

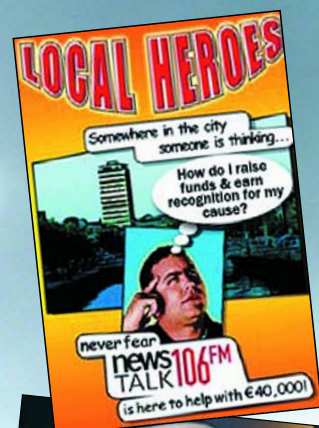
CHANGING IRELAND

AUTUMN '05

ISSUE 15 The National Newsletter of the COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME - funding 190 Community Development Projects

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Suicide: time to improve on throwing lifelines



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New suicide-prevention strategy announced

THE body of a drowned man lies hunched over a motorbike. He had tied his hands to the handlebars to make sure he would sink. Heartbroken friends and family left flowers at the spot and after a few days the wind blew them away. The same spot has been the scene recently for two other suicide attempts - one man was going to jump from a crane, another did jump from a bridge. However, in both cases, the men changed their minds and were saved.

Well, it is gone past time to throw only lifebuoys to the suicidal and, at last, the government have recognised this fact. The experts say that in any rapidly-changing society, suicide rates will increase and Ireland's suicide rate among young men and women is the fifth-worst in the EU. More people die from suicide now than die on our roads.

A new government-sponsored, suicide-prevention strategy (announced in September) will not stop all suicides, far from it, but it will mean more training will be available for those who encounter people contemplating suicide.

That training should, of course, be available to Community Development Project staff and volunteers. Community development staff/volunteers come into daily contact with



people who are experiencing deprivation, unemployment, drug-addiction or are separated and these groups are particularly vulnerable to suicide.

In fact, local community groups are uniquely placed when it comes to young men who may say more to a community worker/volunteer they know than they would to their own doctor.

The National Suicide Research Foundation recommends that projects make themselves aware of the resources available and direct vulnerable people in the right direction. They

warn community workers against taking on too much responsibility for preventing suicides by themselves. The risk of burn-out is high.

The government strategy was seven years coming. In the meanwhile, some CDPs have become active themselves. Projects in Ballymun and Ballyfermot, in Dublin, and in Waterford (among others) have run suicide-awareness courses. On-the-spot rescues save lives, but so too can early intervention.

In this edition of 'Changing Ireland', we look at suicide-prevention and also at counselling and community development (continued from Issue 14).

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Traveller project offers training to businesses

- as Clonakilty publican brought to court

THE West Cork Traveller Centre in Clonakilty has welcomed a successful court action taken by members of the local Traveller community against a local publican who acted in a racist and discriminatory way against them. The publican was ordered to pay one of the victims €500 in compensation and write a letter of apology to all three stating that they are all welcome to return to the bar.

The judgement was secured under the Equal Status Act.

The action was taken against Conor Mulcahy, Alan Farrelly and Philip Clifford of the well-known hostelry, the Galley Bar in Clonakilty.

In Clonakilty District Court on Tuesday, July 19th, Conor Mulcahy, was found by Judge James McAnulty to have discriminated against Kathleen O'Driscoll, Michelle O'Driscoll and Mary O'Driscoll on the basis that they were Travellers by refusing them access to the premises and barring them

from returning. The offences took place on October 16 and 17, 2004.

Kathleen told the court she called to the pub the day after Mary and Michelle were denied entry. In seeking an explanation from Mr. Mulcahy, she said she was verbally abused and told that she was "barred for life".

Welcoming the verdict, Kevin McCaughey, coordinator of the West Cork Traveller Centre in Clonakilty, said, "This is a great day for Travellers generally and in West Cork particularly."

"This judgement sends a clear signal to all businesses in West Cork including vintners, that the Equal Status Act of 2000 applies to everyone and any breaches of the law can and will be challenged in the courts," he said.

"After the government removed the adjudication of such cases from the Equality Tribunal to the District Court system in 2003, the vintners may have felt that the Equality legislation no longer applied to them, but this verdict is a reminder to them that all of their

customers must be treated fairly and equally. Otherwise, there will be more cases taken and more vintners in court," he continued.

"I think it is a source of inspiration for other people faced with the same treatment. It is, according to the Irish Traveller Movement, the second time that there has been a successful challenge in the district courts," added Kevin.

The West Cork Traveller Centre urged all businesses to take their responsibilities in this area seriously and to develop equality policies to ensure their staff are informed and the customers protected. The CDP is prepared to run equality training for businesses in the area.

**Contact Kevin or Kathleen at:
West Cork Traveller Centre
Association Ltd, 8 Park Road,
Clonakilty, Co. Cork.
Tel. 023-35039.
E-mail:
westcorktravellercentre@hotmail.com**

Volunteer involved in successful court action

KATHLEEN O'Driscoll, one of those who took the case, is a voluntary management committee member of West Cork Travellers CDP. She works in a Community Employment position. Her sister, Mary, was another of the victims of the publican's prejudice. The third victim, Michelle, has attended various events and courses in the CDP.

