr Martin Geoghegan of the Department of Applied Social Studies in University, College Cork offers the first comprehensive survey of the views of those involved in local community development throughout Ireland. The community workers were questioned on a range of issues including social partnership and the state's commitment to the poor and marginalised.

Many of those interviewed are sceptical about the Irish state's commitment to reducing poverty. When asked whether the state has played a positive role in the fight against poverty, more answered negatively than positively. Almost half interviewed believed the state has contributed to a deepening of poverty.

The book has been acclaimed by Dr. Peadar Kirby who has himself written much on poverty in Ireland and the wider world. He said, "The book is a timely contribution to assessing what has been seen as one of the most innovative aspects of social partnership, namely its involvement in community groups."

For anyone working or interested in community development this is an essential book with much food for thought. It is published by A&A Farmar, costs 20 euro, and is available from all good bookshops. It is a must-buy for any project serious about tackling the causes as well as the effects of poverty and disadvantage, and isn't that what the Community Development Programme was set up to do.

Calls for 'NCTs' for Men

By SANDY HOLLAND

CARS get a National Car Test (NCT) - and men need check-ups too! The Male Link - a network of community groups and organisation promoting better co-ordination of work with men and boys relating to health and community and family life in Northern Ireland and the Border Counties of the Republic of Ireland.

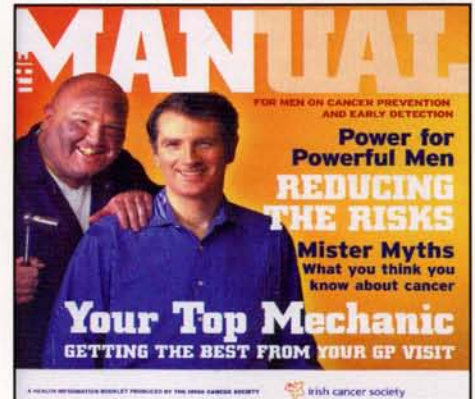
A campaign to encourage doctors to invite local men for annual health checks is currently being run by a network of community groups and organisations working with men and boys in Northern Ireland and the Border Counties of the Republic. 'The Male Link' marked Men's Health Week, which runs in June each year, by writing to every GP in Northern Ireland and the Border Counties encouraging them to set up regular health checks for men as part of their work.

Diarmuid Moore, chairperson of The Male Link explained, "As a frontline service, GPs must be very aware that many men come to them about health problems when it's too late. Offering a 'Men's NCT' will mean that health problems can be identified early and action taken in time and healthy men must be good for both the health service and society as a whole."

Research from the Men's Health Forum in Ireland published in January of 2004 found that many primary health care services, such as GPs are not actively structuring their services to cater for the differing attitudes that many men have towards having regular health checks. Many medical conditions, such as prostate cancer, are treatable; however, many men leave too much time between regular check-ups to ensure adequate screening. The research has identified that services need to be geared towards men and the establishment of regular health checks or clinics is one way to achieve this.

SCOTLAND

A number of GP Practices in Dumfries & Galloway in Scotland are developing such services. One such initiative has been developing over the last four years at Thornhill Health Centre in a rural area north of Dumfries where local men between the age of 40 and 60 have been invited to attend for an annual check-up. The initial meetings were held in a local hotel with over 150 men attending. Medical staff identified men suffering from diabetes, raised blood pressure, raised cholesterol, heavy drinking and problems relating to erectile dysfunction which would otherwise have gone undetected and undiagnosed. The men were



The Irish Cancer Society, like Male Link, have produced a booklet using the idea of car maintenance as a way to encourage men to look after their health and get a check-up.

subsequently referred to specialist services or programmes of care within the practise designed to address their health care requirements.

One significant finding from the Scottish initiative was the number of men who were found to be overweight. Local doctors responded to this need by putting in place a programme of dietary advice and encouraging the men to exercise.

And what better place to find men than at matches? The Scottish innovators set up health check facilities at the home games of Queen of the South, the local football team in Dumfries & Galloway.

IRELAND

While acknowledging that GP Practices already have busy schedules, both research and practical experience have shown that significant gains can be made in the health and well-being of men by using such approaches.

In Ireland, the Male Link believes it is time for the hopes to become a reality in the way that services for men's health are delivered in local areas. Some member groups of The Male Link organised local events to mark Men's Health Week. For example, the Newtownabbey Senior Citizen's Forum held an NCT-style check for men at a local primary school, while another group organised a morning of fun, with water activities for men and their children.

• For more information, contact: Diarmuid Moore, tel: 028 90329718.
E-mail: diarmuid.moore@weani.com
Or contact Sandy Holland,
tel. 071-9853321 or 087-6491394.
E-mail: info@communityconnections.ie
Website: www.themalelink.org

Taoiseach's office responds to Citywide



CITYWIDE Drugs Crisis Campaign, one of six organisations acting as Specialist Support Agencies to projects funded by the Community Development Programme, awaits action on concerns they raised with An Taoiseach last April.

In a meeting between Citywide and An Taoiseach, the project raised five issues with An Taoiseach as follows:

1. The current funding difficulties for drug projects that have experienced cutbacks needs to be dealt with.
2. An immediate commitment should be made to the future of the Local Drugs Task Forces (LDTFs) and budgets allocated to enable them to respond to the changing local drug problem.
3. Key actions in the National Drugs Strategy have not been delivered and there needs to be an immediate re-commitment by government to the delivery of the Strategy.
4. The issues for families of drug users and the need for family support were not recognised by the Strategy and need to be included now.
5. The Regional Drugs Taskforces need to have realistic budgets that can facilitate and support real involvement by communities.

These points were in September put to the Government Press Office who replied on behalf of An Taoiseach. The office issued a general statement to 'Changing Ireland' summarising progress on the issue of drugs (ab)use as follows:

- Both the Dept of Education and Science and the Dept of Health and Children have committed to provide additional funding to their mainstreamed drug projects that have been experiencing financial difficulties.

These monies will be forwarded to the projects involved in the coming months.

- By June 2004, approximately €90m cumulatively has been allocated or spent by the LDTFs to implement their two rounds of local actions plans. The Dept of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs is currently undertaking a mid-term review of the National Drugs Strategy which will Review the operational effectiveness of the structures of the Strategy and propose if necessary a refocussing or modification for the remaining period of the Strategy up to 2008.
- The Regional Drug Task Forces are currently mapping out the patterns of drug misuse in their areas - as well as the range and level of existing services - with a view to better co-ordination and addressing gaps in the overall provision. In this context, it should be noted that an amount of €500,000 has been provided by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, in the current year, for administrative and technical assistance costs incurred by the RDTFs in their on-going work.
- The work currently underway by the RDTFs is likely to take up most of the current year and will then feed into the drafting of regional action plans, which will be assessed by the National Drugs Strategy Team. It is intended that all of this work can be completed by early next year and that recommendations in relation to the funding of the plans will then be made by the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion.
- It is expected that the RDTFs will be in a position to begin the implementation of their plans by mid 2005.

The most dangerous drug in Ireland - alcohol

The most problematic and dangerous drug in Ireland continues to be alcohol. The Gardai, armed with the latest crime statistics, blame alcohol for fuelling almost 200 crimes daily.

Amid outrage at the level of drink-related violence on the streets late at night, Operation Encounter was set up in February 2002. The operation, which shows some signs of success in quelling the number of drunken incidents, targeted pubs, nightclubs and fast food outlets across the country.

Nonetheless, from August 2003 to February of this year, Garda figures show that more than 17,000 people, mainly young men, were assaulted outside late-night venues. Of those, almost 5,300 people were harmed in the assault, while 230 were seriously injured.

A breakdown of the other public order offences show there were:

- 15,064 cases of public drunkenness (82 incidents, on average, every day).
- 2,104 cases of disorderly conduct (11 every day).
- 55 cases of threatening, abusive or insulting behaviour daily
- 219 cases of obstruction
- Garda efforts to prevent under-18s abusing alcohol detected:
- 67 cases of persons under 18 being sold alcohol
- 389 cases of underage drinking

Alcoholics can find recovery through Alcoholics Anonymous, while friends and relatives of alcoholics can grow to live with the effects of alcohol in their lives through Al-Anon. Both offer people an opportunity for personal recovery.



Communities give views on National Drugs Strategy

Community representatives in Dublin met in July to discuss their input into the Review of the National Drugs Strategy. The meeting prioritised which of the 100 actions originally agreed as part of the strategy needed serious attention from the perspective of communities. The submissions to the Review were lodged by mid-August.

Minister of State, Noel Ahern, has special responsibility for the government's drugs strategy. The National Drugs Task Force Strategy is one of the chief initiatives to combat the abuse of drugs.

For more info, see: www.pobail.ie

For more information, tel. Una Ni Fhaircheallaigh, Drugs Strategy Unit, DCRGA, tel. 01-647-3061. Note that all submissions can be made public and attributed to the organisation/author.

Fergus McCabe is the community representative on the National Drugs Strategy Taskforce.

Would you live with a 'heroin-addict'?

- Your daughter for example?

WOULD you live with a 'heroin addict'? The label is demeaning, depersonalising, tabloid-shorthand. In this case, Mary - addicted to heroin - is also a daughter and indeed a mother of three. She is a Dubliner. She is 27 years old. She has hopes and dreams.

And, hard though it was, especially after Mary had dropped out of previous recovery programmes and despite the fact that there was barely room to swing a proverbial cat, Mary's mother Evelyn took her back into the family home.

Her story surfaced during research carried out by Clondalkin CDP in Dublin.

The move home was not easy - it put great pressure on everyone in the house. But Evelyn was determined to keep her off the streets, for Mary's sake and for the sake of her three children.

Mary and the children's move home immediately created overcrowding problems in the home.

However, in view of the daughter's drug addiction, Evelyn felt there was no other option available. As a mother, she could not stand by and watch her daughter and grandchildren suffer.

Mary's slide into homelessness began when the local authority accused her of squatting and blacklisted her. Mary said she was just "unlucky to be in the wrong place at the wrong time". Ending up in a hostel for the homeless, her mother saw things getting worse for her, not better.

Once she moved home, she started on a treatment programme. While she had dropped out of previous programmes, Evelyn was still hopeful, saying she had to give her a chance:

"If I don't, nobody else will."

The overcrowding in the house was especially hard on the youngest daughter, who Evelyn hopes will be the first in her family to do well at school. Suddenly there



were toys and buggies everywhere and much more noise. All the family try to encourage the youngest daughter. Evelyn bought a shed for the back garden so she has her own study-space and the family agreed not to ask the young student to do any babysitting.

Evelyn is determined to support all her children. She feels there is no proper support for young people who have been in prison or those who are trying to break their drugs habit. She knows that those who do not have family support are living rough and sometimes getting involved in more serious crime and drug-taking.

The overcrowding caused by Mary's return is compounded by the difficulty Evelyn's other grown children face in trying to buy a home of their own. Three of them are working and saving for their own homes. Evelyn prefers to let them live at home and save towards their own home rather than paying out money on rents as high as 112 euro a week for little rooms. In fact, Evelyn thinks it will be very difficult for any of her children to buy their own home because of rising house-prices including local authority ones that come up for sale. Mary is lucky to have bought her house from the local authority five years ago and its value has since quadrupled. However, there are now one dozen family members living in the four-bedroom home with no sign of anyone moving out. However, hopes are high that Mary can recover from her drug-addiction.

Note: The research on Evelyn's circumstances was carried out as part of research commissioned by North Clondalkin CDP on overcrowding in the area. For more on the housing crisis in Dublin, see page 8.

Citywide cocaine survey

ONE often hears of the phrase "the impact of drugs on local communities", but who has measured the impact and could describe it? Citywide Drugs Crisis Campaign.

Their survey of 25 of the 27 community-based anti-drugs projects they work with found that between 10% and 50% of current clients were addicted to cocaine.

Said Citywide: "The survey illustrates the significant levels of availability and use of cocaine right across Dublin city and points to some of the consequences of that use for users, projects, families and communities."

Most projects - 81% - try to provide some help services for cocaine users. These services include giving information about harm-reduction; counselling and elements of complementary therapies such as acupuncture, yoga and reiki.

Among the reports measurement of the impact of drugs on communities were the following:

58% of drug projects surveyed said that there was an increase in petty crime and dealing directly linked to the increase in cocaine use in their community.

16% of projects know of residents that are afraid in their communities. These projects also reported significant levels of 'noise pollution' that is keeping people awake at night.

Copies of the survey are available from Citywide and the organisation has contacted the National Drugs Strategy Taskforce and the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs regarding funding for the development of services in local communities and for proper training for project staff.

The man who inadvertently prompted their survey was Minister of State, Noel Ahern. He earlier this year stated that only 1% of people being treated for drug abuse were addicted to cocaine. He added therefore that he did not think it necessary to introduce new guidelines for dealing with cocaine abuse in particular.

However, the "1%" claim did not ring true with communities represented by the Citywide Drugs Crisis Campaign.

Vodka bulls-eye-baggy

A 'vodka bulls eye baggy' - costing 1.50 euro - is the latest product by drink-promoters, The Little Drinks Company. It happens to be a handy way to smuggle alcohol into outdoor concerts. The bags of alcohol are claimed by the promoters to be aimed at an older age group. They were all the rage at Madonna's concert in Slane.

Drug Education forum in October

THE Drug Education Workers' Forum will host a policy-training day for drug education workers and community and voluntary sector workers with an interest in drug prevention and awareness, in Dublin, on October 29th.

The focus for the event will be a brief and practical training session centred on the policy submissions process, with key inputs from the National Drugs Strategy Team and the

Strategic Task Force on Alcohol.

The Drug Education Workers' Forum is a voluntary network committed to identifying and responding to the needs of voluntary, community and statutory drug education workers in Ireland.

For more information on this practical, low-cost training event, contact: The Drug Education Workers Forum, P.O. Box 9364, Dublin 1. E-mail: dewfireland@lycos.com

New management structures: a threat to all?

While 15 new CDPs are to start receiving funding under the Community Development Programme before the end of 2004, a condition of the funding is that the projects are to be set up under a different management structure to the existing CDPs. The idea is to save money by having an existing project - another CDP or a Partnership group for example - take responsibility for administration. The new CDP will be 'hosted' by an established organisation and money saved goes to the CDP's work. However, CDPs in many regions unanimously oppose the idea.

North, south, east and west - all want autonomy maintained - Allen Meagher reports

THE Eastern Region CDP Network includes Dublin and urban Wicklow projects. An almost unanimous decision - only one group objected - was reached to seek a meeting with An Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, over the proposed different management structures for new CDPs and other issues relating to the Programme.

In the mid-west, south-west, and north-east, projects were just as loudly opposed to the proposed new 'hosting' structures.

Mid-west projects unanimously described the proposal as "inappropriate". They asked, in a letter to the Department: Does the 'hosting' proposal represent "a loss of focus (by the Department) on the stated principles and characteristics of CDPs or (does it) signal a fundamental shift in policy regarding the task and process of the Community Development Programme?"

Said the north-west projects' representative, Maurice McConville: "This is a fundamental change to the manner in which CDPs have operated for many years and will seriously undermine their ability to develop as effective community development organisations."

The north-east projects also wrote to the Minister venting their opposition.

Projects in the south-west were unanimously

opposed. Said regional representative, Anna Fitzgerald: "We have written to Minister Ó Cuiv - there will be a loss of autonomy to local management committees. The money saved might even end up being spent on mediation between the new CDPs and their host organisations when problems arise."

The letter from the projects was passed onto Minister of State, Noel Ahern, who has responsibility for the day-to-day running of the Programme and he is currently considering its contents.

Said Anna: "You have pushed as far as you can push and it is important for projects to say that."

Projects in the east fully discussed the issue and "were not happy at all with it", said their representative, Joe Grennell. "The proposed structures for the new projects were seen as diminishing the projects' autonomy. The eastern network committed to seeking a meeting with An Taoiseach to outline the issues to him. People are worried about their own futures as well as the future of the projects," said Joe.

If the 'hosting' arrangement is pushed through, it will spell an end to voluntary management committees that, say the mid-west projects, "provide an alternative

school/university where community development is learned."

The next National Advisory Committee meeting, at which representatives from the regions and departmental officials meet, takes place on September 27th and the matter will be discussed further.

Why one CDP agrees to manage another

RINGSEND CDP is likely to take responsibility for administration of East Wall CDP, one of the 15 new projects due to come on stream shortly. The agreement between the two is being finalised. Why did Ringsend's management committee agree to the idea?

"There were many reasons why," explained Joe Grennell, Ringsend CDP co-ordinator. "We said to ourselves that any new CDP is better off being hosted by an existing CDP rather than any other organisation. We would share the same aims. We feel responsible to people in the local area. And we would have no desire to 'empire-build' and we would be more likely than other organisations perhaps to give the CDP full independence in the future if that was requested by the Department."

"This is not new. It happened before, in Tallaght I think, when a CDP managed a core-funded group for four to five years. And we as a CDP have the capacity to do it," added Joe.