"The CDP provided some support," Kevin McCaughey explained. "When Kathleen told us what happened, we advised they write down their recollections, they did. Then they sent a letter to the pub, by registered post, to seek an explanation for the treatment they received. They never got a reply.



Kathleen O'Driscoll with her daughter Chelsie. Photo: Colm Hogan.

When the complainants decided to go legal, the CDP was the point of contact between the solicitor and the women."

"Given that Clonakilty is a small, rural town where everyone knows one another, it was extremely stressful for the women. They felt stigmatised by being barred," remarked Kevin.

"The women made it clear they did not want money, only justice, from the case," he continued. "Nonetheless, the judge ordered defendant Mr. Mulcahy to pay €500 in compensation (since received) to one of the victims. He also demanded the owners write a letter of apology (also since received) to all three."

Contracts issued for new CDPs

TEN new 'hosted' CDPs approved for funding late last year have been offered contracts with funding of €66,000 each. The projects are located in Dublin, Cork, Wicklow, Laoise and Offaly.

Following an announcement in November of last year by Minister of State, Noel Ahern, that the ten had been approved for funding, negotiations have been taking place between representatives from the new projects, host agencies and officials in the Department's Community Development Unit. The aim was to progress the set-up arrangements and the negotiations culminated recently with the offer of contracts by the Department in respect of each of the projects.

The funding includes €6,000 which will go to the host agency in each case to cover administration costs.

These will be the first new CDPs to join the Programme since the Government decision stipulating that any new initiatives approved for core funding should operate, where possible, within legal structures already in place at local or community

level. The progress of these fledgling projects within this new arrangement will no doubt be closely monitored by all within the Programme in the months to come.

Five of the new projects are in Dublin city and county, two are in Co. Wicklow, one in Cork, one in Offaly and one in Co. Laoise.

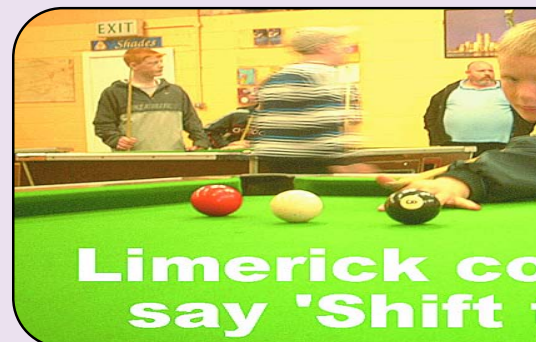
The new CDPs and their respective host agencies (with the exception of Portarlinton CDP which will stand alone) are as follows:

- Cabra CDP, Dublin 7 - An Siol CDP;
- Drimnagh CDP, Dublin 12 - KWCD Partnership;
- Nascadh CDP, East Wall, Dublin 3 - Ringsend CDP;
- Edenmore CDP, Dublin 5 - Northside Partnership;
- Loughlinstown CDP, Co. Dublin - Southside Partnership;
- Gurranebraher CDP, Cork City - Cork City Partnership;
- Edenderry CDP, Co. Offaly - OAK Partnership;
- Arklow CDP, Co. Wicklow - Arklow Community Enterprise;
- Rathnew CDP, Co. Wicklow - Wicklow

Working Together ;

- Portarlinton CDP, Co. Laois - not applicable. This project is being set up as a separate legal entity as no appropriate host agency operates in this project's catchment area.

There are 185 CDPs, including the above, in total in the Community Development Programme.



Limerick communities will 'Shift the Focus'

'Shift the focus', a photographic and arty exhibition of Limerick's successes within the much maligned working class communities of the city will be launched next month.

Sixty schoolchildren have submitted paintings, community projects have sent in hundreds of photos and the Mayor of Limerick will launch the week-long event. The public can add photos and comments to the collection once it opens. Everything positive will be displayed.

The exhibition will depict the good in Southill, Moyross, St. Mary's, St. Munchin's and Our Lady of Lourdes parishes, each of which has a CDP. The organisers say these areas are "too regularly tarnished as bad and ugly".

"We want to shift the focus to the good things happening in our communities," said Liam Shine, a Southill resident and a member of the PAUL Partnership board.

"All the communities are doing excellent work. People working in our communities, especially the volunteers, get next to no recognition at all. Yet, people are volunteering all over the place, going here and there getting things done, but never saying out loud the good they are doing. And it's time we blew our trumpets. And we will on the week starting October 26th," said Liam.

The exhibition takes place in the Augustinian Church on O'Connell Street.