Asked was there any contradiction between representing the region - who are almost unanimously opposed to the new structures - and being a co-ordinator of a project ready to provide administration for another CDP under those new structures, Joe replied:

"There are some contradictions but sense has to prevail. We are operating in a government atmosphere that is right of centre. We are indeed operating in a country where the prevailing environment is right of centre. You would go nowhere saying no to the offer of a project for the East Wall. The newspapers, for example, would think you were mad if you said 'No' to money for a disadvantaged area. It's so difficult to explain why there are problems with the new structures."

More money for communities - Govt.

THE rationale underpinning the Government decision "to depart from the traditional CDP model in the establishment of new projects" was outlined in a letter from the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs to projects' regional representatives.

In essence, as a result of the introduction of the new 'hosting' structure, more money will be "earmarked for the actual delivery of plans rather than being spent on administration." Also, the initiative will "prevent duplication of existing structures."

The Department emphasised that certain principles will apply to the 'hosting' process:

- the day-to-day running of the CDP will remain the responsibility of the local voluntary management committee.
- it is envisaged the voluntary

management committee will manage the recruitment of staff and staff will report in the first instance to that committee.

- the new CDPs will be free to choose a local premises to enhance their visibility locally and this may or may not be in the same place as the host organisation.

- administration, for example accounts, payroll, etc, will be handled by the host organisation. Savings made from this arrangement will revert to the CDP project to be used for project activities.

The fine details are currently being negotiated with the new CDPs and potential host organisations.

The letter also made the point that, "The government is keen to ensure that the structures employed serve to assist communities to tackle disadvantage to the greatest possible extent."

Specialist Support Agencies - Contact Details

Blue Drum - The Arts Specialist Support Agency
The Outreach Centre
Clonsillaugh Drive
Priorswood
Dublin 17
T: 01 8771446
F: 01 8479392
E: bluedrum@eircom.net

City Wide Drugs Crisis Campaign,
175 North Strand Road
Dublin 1
T: 01 8365090 / 8365039
F: 01 8364849
E: info@citywide.ie

DESSA - Disability agency
Fumbally Court
Fumbally Lane
Dublin 8
T: 01 4163548
F: 01 4536861
E: desa4@eircom.net

NCCRI - anti-racism agency
20 Harcourt Street
Dublin 2
T: 01 4785777
F: 01 4785778
E: nccri@eircom.net

Pavee Point Traveller Centre
46 North Great Charles Street
Church Lane
Dublin 1
T: 01 8780255
F: 01 8742626
E: cdp@pavee.iol.ie

Women's Aid
Women's Aid,
Everton House,
47 Old Cabra Road
Dublin 7
T: 01 8684721
F: 01 8684722
E: info@womensaid.ie

CDPs' success with schools behaving badly

SUCCESS takes hard work. In Limerick, a campaign by the Northside Local Education Committee, the PLUS Network in Mary Immaculate College and others, finally convinced the Minister of Education, Noel Dempsey, to visit the city and address the continuing discrimination against children from disadvantaged areas of the city. Originally, 78 children were denied places in secondary schools. In the country as a whole, around 1000 children suffer this each year.

Community groups, including St. Munchin's CDP and CDN Moyross who were to the fore in the campaign, met the Minister on September 13th when he gave a day in Limerick to sorting out the problem. By then 17 children were still without a place, but, after the Minister met with school principals, 12 of those were found school places.

If however, this problem affects 1000 children nationally, how come Limerick was the place in the spotlight? According to Andrew Byrne, a member of the Northside Local Education Committee, it was thanks to the successful identification and highlighting of the problem by community groups. The media took up the story and local CDP staff were

interviewed on television and radio about the discrimination problem. 'Changing Ireland' was also involved in getting national attention for the story when radio presenter Gerry Ryan asked were the children involved not 'normal'. Of course they are.

Newly appointed Education and Welfare Officers also worked with many parents to appeal against the school's initial refusals and most were successful.

However, for the CDPs and all others involved, it is not time yet to celebrate their successes. The causes of this problem still exists, namely the seemingly discriminatory enrolment procedures of secondary schools. The principals have strenuously defended their schools records and policies but apart from St. Nessan's Secondary School there is little evidence that these principals or their Board of Managements are taking a positive approach towards children from estates like Moyross.

A number of actions which need to happen were put to the Minister when he visited.

The law says that every child must go to school until they are 16 years of age. Parents can be sent to prison for not co-operating. However, the law as it currently stands does not punish schools for refusing children access.

University or Prison? - Minister's measure of success

"I WILL measure the success of community and local development initiatives by asking the question, 'Will a child born in Moyross in the future have a better chance of going to university rather than prison?'" said Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, Eamon O'Cuiv, at the launch of PAUL Partnership's 2003 Annual Report in Moyross Community Centre in July.

The Minister's words were interesting on two

counts. Firstly, children from Moyross had huge difficulty getting a place in secondary school this year let alone getting in to university. These difficulties were not caused by the children but by the secondary schools and their "random selection policy", as was reported in the summer edition of 'Changing Ireland'.

Secondly, community initiatives in Moyross can claim some success already because despite everything (including a higher than average number who have been to prison) more young people from Moyross are going to third level than 8 years ago. It is a measure of change that in 1996 only 4% of people from the area had been to third level and close to 70% would have left school early.

Yet since 2001 a total of 76 third level bursaries were given out to young people living here. A further 12 adults have completed Diplomas and Degrees in UL sponsored by PAUL. This has come about because of the abolition of fees and with the help from groups like the Community Development Network Moyross and the availability of area partnership bursaries and other grants.

In some disadvantaged areas of rural Ireland over 70% of young people go to third level so the culture is very different. The challenge remains to create a community where more children will look forward to going to university rather than ending up in prison.

Six Programme agencies went on the road - Specialist Support Agency Roadshow 2004

By ANN O'CONNOR

THE six Specialist Support Agencies (SSAs) - Blue Drum (Arts), City Wide (Drugs), DESSA (Disability), NCCRI (Race and Interculturalism), Pavee Point (Travellers) and Women's Aid (Violence against Women) - took to the road together last May with their inaugural Roadshow event. The SSAs visited Kerry and Cork, hosting similar events in Tralee and in Cork city.

The purpose was to provide information about the work of the Specialist Support

Agencies to staff, management committee members and volunteers involved with projects. The roadshow encouraged projects to link with the SSAs. And the projects got to have one-to-one chats about developing ideas they had where an SSA could assist.

It is anticipated that the SSA's will take the show on the road annually, and in time, will visit most parts of the country.

The SSAs have a national remit to provide a resource, support and information to CDPs and Family Resource Centres, in relation to their specific area of expertise. Contact details for each agency are above.

'No-one was safe on June 21st in Ballyshannon'

- One day in the life of a Donegal town

THE Summer Solstice, June 21st, began early for Cathy McVeigh, resource worker with Youthreach in Ballyshannon, Co. Donegal, and Ann McGowan, development worker with Atlantic View CDP. They were out on the streets shooting taking photos from 8am.

It was all part of a project titled "A Day in the Life of Ballyshannon" and the idea was to record a specific day in the life of the town in 2004. Is that development work? Or daftness? Well, by Ann's report, they really enjoyed the experience, but it was also a voyage of exploration for 14 Youthreach members who joined in the photography project. To top it all, the work has been put into book and CD form and is now for sale in the shops. It has also been placed in the National Archives as a permanent record of life in Ballyshannon one day in the summer of 2004.

The photographers were neither coy nor shy in their approach.

"Every person on the street, half awake or otherwise was snapped and their particulars taken," said Ann. "There are photos of workmen tumbling out of vans, women going to mass, people whose car had broken down, workmen on roofs. No one was safe."

At 9.30am, Cathy and Ann collected 14 members of Youthreach, the group split up and visited work places, hospitals, schools, power stations and resource centres. The Youthreach members gained access to places they may never have visited otherwise.



The Youthreach members who photographed every part of Ballyshannon on June 21st.

Kiara and Rachel were fascinated with the ESB Power station when they were taken to see the young eels who had swam thousands of miles from the Saragosa sea into Donegal Bay and up into the Erne River to spawn. Apart from the eels they got a talk on how the power is generated at the station. Others were taken to the hospitals, schools and various work places that are normally closed to the public. The Youthreach members called it a day at 4pm, while Cathy and Ann kept going.

"We photographed buildings that were going up, long established buildings and those that were going to be demolished over the next few months. We photographed rehearsals for plays, yoga classes, choirs, bands, etcetera, and then it was on to the pubs," reported Ann.

The last photo was of Cathy and Ann sitting outside the Bridge End Bar leaning against each other with their eyes closed. Was it exhaustion or a few too many? The debate goes on!

All proceeds from the book and CD sales are going to Youthreach for future projects. The project

was the brainchild of photographer, Brian Doyle. Also involved in organising the photo-day were Emma Stroude, resource person, John Ward,

woodwork instructor, Lauder Clark, manager of Youth Reach in Ballyshannon and Siobhan McGloin, admin worker with Atlantic View CDP.

The participants of Youthreach are 15-20 year old early school leavers and the programme is run by the VEC. The curriculum consists of Art, IT, Communications, Personal Development, Maths, Woodwork, Childcare and Work Experience. Atlantic View has worked on various projects with Youthreach before this, including preparation for the St Patrick's Day Parade and organising a basic course for youth workers.

Say NO to poverty on Oct. 17th!

The 17th October is the United Nations World Day for Eradicating Poverty, and is an occasion to restate our refusal that poverty and social exclusion continue to exist, in Ireland and around the world. It is a day of solidarity with people who battle against poverty every day of the year, a day to highlight and honour their struggles and the struggles of their communities. It is an opportunity to stand together to re-commit ourselves to fighting poverty and social exclusion here and abroad.

In Dublin, the annual commemoration will take place on Sunday, October 17th, at the Famine Memorial on Custom House Quay. Everyone is welcome. 17th October initiatives are also being planned by the Community Workers Co-operative (on behalf of the Community Platform), the European Anti-Poverty Network, the Children's Rights Alliance and the Combat Poverty Agency. Contact them for details.

Two UN Day information packs are available, one for community groups, local authorities etc, with background information and suggestions for marking the day, and one for primary schools, with class material and children's projects. To order copies, contact the 17th October committee on 01 8558191 or 17october@eircom.net

Upcoming UN days

The following are commemorative days of action that will be marked around the globe by various groups, including CDPs in Ireland.

October:

- 1 International Day for Older Persons
- 5 International World Teacher's Day
- First Monday World Habitat Day
- 10 World Mental Health Day
- 16 World Food Day
- 17 International Day for the Eradication of Poverty
- 24-30 Disarmament Week

November:

- 6 International Day for Preventing the Exploitation of the Environment in War and Armed Conflict
- 16 International Day of Tolerance
- 20 Universal Children's Day
- 21 World Television Day
- 25 International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women
- 29 International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People



Ann and Cathy retired to the bar after a full day taking photos in Ballyshannon and got snapped themselves.

A strange new burden, and probably worthwhile

Review of SPEAK
By MAURICE MCCONVILLE

BY now all CDPs in the country should be using the new SPEAK system for planning and evaluation. The system was developed by NEXUS working with CDPs in the West and has been rolled out throughout the country. Each CDP has been supplied with the software, given two days training and should, by now, have completed an evaluation of their project for 2003.

At the training, in Ballymun, Dublin, Paul Butler from NEXUS tried to put the whole thing in context. He outlined the expected benefits from using the system and demonstrated how to operate it.

For many CDPs the SPEAK system seems a strange and technological way to carry out an evaluation. While attending the training at Ballymun I got the sense that while most project workers accepted the new system as probably a good thing, some were uneasy with the computerised form. Others felt that the introduction of SPEAK in the middle of "The Review" was bad timing.

A BIT ALIEN - IT SEEMS ODD

As a worker, who is struggling with this new system, I have to admit I find it a little alien to the community development process. Strategic Planning Evaluation and Knowledge Network is a bit of a mouthful. Sitting down at a computer to evaluate a process, which is about developing and



It was all smiles at the SPEAK training held in Dublin.

empowering disadvantaged individuals and communities, seems odd.

Terminology such as Operational Environment, Resource Audit, Impacts, Outputs and Core Community Statistics seem more relevant to accountants than community workers. Bar graphics or pie chart representations of time spent at meetings or working with target groups may look impressive, but do they measure how well our project is doing? We need to be careful not to be seduced by snappy technology.

Attempting to complete our evaluation for 2003 was indeed a learning process.

Remembering what we did last month can sometimes be difficult but trying to remember what we did over a year ago was nearly impossible. Calculating the number of days spent on each Working Partners, Methods, Target Groups, etc, turned into more of an art than a science, where previous experience of using a graphic equaliser was definitely an advantage.

Nevertheless we struggled on and in the end we managed to complete SPEAK and emailed our evaluation into cyberspace to NEXUS. It was at this point that we wondered whether our report would go into a supercomputer like 'Deep Thought' in The Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy and become part of "the answer to life, the universe and community development".

DEPENDS ON HOW CDPs USE THE SYSTEM

Seriously though, at the end of the day, we need to be clear about what SPEAK is for. Well we are told that we should have a clearer understanding of what are doing and why we are doing it, and that this will help us to plan and evaluate our work more effectively. If this happens it may well be worth all the effort. This is after all an evolving process and a lot depends on how CDPs use the system.

SPEAK does create a structured method within which, management committees and staff can examine the "big picture" as well as each individual input into this. For this alone SPEAK will be useful. However as has been



There was less smiles at the SPEAK training when the hard work started and project workers from CDPs around the country began to learn how the new self-evaluation system works.

recognised by NEXUS, modifications are needed.

Outside of our own projects I can see the benefits of using SPEAK. Three things - the Review, the bid by PLANET to take over the support for CDPs, and our involvement with the Social Inclusion Measures groups - highlight the amount of 'competition' that has developed in our line of work. This is not a bad thing but many of the organisations and agencies that purport to "do community development" have a lot to learn.

OUR COMMUNITIES JUDGE US BEST

We too have a lot to learn. We need to be able to explain our work better to other organisations and demonstrate how we can make a real impact on social inclusion and equality. While our 'competitors' often score high on presentation and low on content the reverse is true of CDPs. We have to learn to "blow our own trumpet". SPEAK can help us to do this.

It is also important that we plan and evaluate our work in a professional manner. This will help us demonstrate clearly what we are achieving and how we are achieving. With the current concern with "duplication" by the government, this has particular relevance.

SPEAK may well prove to be a useful mechanism for examining our work. However it should not replace direct feedback from our target groups, which should remain at the centre of the community development process. We all need to be clear about and be accountable for our work, but, at the end of the day, it is the communities we work with that will judge how well we are doing.

Ding-dong! Music, art & community work

BLUE Drum want to hear from CDPs interested in mixing community development work with (a) music and, (b) arts and health.

Around 25 volunteers and staff from all over the country, attended a seminar to explore how music can be used in community activities and as part of Community Development Programmes, reports Sandy Holland.

The seminar, held in Tullamore on June 3rd, explored this emerging area of work by looking at examples of where music has been used to date in this way. Blue Drum are interested in opening up discussion on such activities so for more information on the



seminar or to discuss your ideas further, please contact Blue Drum or look out for the feature in the next issue of 'Changing Ireland'.

Also, if your Community Project is interested in the area of arts and health and community development, Blue Drum are inviting community projects to a meeting about mixing all three on September 30th, in the Community Meeting Room, Civic Offices, South Dublin Co. Council, Tallaght, from 3.30-5.30pm. After the meeting, at 6pm, Minister Eamon O'Cuiv will launch a video 'Clay Changes'.

Contact Blue Drum to find out more about either development.

Got the holiday blues!

- Put a pep in your step with Lorcan's tips

September can be a wicked month. We are back. The summer break is just a memory and for people within CDPs and communities impacted by poverty many of the same problems and issues have not gone away, writes Lorcan Brennan.