Training '05 in the South & Mid-West

Between now and December, the South & Mid-West Community Development Support Agency will run training programmes in:

- Equality training
- Volunteer Induction Programme
- Influencing Policy
- Staff Support and Supervision /Grievance and Disciplinary procedures
- Management Committee Skills
- Facilitation Skills
- Community Development

The courses - most taking no more than one or two days - are being provided in response to needs identified through meetings between projects and the support agency in the last year. Some will be held on Saturdays.

The support agency was established in 1996 and is an independent voluntary organisation which provides support and training to CDPs and Family Resource Centres in Cork, Kerry and the Mid-West.

The agency is managed by a voluntary management committee

The seven courses on offer aim to provide participants with skills and knowledge to support them in the management and the effective running of their projects. Voluntary Management Committee Members, Sub Group Members, Staff and Volunteers attached to CDPs and FRCs may apply.

Courses will take places in Tralee, Killarney, Limerick city and Cork city and you must book and pay a €10 fee towards food at least ten working days prior to the date the course begins. There will be a maximum of 16 participants per course.

- **To apply: For a booklet and booking form, Tel 061-225711.**

Places may be booked by completing and returning the booking form to: Gillian Downes, S&MWCD SA, Block 1, Floor 2, Ashbourne Business Park, Dock Road, Limerick.

The idea for a 1905 Cottage in Mayfield came from a local lady, Julianna Griffen. She wished to see Mayfield involved in the Cork 2005 European Capital of Culture Celebrations. Julianna approached the Mayfield CDP seeking support. Contact was then made with the Cork 2005 Community Officer Tony Sheehan who linked the group to Cork 2005. The group's application was successful and the exhibition was included in the Cork 2005 programme of events.



Of course you can!

NAVAN CDP has secured funding under the Back to Education Initiative to run six accredited training courses from this September.

The courses planned include: Computer Literacy; Child Development and Play; Office procedures; Preparation for Work; Personal and Interpersonal Skills; and Computer Applications.

People on social welfare, unemployed, or with less than 5 D's in their Leaving Certificate will be given first option to participate on any of the courses.

For more information, contact:

Kay Kearns, Teach Na nDaoine,
96 Claremont Estate, Navan, Co.Meath.
Tel. 046-9029242.

Mayfield turns clock back 100 years

AWAY with your skyscrapers and motorways, we're going to build a cottage! During the summer Mayfield CDP supported a local heritage group to produce a replica of a 1905 city cottage. A year's work went into planning the exhibit and while it was only open to the public for a couple of days, the hope now is to establish a permanent museum for the exhibits that were collected. The cottage showed what domestic life was like 100 years ago.

Officially opened by renowned Cork Historian, Dr. Sean Pettit, the exhibition replicated the living and sleeping areas of a cottage of a hundred years ago. This included a bastible, which was used to bake bread. Eileen, a member of Mayfield's heritage group demonstrated the old-fashioned bread-making techniques.

Speaking at the opening - there were as many children present as adults - Dr. Pettit said the exhibition served as a perfect representation of "how our fathers and mothers, lived, ate and slept." He noted that if our forefathers walked into a modern kitchen, they would approach it with fear because we are living in an age of man-made miracles, which slows the sense of wonder.

"When we talked about this a year ago, they didn't believe we would do it," Tony Sheehan recalled. As Cork European Capital of Culture 2005 director of community-based

projects, he performed the official opening.

Over the two days there were many visitors to the Cottage and they were provided with tea and currant cake like their granny used to make. All who visited were very impressed with the authenticity of the display and the great attention to detail.

The exhibition was made possible with the help of many people and was an excellent example of co-operation between community organisations. The Heritage and Culture group was supported by the Mayfield Community Development Project. The Mayfield Community Training Centre played a key role, as the students on their multi-skills course built and painted the set with the help of their tutors Val Sheehan and Brenda Stillwell.

The Mayfield East Community Association allowed use of the Kerrigan Tyrrell Centre, security was provided by Express Security and the old fashioned currant bread for the event was provided by the Alternative Bread Company.

Since the event was such a success, the heritage group's long-term aim is to source funding for a local museum, which could house all the old items. This would be a great resource for children in the area to visit. The only pity about the 'Cottage' was that after the weekend exhibition, it and all the old items had to be removed and put back in storage until this dream comes true.



Relaxing in the cottage in Mayfield, Cork.

16 Days of Action begins Nov. 25th

COMMUNITIES are reminded that the annual campaign '16 Days of Action against Violence against Women' will take place shortly. This year, the 16 days begins on November 25th, which is the UN's International Day against Violence against Women, and goes to December 10th (the UN's International Human Rights Day).

Women's Aid is the Specialist Support Agency to the Community Development Programme and they have put together an information pack for the campaign. It contains ideas of action, information on events and actions planned by different groups around the country. It also highlights examples of the kind of activities communities have

organised in the past.

Any CDP or community group planning to do something to mark the 16 Days is encouraged to contact Women's Aid - they wish to get an overall picture of what events are going on around the country and they can also lend support and advice.