Facing it all again can be daunting. We want to step aside. Stop the world, we want to get off... Before long, as we go about our days we realise we are suffering the same old feelings of poor self-esteem as we face the difficult battles for justice and inequality in the surrounding world. Reading recently an excellent poetry anthology 'Staying Alive', I came across a short poem by Eibhlín Ní Eochaidh titled 'How to kill a living thing'. It goes:

*"Neglect it, criticise it to its face/
Say how it kills the light/
Bores you with its green/
Continually harden your heart/
Then cut it down, close to the root as possible/
Forget for a week or a month/
Return with an axe/
Split it with one blow/
Insert a stone to keep the wound wide open."*

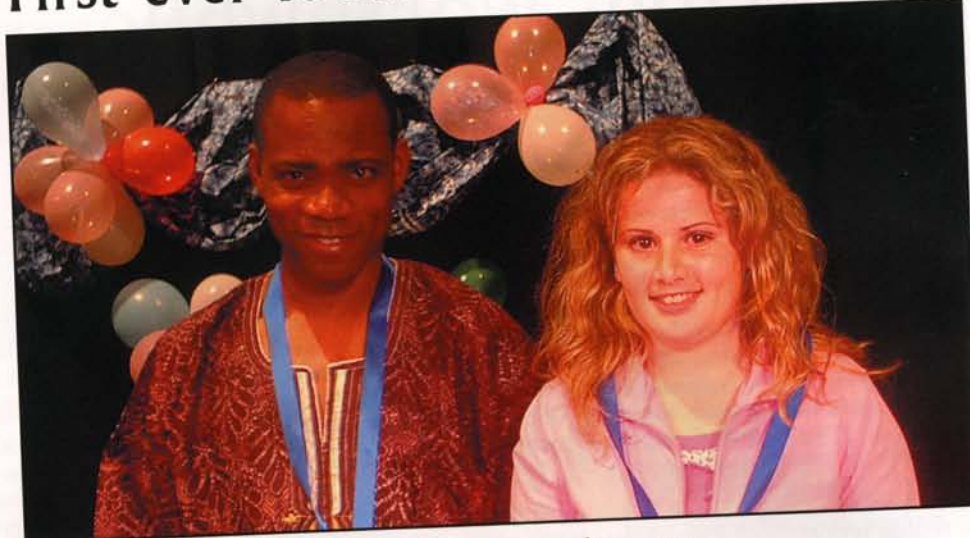
There is no doubt there are days for all of us when we feel the world has practised such terrible action upon us. But if there are, we must think also of ways of focusing and building in these coming months rules of care and support to see us through our vital work and commitments, not just as struggling survivors, but with a real pep in our step.

Alan Loy McGinnis, in his excellent little book 'Confidence', gives us 12 rules for building self-confidence, good rules to have when starting back to any new adventure. I think you will agree they are built on simple wisdom and common sense. By keeping these rules in mind they can help us all; they are as follows.

1. Focus on your potential instead of your limitations.
 2. Determine to know the truth about yourself.
 3. Distinguish between who you are and what you do.
 4. Find something you like to do, do well and do it over and over.
 5. Replace self-criticism with regular, positive self talk.
 6. Replace fear of failure with clear pictures of yourself functioning successfully and happy.
 7. Dare to be a little eccentric!
 8. Make the best possible peace with your parents.
 9. Determine to integrate the body and the spirit.
 10. Determine to live above neurotic guilt.
 11. Cultivate people who make you grow.
 12. Refuse to allow rejection to keep you from taking the initiative with people.
- As for the rest, it's up to you. As John Lennon said, "It will be just like starting over."

Best of luck!

First ever local intercultural awards



NEW Ross in Co. Wexford made history during the summer when it became the first town in Ireland to hold a Local Intercultural Awards Ceremony.

A lavish fashion show and night of music and dance was staged in a packed St. Michael's Theatre in the run-up to the

awards ceremony.

Among the winners was New Ross CDP - they were instrumental in the early stages particularly in supporting the set-up of the New Ross Intercultural Group. That group are very strong now for it was they who organised the awards event.

Spidery volunteers get networking

THE mid-west's volunteers network, called 'Spiders', is looking to increase its active membership. There are a dozen CDPs and up to 120 volunteers in, or within a short drive of, Limerick city where Spiders is based. After the successful Christmas party, Spiders held a Valentine's Night Out. More get-togethers are in the pipeline and the networking done is proving excellent for management people who may not know CDP volunteers apart from those in their area.

To support this networking among volunteers in the mid-west, a grant of 4000 was given by the Department in December of last year. Spiders do not wish to waste the money on meals or hotels. Instead it is being spent on supporting childcare or travel costs for volunteers who come to Spiders meetings.

To find out more, contact: volunteer Helen Whelehan, tel. 061-326690 or 087-6125511.

Project workers join trade union

Project staff in the mid-west are in the process of becoming trade union members. At regional meetings earlier this year, it was agreed that staff would be best served by joining an agreed-upon trade union and by joining together at the same time. Staff, with the support of management committees, are currently in the process of submitting their SIPTU membership forms.

CWC's harsh view

"Following the recent election results the government acknowledged that it was perceived as not listening to the public and of being arrogant. These are precisely the characteristics reflected in their ongoing approach to local and community development structures and programmes."

- Sean Regan, Community Workers Co-operative.

'Working for Work' - 11th edition

The Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed (INOU) has launched the 11th edition of 'Working for Work (2004)'. Over the years, 'Working for work' has proved to be an indispensable information booklet for unemployed people, front-line staff both in the state and community sector, and employers. It is the only comprehensive publication that brings together the wide range of information and supports available for unemployed people trying to return to work, education or training.

With the support of the Department of Social and Family Affairs, FAS, and the Department of Education and Science, a total of 20,000 copies were printed and distributed to groups and organisations throughout the country. Copies are still available FREE of charge (plus postage costs) from the INOU.

To contact the INOU, tel. 01-8560088, fax 01-856-0090; e-mail: welfareinfo@inou.ie. Website: www.inou.ie

Sunday, 6.00pm:

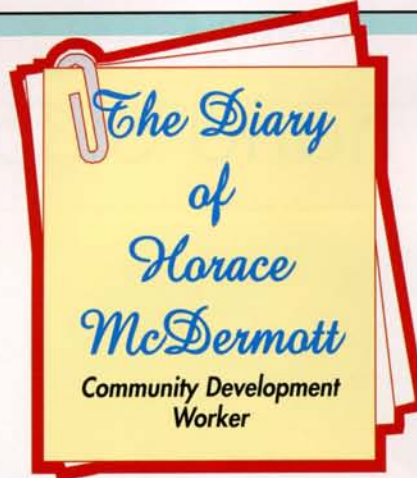
Michael Moore - what a fat fool he is - always having a go at my man George. I queued up to see Shrek 2 and asked the girl for a ticket for the film with the ugly guy in the poster and ended up in Fahrenheit 9/11.

Monday, 5.00pm:

I got to the bus-stop early this morning and started reading the latest inspirational book by Imakin Milons. It's all about 'living in the moment'. It was so good I didn't notice the Ballybog bus go by and I got on the Ballyotherbog bus instead. At least I had the book to read while I was waiting for the bus back. A pity it was so interesting though, 'cos then I stepped aboard the Ballynobog bus and ended up in the city. Still it was worth it. I really know where I am now. Mick went mad I was late, but calmed down when I reminded him I was booked into a time management course for Thursday.

Tuesday, 9.00am:

The CDP's new computer programme SPEAK has me speechless. After I put in my data it turns out I spend 32% of my time on project maintenance; 26% with target groups; 16% with working partners and 28% unaccountable. That was because I



didn't know if running down to the shops for biscuits was project maintenance, planning or travel.

Wednesday, 11.00pm:

The local Partnership SOB - Sorting Out Ballybog - brought in a time and Motion Consultant to help them assess what their employees were doing. The results were that most of them were busy completing Time and Motion surveys.

Thursday, 3.50pm:

The SOB held the time management course for us today. It was good, except it

didn't start on time 'cos the facilitator was late. But the good thing was she had to leave early before it was due to finish 'cos she had to pick her child up from school. So we had more time in the group to chat to each other. I'm going to take this on board whenever I run a training course myself from now on. Start late, finish early, great. And I'd have a break every half-hour to encourage participants to take up smoking - it's a great way to network, shame it kills you.

Friday, 1.00pm:

It was a good week - the only down side was I've had to give up slipping out to buy biscuits until I find out where to log this into the SPEAK system. I think it should go under 'project maintenance' because I maintain I cannot do my work effectively without my bikkies. Oh, I put away the 'living in the moment' book for the time being. I'm too busy right now to be bothered with that kind of stuff.

Saturday, 6.54pm:

It was a disgrace that that poor priest Fr. Horan - the man who built the airport in Knock - was disqualified in the Olympic Marathon when he was dragged into the crowd as he was about to pass the Brazilian guy. The world's not right.

OUTCOMES FROM REFERENDUM

Did CDPs increase voter turnout?

AS is well-known, there was an increased turn-out in the June elections in working class and disadvantaged areas. Sinn Fein were partly credited for this development. There is anecdotal evidence that the higher turnout was also partly due to those who may not normally bother voting but were motivated to turn out and vote because they wished to see the Referendum on citizenship passed.

However, there was another reason, though it's exact impact has not been quantified yet - in many disadvantaged communities, from Cork to Limerick city to suburban Dublin, CDP volunteers and staff worked on the local electorate, calling on them to come out and exercise their right to vote. Even where projects were against the Referendum, they preferred to see people vote 'No' than not vote at all.

In North Clondalkin, Dublin, residents and project staff from the local CDP, from Rowlagh Women's Group CDP, and from

a number of other local groups, spent election day calling door-to-door to encourage people to come out and vote.

The numbers that voted in North Clondalkin were twice as many as before. The CDP's local magazine 'North Clondalkin Buzz' remarked in its front page editorial: "The fact that 50% of those eligible in North Clondalkin voted means that politicians need to take an interest in the needs of the people of North Clondalkin if they want to get re-elected next time. They cannot continue to ignore us."

The magazine noted that the level of voting in the most disadvantaged part of Clondalkin - the north part - now matches the voting level in the mostly middle-class Village part of Clondalkin.

Elsewhere, there was a similar pattern. In Moyross, Limerick, there was a significantly higher turnout than usual, up from 24% in the last local elections to 40%.

No rush to enact new 'citizenship laws'

The legislation to give force to June's citizenship referendum, which was opposed by many CDPs throughout the country, is now unlikely to be enacted before 2005.

During the referendum campaign, the government said legislation was urgently required to stem the tide of 'passport tourists'. They claimed there was massive abuse of our citizenship rules and the state's maternity hospitals were said to be on the point of collapse with the number of pregnant women flying in to give birth in Ireland.

Before the Dail broke up for the summer, however, Minister for Justice, Michael McDowell, indicated that legislation to put the referendum vote into effect would not be debated until the autumn session. This suggests it may not be enacted this year. The fact that Minister wishes to hear the opinion of groups who have an interest in the matter will cost more time.

Labour Party justice spokesman, Joe Costello, said the government's lack of urgency now showed the "hypocrisy" at the heart of the referendum campaign: "It is now clear the referendum was just a tactical manoeuvre in the context of the elections."

So 'Citizenship tourism' may continue into 2005, but it is no longer seen as a threat to the state, if indeed it ever was.

The hand of love



Baby, Ruth Smith-Murphy, died this month ten years ago - she had just passed away when this photo was taken of her hand being held by her then 5-year-old brother Simon.

A still-birth is a death too

MARTINE BRENNAN reports

"I know I will never be the same again. I have seen death in my baby's face and I embraced her still."

IN Ireland every year, about one in five pregnancies end in miscarriage and approximately 500 babies die around the time of birth.

In the past, the father and grandfather of

the baby buried the child and the mother was not present. In many cases the mother did not even know where her baby was buried and the grave was unmarked. People did not speak of the baby.

In years gone by, the mother did not see the baby and often did not know whether the child was a boy or a girl. The baby was not given a name. Other siblings were usually not told of their sibling's birth and death. This practise caused untold suffering to mothers and fathers.

Thankfully these practises have been discarded at least by the medical profession

and by religious authorities. Mothers and fathers who experience the death of their baby are encouraged to hold and cuddle their babies. They can take pictures and hand and footprints, and sometimes have a lock of their baby's hair.

Parents are told their baby's weight and length and are given the baby's identification bracelet. Parents can give their baby a name and receive a birth, death or stillbirth certificate. Parents can organise the funeral, choose readings and hymns.

All these things support parents in honouring their babies and acknowledging their short lives.

What projects can do!

STILL-BIRTH deaths and miscarriages happen all the time, but are often ignored because there remains some social stigma attached to discussing these matters. It is time to change. Here are examples of what project workers and volunteers can do when a friend of the project or a work colleague loses a child, born, still-born or unborn:

- Send condolence cards/Mass cards. The project may not hear of the death of the child immediately it occurs but whenever it does it is important to acknowledge the loss of the child.
- Condolence cards can also be sent to the grandparents or the siblings or the aunts and uncles if they are the ones who are in contact with the project. It is important to acknowledge the grief of other family members.
- A project member who is close to the mother/father of the child could make a telephone call to find out when the parents would like a short visit.
- Gift Certificates can be purchased from ISANDS in the name of the child. The project will receive a receipt and the parents will receive the certificate, which does not include the amount.
- Projects can telephone ISANDS for information and they can request a copy of the booklet 'A little lifetime' for themselves. Although ISANDS distribute the booklet to all Maternity Wards in Irish hospitals the mother may not have received the booklet.
- Though many parents decide to have a private funeral for their baby, this should not be taken as a sign the family does not want their baby's life to be acknowledged.
- Remember, there may be other project members who have experienced miscarriage, stillbirth or neonatal death in the past. The most recent death may have had a profound impact on them especially if they were never given a chance to grieve for their own loss.

OLD HABITS DIE HARD

However, as a community, old habits die-

THINGS TO SAY

"I am sorry for your loss"
"My heart goes out to you"
"I don't know what to say"
"I think of you every day"
"How are you feeling?"

hard and we are still inclined to remain silent in the face of the death of a baby. We have many fears.

We fear intruding on the parent's grief. We fear saying or doing the wrong thing. We fear upsetting the parents and making their grief worse. Often we are so frightened we say or do nothing.

We expect the parents and family to get over their loss quickly. We make their babies invisible by not mentioning their names. We are afraid of their pain and unsure of our own ability to respond appropriately.

THINGS NOT TO SAY

"You will have more babies"

"You have a little angel in heaven now"

"At least you have other children"

"At least your baby didn't suffer"

Any sentence which starts with "it could have been worse if..."

In the case of a twin that died, "At least you still have one".

"It is God's will"

"Tell me all the gory details" or any variety of this including "twenty questions".

In community projects up and down the country, as in other workplaces, there are men and women struggling silently with pain and grief. Uncomforted. The following are some comments from people who have experienced the death of their baby. Their names and identifying details have been changed.

THEY PRETEND THEY HAVEN'T SEEN ME

A, mother of a baby who died six months ago:

"I hate going to the supermarket since my baby died. My neighbours pretend they haven't seen me or try to hide behind the shelves. I feel like a leper."

J, a grieving father:

"People never ask me how I am, they only ever ask me about my wife. He was my son too."

K, a heartbroken aunt:

"My friends behave as though I never had a niece. I have to keep on explaining over and over that I don't want to go to the party or the gig. They have to be reminded why I am so sad. I miss her every day."

L, mother of M.:

"I spent years volunteering at the [name withheld] project. They did not even send a card. No one phoned or came to see us. Yet my husband's football team were fantastic. Within days of our baby's death two of the



Over 50,000 babies are buried in unmarked graves in this plot of Glasnevin Cemetery. ISANDS is building a memorial. Recently, 500 people, relatives of those buried in the plot, attended a public meeting to discuss plans for the memorial.

guys came to tell us of their babies that had died. They hugged us and cried with us. Where were all the project people when I needed them?"

F, sister of G.:

"When my granda died the teacher said prayers for him. And all my friends said that they were sorry but when my sister died nobody said any prayers or anything. This made me feel very upset and my friends kept forgetting that my sister was dead."

M, mother of C.:

"When I said one day, 'C would be two today', my sister-in-law said 'you are not still thinking of her surely'. I was gutted. Does she ever forget her live babies?"

REGISTERING THE BIRTH

Under Irish law, a baby of 24 weeks or more, or who weighs 500g is registered in the Stillbirth Register. Parents can register the birth, but must do so within 42 days of the birth. If the parents decide not to register the baby's death themselves the hospital is then obliged to do so. The Registrar then issues a certificate of stillbirth. If the parents are not married and wish the father's name to appear on the certificate it may be necessary to go to the local District Court to have the father

declared the legal guardian of the child. Not all District Court Clerks are familiar with this procedure so it is important to speak to the Registrar about this.

ISANDS

The Irish Stillborn and Neonatal Death Society (ISANDS) was established in Ireland in 1983. It is a voluntary support group set up by bereaved parents for parents and families of children who have died in the womb or shortly after birth. ISANDS offer information and support on the telephone not only to parents and families whose child has died but also to anyone who comes into contact with the family. They also organise parents support meetings, information talks and memorial services.

ISANDS has also been instrumental in establishing the Stillbirth Register in Ireland. This means that the birth and death of the child is now formally recognised by the State, which is a source of real comfort to parents. Also, ISANDS publish a magazine twice a year in which parents and siblings write articles about their own experience.

• For more information, contact: ISANDS, Carmichael House, 4 North Brunswick St., Dublin 7. Tel. 01-872-6996. Charity No.: CHY-11507.

Author's note:

I have made some of the above mistakes myself when friends have experienced the death of their baby. You may have too. Now that I have learned more I have apologised to my friends and have made a fresh start with the ones who have been able to forgive me.

Dedication

In loving memory of
Hannah Michele O'Gorman.

What friends can do!

Ask "how do you feel" and then just listen.