For more information, contact: Women's Aid, Everton House, 47 Cabra Road, Dublin 7. Tel. 01-868-4721. Fax 01-868-4722.

E-mail: Kathleen.quinlan@womensaid.ie or maeve.healy@womensaid.ie. Website: www.womensaid.ie

Imagine being disabled!

By MAURICE McCONVILLE

A GROUP of people - disabled, some in wheelchairs - arrive at a community centre to join a new line dancing class. And let's say they are not exactly made to feel welcome. This was the scene set at a workshop of Forum Theatre, organised by Disability Awareness North East (DANE), which I attended in Dublin, in June.

Drama is a great medium for communicating ideas, but the Forum Theatre workshop offers much more. As members of the audience, we were invited to participate by facilitator, Peter Kearns. He asked us to analyse the action and to say how we could turn a negative situation into a positive one. We were all immediately challenged and made more aware of our own attitudes towards disability. The actors themselves were put on the spot by being questioned by the audience, on their behaviour and attitudes.

Through interacting with the performers, the situation became much more real for the audience. The scenes acted out in the community centre represented vividly the struggle for equal treatment of disabled people in wider society. The Forum Theatre's approach to disability equality, gets its message across in an immediate and



Workshop participants acted as if they were disabled to learn how discrimination works.

powerful manner.

Talking to Peter after the workshop I got a better idea of the background to the Forum Theatre. Peter is a Policy Worker for the Forum for People with Disabilities, based in Dublin. The Forum Theatre project was set up in collaboration with DANE and Eileen Carroll from DESSA, the support agency for disability. The aim is to help groups to attract more disabled people. Peter described what Forum Theatre is about:

"We do not preach. The groups themselves come up with their own solutions. Audiences get to change the situation ...they

may well recognise their own attitudes or prejudice in a character ...it is about transforming the negative real situation towards a more positive one."

Peter works closely with a Forum Theatre actor, Yvonne Lynch, who gave an excellent portrayal of a "well meaning" but patronising organiser, with little awareness of the needs of disabled people.

All the other members of the group have little or no experience of acting, yet their performance make the issues come to life. They are from a variety of backgrounds and include John Lynch a Methodist Minister from Dundalk, Nora Malone from the Louth Centre for Independent Living, Gerald Martin, Le Cheile CDP, Liam Cunningham, The Beech Corner Support Group, and Martin McBride People With Disabilities in Ireland.

The group are touring between now and Christmas.

Forum Theatre workshops dates include:

October 19th, in Castleblaney (venue TBC);

November 16th, in the Cavan Crystal Hotel, also 10am - 2pm.

For more information, contact: Forum of People with Disability, 21 Hill Street, Dublin. Tel: 01-8786077.

Volunteers at centre of new Programme committee

MAURICE McCONVILLE reports

VOLUNTEERS are now more involved than ever in guiding the Community Development Programme forward and in advising the Minister (who can choose of course whether or not to accept the advice). From each region of the country, volunteers have now joined the Programme's National Advisory Committee (NAC). The committee also includes department officials and representatives from the wider community sector.

The Programme representatives and support agencies' representatives met in June under a new structure.

The meeting, held in Tullamore, was to plan for a strategy for future NAC meetings. Representatives who are mostly new to the

NAC came from all over the country. It was organised and facilitated by Sharon Kennedy from the South-East Region.

The meeting reviewed the operations of the NAC and drew up proposals which are hoped will make the NAC more effective. The new structures require a volunteer representative from each region and issues of support and expenses for volunteers were seen as a priority.

The meeting also proposed that reps would meet regularly, between NAC meetings, to ensure a coherent approach to issues facing the Programme. The NAC was again due to meet in September as 'Changing Ireland' went to the printers. We can however give you the names of the members of the new NAC along with their representation.

The NAC membership is as follows: Aidan Lloyd, Area Development Management; Anna Quigley, Citywide Drugs Crisis Campaign (Specialist Support Agency); Cathleen O'Neill, Kilbarrack CDP (staff); Dick Hickey, St. Brigid's Family Resource Centre (FRC rep); Eddie Arthurs, Dept. CRGA; Gerry McKeever, Tosach Regional Support Agency (Support Agency Network rep); Jean Garland (FRC rep); Joan Byrne, CAP CDP (volunteer); Joan O'Flynn, Combat Poverty Agency; Joe Grennell, Ringsend CDP (staff); Liz Fletcher, Harmony CDP (staff); Mags Dorney, Dept. CRGA; Maria Tuohy, a volunteer from the

West and Midlands; Mary Hennessey, Bridge CDP (staff); Mary Seale, West Training Regional Support Agency (Support Agency Network rep); Mattie Sheridan, Larchville/Lisduggan CDP (volunteer); Maurice McConville, Le Cheile CDP (staff); Rosemary Kerrigan, Community Connections CDP (volunteer); Sean Dooley, Dept. CRGA; Sean Regan, Community Workers Co-operative; Siobhan O'Dowd, from the south & mid-west region (CDP staff); Terry Dunne, Dept. CRGA (New Chairperson); Theresa McGouran, Markiewicz CDP (volunteer); Thomas King, East Clare CDP (volunteer); Tony Finlay, Dept. CRGA.