Don't be afraid to cry, the family cry too.

Don't be afraid to mention the baby and "upset" the family unless they ask you not to. They are upset already anyway.

Offer specific help e.g. can I get your groceries for you?

Offer to accompany the mother on her first shopping trips or for her check-up at the hospital.

Offer to make sandwiches for the day of the funeral.

Offer to inform friends if and when the family wants you to.

Send a condolence card.

Contact ISANDS yourself if you have questions or don't know what to say or do.

Your friend may have been utterly changed by this experience, so give them time to talk about how they feel.

Recognise your power to advocate!

DECLAN WEIR writes

WHETHER we are aware of it or not, many of us act as advocates every day in Community Development Projects and indeed in other development settings.

Our involvement in community development work means we work with people who often have been excluded or marginalised. Many of the individuals and groups we work with - older people, people with disabilities, unemployed, Travellers, asylum seekers, families in financial difficulty, early school leavers - require a little, and sometimes a lot of, help. Education, employment, financial matters, access, and discrimination are just some of the issues around which they come to rely on us.

We speak up for them, help them secure their rights and entitlements, help them scale bureaucracy's intimidating walls. It might be as simple as making a phone call on behalf of someone applying for a social welfare payment, helping someone else to make sense of an application form for a job, or it could involve drafting letters and corresponding with a state department. Sometimes it goes further, representing a community's interests in a local authority setting, negotiating with a third party on behalf of someone, or providing long-term support for a vulnerable group. All of the above are examples of advocacy.

Advocacy's profile has become much higher in recent years, and is likely to get even higher, what with campaigns such as the ones to have the Disability Bill brought before the Dail.

So what exactly is advocacy, and where does it fit into community development? What does advocacy mean to you? Does it fit into your everyday activities in community development? If so, where? Would you remember to list it on your CV as a skill? If not, is it just another buzzword that doesn't mean anything?

I asked some of those questions to community development workers as well as the ever-reliable man and woman on the street. Definitions ranged from "It's helping someone through acting on their behalf" to "It's someone speaking for or on behalf of me if I'm unsure about something, or I lack confidence or I don't have access to the information I need."

Others used the words "supporting, clarifying, deciphering, negotiating," even "translating." Someone saw it as "help to deal with state bodies or organisations."

Another eloquently stressed the importance of advocacy as - an open door in helping to address issues of inequality, as the closed doors of the past have generally been the problem.

One individual remarked that, "Ultimately, the definition is of secondary importance as long as those who should benefit from advocacy do benefit."

Those benefits potentially include giving

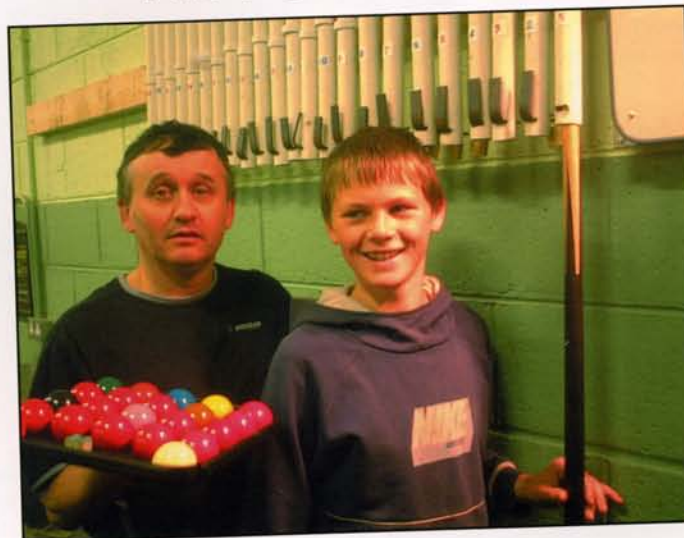
people self-respect, dignity and confidence as well as access to the services they need. And that's probably the most important thing for us all to remember.

It's crucial that advocacy, if it is to work properly, must include the person being advocated for, and that brings us to a definition put forward in a recent report by Comhairle that succeeds in bringing together many of the views mentioned above:

"Advocacy, which has always existed in human relationships is a process of empowerment and can take many forms. It is a way of enabling those who may have difficulty speaking up for themselves to do so and thus can be key to involvement in decision-making. It generally means representing the view of a person or supporting them to exercise or secure their rights."

Now you know!

ADVOCACY IN ACTION:



Cue Tips!

Jude Meaney (left) and Kevin Duggan show off the Wavin pipes that have been turned into a secure snooker cue locker system for a third of the price of having them custom-made in wood. Kevin is a member of Corpus Christi Snooker Club in Moyross, Limerick, which has 180 members. Other clubs that wish to know more about this simple and yet secure home-made cue-locking system can call Jude, a volunteer with CDN Moyross, on 087-688-2050.

Sligo launches a course in Advocacy

COMHAIRLE, the Equality Authority and the Institute of Technology, Sligo, are launching a new distance learning advocacy course this Autumn.

Comhairle's remit includes the provision of information, advice and advocacy through the national network of Citizen Information Centres. For some time, Comhairle had seen the need for accredited training in advocacy and, following much behind-the-scenes work, the first intake of students is currently underway.

Course-participants are likely to include staff and volunteers from projects funded by government-funded initiatives, including of course the Community Development Programme.

The course, starting in early October, is

being accredited at Certificate Level (Level 6 HETAC) by the Institute of Technology, Sligo. Speaking on behalf of the Institute, Dr Perry Share, Head of Department of Humanities, said, "This course is a logical development for an institution that has been involved in social care education for over 20 years."

One of the key selling points of the advocacy course is the delivery method. Comhairle's Máiride Woods, who has also been involved throughout the process, says it is to be delivered by distance learning. This makes it more accessible to information and advocacy workers on the ground.

Subjects include an introduction to advocacy, communications, social administration, and information management as well as work placement. There will also be

modules looking at increasingly relevant issues such as disability awareness, equality and law aimed at supporting positive change in the community.

Yes, anyone can be an advocate - but an effective advocate needs training, experience and information. If your job entails speaking up for others or supporting others to speak up for themselves, then this unique course will be of interest to you.

- For further information, contact : Dr. Perry Share, Institute of Technology, Sligo.
Tel: 071 - 9155340. E-mail: share.perry@itsligo.ie
Website: www.itsligo.ie/advocacy

Africa now educating its daughters

AFRICA is beginning to educate its daughters more than ever before, though it may take 25 more years than the UN planned before there is gender-equality in education worldwide.

"Some 65 million girls worldwide are kept out of school, increasing the risks that they will suffer from extreme poverty, die in childbirth or from AIDS and pass those dangers from generation to generation," say UNICEF, the world body concerned with children's welfare.

"We believe that the failure to invest in girls' education puts in jeopardy more development goals than any other single action that could take place," said UNICEF executive director, Carol Bellamy, urging the gender gap be closed.

The good news is that, throughout Africa, a push to get girls into school has seen big improvements. Over five years, school enrolment rates for girls rose by 15% in Guinea, 12% in Senegal and 9% in Benin. Numbers are also up in The Gambia thanks to President Yaya Jammeh's decision to offer free education to all



Many children, boys as well as girls, in Afghanistan have no schools to go to.

Pic: Nicky Morrissey

girls (boys must still pay fees).

In the most striking example, the number of girls enrolled in the central African country of Chad quadrupled in two years and the number of female teachers rose from 36 to 787. However, at the current rate of funding it is estimated that it will take until 2129 to achieve universal primary education in sub-Saharan Africa. The UN had set 2005 as one of their 'Millennium Target' dates for achieving this.

UNICEF point out that educating girls in particular also has wider social benefits.

"You educate a boy, you educate the man. You educate a girl, you educate the community and the family," said UNICEF's director. Explaining further, she said: "A girl gets an education and she is more likely to be healthy. Her children are less likely to die before the age of five. She is more likely to make choices about her life. It doesn't make it all go away, but she becomes more of a functioning person in society."

Because educated girls and women better understand health issues, every extra year of education reduces the number of women who die in childbirth by two per thousand, the study added.

There are 121 million children around the world going without schooling and most of them are girls. It is nonetheless being slowly recognised by governments that educating girls in particular has wide social benefits.

In salute of APSO

By OMAR
SANYANG-BADJIE

A 30-year tradition of sending secular volunteers to work in the developing world ended during the summer when the Agency for Personal Service Overseas (APSO) was shut down. Many co-ordinators and development specialists working in communities in Ireland today served their 'apprenticeship' with APSO in far-flung places such as Guatemala, Cambodia and Lesotho.

At its height, the agency operated up to 20 offices in the developing world - they were all closed in recent years. The closures came without warning and meant promises of aid were broken in some cases.

Surprisingly, there was little in the way of an organised campaign by former volunteers to save the agency from closure. This is at least partly explained by the fact that management and staff at the Dublin office had been criticised in a withering consultant's report which said the agency suffered from "ineffective leadership, low staff morale and poor communications."

However, in closing the agency down, the government threw the baby out with the bath-water, as considerable Irish expertise and the trust and respect of developing countries for Ireland was damaged.

APSO was slowly wound down after the consultant's report. The integration of APSO into

Development Co-operation Ireland (DCI), which operates under the umbrella of the Department of Foreign Affairs, was recommended in a review of the Government's development programme in 2002 and, since then, the agency and most of its staff have been subsumed into DCI.

APSO's closure spelt an end to the direct funding of long-term placements of Irish professionals overseas. More than 10,000 Irish doctors, nurses, technicians and other specialists went on two-year placements with APSO since it was set up in 1974. The development work APSO engaged in was very diverse. In one country, for example, APSO was responsible for supporting an archaeologist, a city planner, an accountant, a management consultant, a furniture factory manager, tourism marketing officer, laboratory technician and a wildlife conservation worker. It was a form of investment that no African dictator could siphon funds from.

APSO was good for Ireland of

course. During the long periods of economic slack, people who volunteered to go abroad with the agency freed up jobs for others at home. And while the volunteer pay cost little more than it would to keep someone on the dole in Ireland, their volunteer work won international credit. Ireland even received financial rewards from the EU for sending volunteers to developing countries. In more recent years, a shift was underway, however, in development thinking and it is considered better now to employ local staff where possible rather than sending in expatriates.

Yet, there were a number of advantages to sending Irish people to developing countries, not least the development skills and experience they brought home to Ireland with them. Two years ago, 'Changing Ireland' focussed on development workers engaged in the Community Development Programme who had previously worked as APSO volunteers. Their lives had been enhanced by volunteering to work in

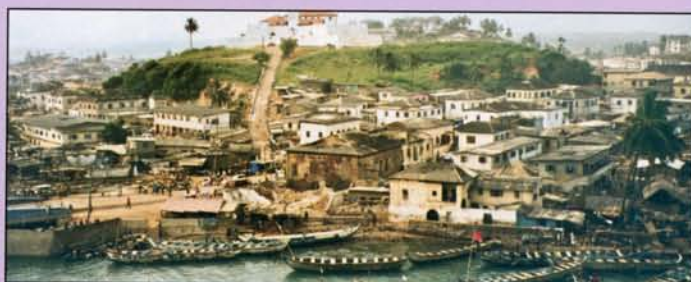
solidarity with the poor and oppressed overseas. No doubt, many others are also contributing to Ireland's true development in ways they could never have without the experience gained from working alongside Africans, Asians and Americans. Former APSO volunteers gathered earlier this year in Dublin to mark the agency's decades of achievements and, alas, its end.

To compensate for the demise of APSO, the Department of Foreign Affairs has now channeled new resources in support of the work of Irish missionaries and secular volunteers going abroad. Minister of State for Development Co-operation, Tom Kitt, has also launched a new initiative, 'Volunteer 21', to take up work previously done by APSO, such as the management of volunteer registers for specialist staff overseas.

And despite APSO closing, there are many worthwhile volunteering organisations still tapping into Ireland's pool of professional and non-professional labour. DCI provide training to intending volunteers.

Check their website: www.dci.ie
Volunteer organisations:
www.trocaire.ie, www.goal.ie, etc.

NOTE: APSO volunteers were typically given new names as part of their cultural training on starting work in a new country. Omar Sanyang-Badjie a.k.a Allen Meagher, is the founding editor of 'Changing Ireland'.



APSO once had volunteers in Ghana. This is Elmina, one of the first slave ports in Africa

Is Ó Cuiv's dream becoming reality?

The Minister takes the hard questions

INTERVIEWER, Allen Meagher: In your first interview with 'Changing Ireland' (Autumn, 2002) you said 'I have a dream'. How is it coming along? Has it turned into a bit of a nightmare?

Minister Éamon Ó Cuiv: I think like all changes, it happens slowly. Obviously, in the beginning there was a fair amount of suspicion and reaction against the changes, but as things progress, people will see more and more that what we are trying to do is very much to the advantage of the sector.

It was a bit unfortunate as well that, when I came into the Department, there was a downturn in the government finances, some people mistook tightness of money for policy. There was no connection between the formal changes which I felt were necessary and the fact that money was very tight.

Will the Community Development Programme get a doubling of funds then, given that the coffers are overflowing, an election coming up and Sinn Féin are gaining ground?

The government's priorities have been very clearly articulated - health, education and welfare. And I would include in welfare all of the community programmes focussed on the least-well-off.

Shouldn't it be a serious priority, equal in importance to our roads and the spending that goes on roads?

I wouldn't equate it with roads because roads are capital (once-off) expenditure and we are talking about current (ongoing) expenditure. The reason capital expenditure is always easier to handle is that in the bad times you can slow down capital expenditure, but once you commit yourself to current expenditure you have to fund it long-term, but yes, it is vitally important, maybe even more important than roads, because it affects people in the most direct way possible.

The UN statistics this year showed that Ireland was the second worst in levels of inequality in the industrial world...

But how do you measure that?

Yes, the government raised a lot of questions about the UN's methods of measuring inequality, so the statistic is a disputed one, but nonetheless it's been the same for a lot of years. But should we/you be using the UN report to help argue for more money?

Well I'm going to have to look for more money.

The Programme is now 14 years old and last year there was no steadiness in it - people weren't sure they would have jobs. They worried - Would the Programme be named something else? Would it be turned into something else? Would they have the heart in it anymore?

I recognise it's been a difficult two years, as I said because money was tight, yet this had no major connection to policy change. Now I



think we are trying to get to the end of the process and a lot of what people had feared won't actually happen. For example, the CDPs again are getting 3-year contracts, but the advantage is that we have now aligned them to the same time-periods as the partnerships.

People say 'Is the government trying to take over community groups?' For example, the government can't like Sinn Féin and other parties being involved in CDPs?

That might be the perception, but the reality is that if we want to counter activism by other parties in community groups, we would do that as party politicians by encouraging our own members to be active members of their community.

As a Minister, there is no party-political agenda, it is totally apolitical and anybody who has dealt with me would know that we deal with all the community groups in a non-party-political way.

Some people imagine there is a much bigger agenda out there than there is. In relation to control, the one thing we have to have control over is accountability for spend. But in relation to policy, as long as the policies and the projects fall within the (Programme) framework we don't try to determine who goes on the boards, or what policies they follow locally. And there hasn't been any change in that.

Is this the most unsexy ministry in the government?

People in the national media probably don't see it as a very attractive department. I think on the ground its importance is being seen more and more. Over the next three years this Department will be seen to make a major impact where it counts, and that's on the ground in the communities.

Are you going to be making the impact from the top-down though?

We want simple structures where people can make decisions. It is no part of our agenda to make some centralist control over all these bodies.

Is the CDP radical enough for you? Should

the CDP be challenging government more?

Well, what I'm always interested in is how do we eliminate or eradicate poverty? One simple question I've asked time and again, at home and abroad, I've asked everybody, is: 'We are urbanising at an incredibly fast rate in this country. So how do you build cities that do not create new areas of major disadvantage?'

I'm willing to enter a debate with anybody, particularly with a view to learning and finding solutions.

In the meantime, there is a huge amount of very practical work going on on the ground.

Do you feel proud of the CDP? Do you feel an affiliation with it at this stage?

What I would hope is that, in three years time, if I'm left in the Department I'm in, people would say 'Yes, we don't agree with everything that was done but in general terms a good job has been done and we left it better than we got it.'

Was 'endorse' the right word to use? It caused a mini-confidence crash.

I don't accept that. What's important to remember is that the City/County Development Board's (CDB's) are central to the coordination process for local development and there is a need for coordination of activities. The endorsement process is a vital link in this. However, if there are practical problems with the process, the Department would certainly be interested in addressing them.

Two CDPs were not renewed for funding this year, on Sherkin Island, Co. Cork and in Kiltrush, Co. Clare. Do you want to make any general comment on it?

CDPs on a day-to-day are a matter for Minister Ahern. The Department's policy on the funding of these CDPs relate to management issues and to no more. The Department had the resources to fund these CDPs but there were certain serious issues raised regarding both CDPs, these have to be dealt with, we are committed to both those communities but we have to see how best to deliver within those communities.