Even the 'well-off' can be socially excluded

"AS we know, social inclusion is not a matter of having adequate financial resources, but of being able to participate and have a measure of control over one's life chances. Even the financially well-off can face problems of social exclusion such as discrimination based on age, gender, sexual preference, or disability."

- Morgan Mee, West Training



Advisory committee members.

HELP ME HORACE

'Changing Ireland' is pleased to offer a new service to our readers with our problem page. You can write to our resident counsellor Horace McDermott. As our Diarist, he shared his innermost thoughts and feelings with you and now he is available to hear yours. Horace worked for two years in Ballybog CDP and recently completed a course in Holistic Psychosomatic Studies from the Wako University in Texas, so he is well placed to help.

Just write to: Help Me Horace, 'Changing Ireland', c/o CDN Moyross, Community Enterprise Centre, Moyross, Limerick.



staff are signatories – the real trouble starts when your secretary runs off with your treasurer so nip any simmering romances within the management committee in the bud. A training day on gender discrimination should be enough to create division and enmity between the males and females in the project.
Horace

I'm worried about poverty

Dear Horace,

When will poverty in Ireland be a thing of the past? I thought we were getting there, but apparently not. I'm nervous we might make a sudden breakthrough, because once the poverty is done away with, I'm out of a job. What's the story?

Bothered Bob

Dear Bob,

Some things are very hard to get rid of like Twink or Gay Byrne. They keep popping back up just when you think you've seen the last of them. Poverty is a bit the same. It's always there and when you try to have a real go to eradicate it and consign it to history all you get is an upsurge in wrinkly rocker record sales like Pink Floyd. Anyway look at it this way. If you did away with poverty and you lost your job then you'd be poor. Then somebody would be given the job of fighting poverty and soon you'd be out of poverty and then they'd lose their job and ... well you can see you have nothing to worry about either way.

Horace

My staff have eloped

Help me Horace!

I am the CDP Chairperson here in Ballydonsaywhere. My problem is that our Administrator has run away with our Co-ordinator. That wasn't so bad but the cheque-book is also missing. I am too embarrassed to tell anyone. What can I do?

Worried Wilma

Dear Wilma,

There is no need to be embarrassed about telling anyone? Now that it's published in Changing Ireland everyone will know. As for the cheque book don't worry. Neither of your

Should we stop speaking Irish?

Help me Horace!

I am involved in a Gaeltacht-based CDP and the Minister wants to move us out of the Community Development Programme. He's going to throw us in with the Udaras crowd. We are thinking of stopping speaking Irish as a way to mess up his plans. (We could still speak it on the Q.T.) Have you any better ideas?

Sean O'Suilleabhain, Bothar Gangaeilge, Dingle, Co. Offaly

Dear Sean or should I say John,
No – that's a great idea. After all "Nil aon programme mar do programme fein."
Horace

My Co-ordinator stinks

Dear Horace,

My Co-ordinator insists on wearing eco-friendly alternative moisturiser to work. He stinks and no-one calls to our office anymore. The management don't know what to do. There is nothing in the contract to cover this, is there?

He also refuses to shower more than once a month blaming the Government for putting chlorine in the water. As each month wears on, he tries to compensate by lobbying on extra helpings of moisturiser. It's horrendous in here as I type. What can I do?
Fuming Fiona

Dear Fiona,

A smelly co-ordinator will never address the need for water and soap but an itchy co-ordinator will resort to anything that brings relief. Why not try spiking his moisturiser with pepper or chilli powder. If that fails then

burning incense sticks is an option. Be careful where you stick the incense of course
Horace

I'm a Burned-Out Smoking Social Outcast

Help me Horace!

I'm a burned out community development worker and for the last year have begun to feel like a social outcast, unloved and unwelcome. The problem is you see that I'm a smoker and now in the office, at meetings, pubs, cinemas and even in Croke Park I'm banned. It's taken the enjoyment out of everything especially a drink or two after work. Worse, some of my friends say that I shouldn't be allowed treatment in our hospitals. They say I'm blocking up badly needed beds by my selfishness and anti-social behaviour. It's really getting me down. Please help Horace. Am I that bad? What should I do?

Sincerely,

Nick O'Teahan, Durtee, Ash Tree

Dear Nick,

You've got it completely wrong. Your friends should be thanking you for all you have done for this country. If the truth was told the celtic tiger was built on the lungs and livers of the hard pressed heavy smokers and drinkers of Ireland. When there was no work and no investment, the most consistent form of government income was raised on the excessive duty and taxes on cigarettes and alcohol increased each year in the budget.

The government knew they could count on patriots like you willing to die for Ireland and it was your daily pack of 20 and slew of pints at the weekend that paid for the transport, education and health systems in this country. Your friends have a cheek. Smokers anti-social? Where did all the lovely side walk cafes and pleasant beer gardens come from? If you had given up the fags then the publicans would never have developed these facilities.

Now that the government have stopped lashing the duty on to the "old reliables" you have other ways that you can do your civic duty and keep the coffers full. One very practical thing you can do is buy at least a half-dozen plastic bag every time you shop so we can be sure the government levy raises as much as possible for the good of the many.

Horace

You should know why women are like teabags!

MARTIN McCONVILLE reports

DURING the summer, women from Dundalk-based Le Cheile CDP attended a 'Learning Across The Line' conference in Newry, County Down. Access to education for women and the barrier of the border were the main themes of the conference.

Over two years, women have participated in around 800 courses funded by the 'Learning Across The Line' project. On a personal level, women developed confidence, made friends and established new networks.

The success of the initiative was put down to the atmosphere created, the fact that the courses were free, were held at local venues, and because expenses for childcare, carers and travel were covered.

Quipped the first speaker, Avila Kilmurray, Director of Community Foundation Northern Ireland, Peace 2 funders: "A woman is like a teabag. It is only when she is in hot water do you realise how strong she is."

Avila said the 'Learning Across The Line' project was addressing learning needs in an

area where there was conflict over sovereignty. The project reached across the border and was socially-inclusive and encouraged curriculum development with learners and teachers working together. The learning took place in a safe, non-hierarchical environment, where women learned from each other's experience.

The Workers Education Association (WEA), who operate on both sides of the border, teamed up with Lónra (meaning 'Network') to organise the conference.

BORDER REVELATIONS

Two WEA workers, Sharon Jennings from Newry, and Dora Murphy from Castlebar, introduced the large number of accredited and non-accredited courses taken. These included: Women and Leadership, Self Awareness, Community Relations, Computers, Return to Learn and many more.

A number of participants from the courses spoke, including mother of four children, Roisin Kelly, from Ballygawley near Omagh. Roisin said that she had completed several courses with the project and spoke

passionately of the opportunities she had been given. She said, "I got the courage to speak today because of the project." Bernadine Quinn, from the gay and lesbian support group 'Dundalk Outcomers', described how meeting and talking to other lesbian women across N. Ireland had been a revelation and made her realise how much of a barrier the border had been during the conflict. Because of the 'Learning Across the Line' project, Bernadine is now in contact with gay women throughout the border region.

When the conference was opened to the floor, several women expressed their appreciation of the project. Mary Caldwell from Le Cheile CDP said that participating in the 'Aspects of Self Awareness' course helped them set up a women's group in Dundalk.

The conference then moved on to discuss a progressive route for women based on the success of the 'Learning Across the Line' project.

Clodagh Barry from Lónra, which is a border-region higher education network, spoke of the network's work and its objective to develop a 'Bridging Course' into higher education, on both sides of the border.



Determined woman returns to education

WHEN Roisin Kelly, from Ballygawley, decided to return to education with the 'Across The Line' Project, (see full report above) she did not let having three children, with one on the way, hold her back.

"When I started I was six weeks pregnant, but I only missed two classes and that was when I was in hospital," she told the conference.

Roisin took several courses over a year including Stepping Stones for Families and Essentials Skills. It was hard not to be impressed and uplifted by Roisin.

She continued, "Doing the courses gave me more confidence and made me at ease...I met women from all sides of the community and made great friends...I was better able to help my children do their homework." And her message to other women thinking of returning to education was - "If I can do



Roisin Kelly returned to education.

it with four kids they can do it."

Roisin was profiled on the evening of the conference on BBC TV's Newsline report.

SENATOR O'ROURKE

Research had been carried out by consultant Jackie O'Toole who spoke of the findings of the research and the proposal to set up courses in 'Women In Contemporary Society' and 'Peace Studies'.

Irish Senator, Mary O'Rourke, talked informally to the participants and congratulated the women for getting this far. "There is nothing to beat education," she said.

The senator urged Lónra and the WEA to act quickly in order that the work already done is built upon. While funding for the project ran out in May (and not in time for the Peace 2 Extension funding) it is hoped that further funding may be found to continue the progress made.

The conference certainly demonstrated the way forward for access to education for women in the border region. The uptake of the courses and the enthusiasm and confidence of the participants are evidence of the need and the success of this approach to education for women.

For further information, check out the following websites: www.wea-ni.com and www.lionrarhen.com

Women's groups cured of border-blindness

TWO women from different sides of the border become acquainted on a Development Studies course. What happens next? They swap lecture notes. They talk football. Maybe, but that's not it.

They book a hotel in Donegal and bring thirty women from their respective women's groups to enjoy a cross-border networking weekend. In June, more than 30 women from women's groups in Co. Donegal and Co. Fermanagh met in a hotel in Ballybofey for the cross-border residential.

For many of the women, it was their first time meeting each other. To their amazement they discovered there were several women's groups who are quite close geographically. This was especially the case for the Pettigo and Tullyhummon Women's Group which straddles both sides of the border.

"Realising there are so many women's groups and some not too far away has been brilliant. Phone numbers were exchanged and we plan to meet up soon," said Finola Brennan afterwards. Finola was one of the two organisers and is co-ordinator of Donegal Women's Network (CDP).

As well as having been a very successful networking event, women from Donegal and Fermanagh exchanged some of their experiences of what it was like living on the border in the past and the changes for them now.

These stories touched many aspects and the different levels in which their every day lives were affected. These ranged from the very visible check-points and physical barriers, to romances that were sustained, while acknowledging for some couples the border and different community backgrounds proved insurmountable.

"The diversity of the group meant a lot. I would like to see this happen annually, if not bi-annually," wrote one woman



afterwards.

Great energy was generated at the meeting, because the women were from various denominations, demonstrated different abilities and disabilities, and came from various ethnic origins.

Going by the evaluations, there will be big demand for repeat meetings.

"I have been to a lot of residentials and this was the best yet," remarked one highly impressed woman.

People were raving about the 'Circle Dancing' lessons they received in Ballybofey. Learning the Russian dance had people howling with laughter and enjoying themselves no end.

Isobel Cleary, co-ordinator with Fermanagh Women's Network (CDP), and Finola Brennan, co-ordinator with Donegal Women's Network, first met on a Community Development Peace Building studies course. They put a plan together, the North-South Rural Voice provided funding, and the meeting between the two networks has opened up many new opportunities for women to meet. There are already plans in motion for other local women's groups, once divided by the border, to meet up.

You might see them if you keep an eye out. They are likely to break into Russian dance once they meet!

For more information, contact:
Finola Brennan, Donegal Women's
Network CDP, 10 Donegal St.,
Ballybofey, Co. Donegal.
Tel. 07491-32023.
E-mail: donwomnet@eircom.net



All eyes down for, Susan Finnegan, Rossnowlagh, Carmel Campbell, Fintonna, Eileen O'Reilly, Garristown and Maria Ellis, Enniskillen, at the Women on the Border Residential.

Where's the respect and recognition?

Matthew Sheridan,
 Larchville/Lisduggan C.D.P.,
 Waterford City.

Dear Sir,

I have just read the report on your Special focus on Volunteering in Ireland and was taken with the debate over paying volunteers. I am a volunteer in my community for the last eight years and I did not look for payment for volunteering, but that was when I started.

Over the years things have changed in community work so much that the volunteer has a lot more responsibility to deal with and more committee meetings to attend. They spend a lot of time away from their families and their homes. And what about the volunteers who work for a living and then have to go out to meetings at night to represent their communities?

What recognition and respect are any of us getting: either from the department (DCRGA), or the other Agencies who have no involvement or input into our projects, but who continue to mess us about saying they are there to help us. But they are more of a hindrance to our projects and put a lot more work on our already overworked staff.

We in the South East Region are in the process of trying to organise a get-together for volunteers, but as you know these things take a lot to organise and of course - money. So far we have been unsuccessful in getting a grant for it. As I said earlier where is the recognition for the volunteers and all the work they are putting into their communities?

I do agree with some of the volunteers quoted in the article who said they should not be out of pocket because they are representing their community and are taking a lot of stick from people in their communities. There is also a lack of respect for volunteers' work and commitment by others who do not know anything about community work or think they do.

Might I add that I did not see anyone from the South East give their views on Volunteering in Ireland.

Yours truly,
 Mattie Sheridan

Ten essentials for Volunteers

- to run an effective Management Committee

By PADRAIG KELLY

1. **Dust down the Memorandum and Articles and read it through.** It may be a lengthy document but it is important as it sets the ground rules and is the legal framework for your Project. If as a member of the Voluntary Management Committee you don't understand it or can't get to grips with it, don't be shy and ask someone who will explain it to you. Rest assured that you would not be alone in finding it difficult to grasp the meaning of legal documents. **Be aware of your duty as a director of a limited company and a registered charity.**
2. **Understand the terms and conditions of contracts you have entered into.** There are usually three contracts:
-The contract the Project has for core funding. Be aware that your contract is to implement an agreed work plan and that the contract places financial and legal obligations on you.
- Your contract with staff - understand the terms and conditions under which they are employed and the legal obligations you have as an employer.
- Find out the terms and conditions of the contract you have with the owner of the premises that you are renting for the Project.
 There may be other contracts for grants or funding that your Project may have been successful in accessing for your Project.

3. **Know the Project work plan.** As a member of the Voluntary Management Committee it is your role to ensure staff and volunteers are implementing the work plan. If the work plan is not practical, outdated or irrelevant ask why? If so the Project may review the work plan and start again.
4. **Know the policies and procedures that the Project has in place.** You may think these are complicated documents that go into elaborate details about situations that might never happen. You might be right. Some of these situations don't happen. However, some do. When they do everyone needs to know that there is an agreed way of dealing with certain tricky situations that is agreed beforehand. **No point in considering fire drill when the house is burned down!**
5. **Be informed.** You are managing the Project. You should look for information on all aspects of the work of the Project and keep yourself aware of all its activities. To make informed decisions you need to inform yourself and be informed.
6. **Be aware of the different roles in the Project and what they mean.** If people have clear responsibilities within the

Voluntary Management Committee what are these responsibilities and how do you relate to these people - what is the role of staff? Staff liaison? Finance sub-committee, chairperson, secretary and treasurer? All these positions are there to serve the Project. So, how can people in these positions be let get on with the work and responsibility they took on and yet keep the Voluntary Management Committee fully informed and be accountable?

7. **Lead. You must offer leadership - you must participate in the debate that determines the direction the Project takes.** Staff in the Project play an obvious role in the day to day running of the Project. However, the Voluntary Management Committee in discussion with staff must provide the leadership for the Project. Don't be afraid to lead - leadership involves putting new and fresh ideas forward and having your own opinion based on your unique experiences.
8. **Are your Voluntary Management Committee meetings effective?** Minutes of previous meetings, proposals for the meeting and relevant information should have been sent out and read before coming to the monthly meeting. This meeting should review the work the Project has engaged in for the previous month and plan the work you will engage in for the next month. Each member should contribute to this discussion. Staff should leave the meeting with feedback on their work and with an outline of the work they are to undertake in the next month.
9. **Time. You must have time to commit to the management of the Project.** The Project depends on you managing it. If you cannot attend at a meeting send your apologies as early as possible. This way if there won't be a quorum, a meeting can be rescheduled. If on a regular basis you cannot afford the time then inform the other members of your situation.
10. **The final ingredients** are ones that no rules, guidelines, policy or procedure can enforce. Yet they are the most important. **These are honesty, openness and willingness to take risks for the benefit of those for whom the Project was established.**

• *Pádraig Kelly is a development worker with West Training Support Agency.*

10 advantages to volunteering

1. It provides you with a real opportunity to grow as a person while you work to improve the quality of life for all the people in your community.
2. You will be respected by many people in the community for the work you do.
3. Your career and employment prospects - if you are a volunteer - will widen considerably as you gain experience in project and staff management, social issues, company law, recruitment, employment and financial issues.
4. You stand to learn through both training and action how to be a leader, a team-worker, a supervisor, a listener, a decision-maker, an innovator, a reporter.
5. You will gain a great understanding (after some time!) of your community, the services available to members of the community, how local democracy can work, how to stand up for your rights and the rights of others, how to motivate marginalised people to become active around their own issues and in their own communities.
6. You may become less selfish!
7. You will watch less television!
8. You are part of a collective response that gives individuals some protection from critics/attackers.
9. You get up with a purpose everyday and have somewhere warm to go.
10. Your active participation in community life brings many unexpected rewards.

'You're only a waste of space and a spy'

- abuse on the job

HERE, two community workers outline the hassles they sometimes face in their work. They are Juan Carlos Azzopardi and Geraldine Clohessy, two of the editor's work colleagues at CDN Moyross in Limerick.

JUAN Carlos, project co-ordinator, is working in Moyross for seven years and lives some miles away: "I'd have experienced a certain amount of verbal abuse. There are two types of abuse, the first coming from the target group because you are seen as 'a money-grabbing, waste-of-space and a f-ing spy'.

"Then you have people you know or half-know who speak disparagingly of the people or the place where you work. First of all they extend their sympathy and pity because of your area of work. But when you say you don't need their sympathy, then they attack you saying 'Why are you working with these people? They should all be locked up.'"

"So, on the one hand, you have people in the area calling you a 'waster' and you also have people from outside saying you're at nothing. I get that a lot, for working with early school-leavers and for working with refugees. But I never felt in any physical danger from the people abusing me," he said.

Geraldine, a development worker, is a long-time Moyross resident: "A lot of people don't even know what you do. We worked hard to get these facilities (community centre, creche, CCTV, shopping centre, women's group, etc) and now people take them for granted. You get a bit of rubbish talk - 'Oh, look at yer one, who does she think she is!' or 'See her, she thinks she's going to save the world'. But that's about the worst of it," said Geraldine.

We would like to hear more on this topic from readers. Editor's contact details - page 2.



Would you cross a river this way to work? If so you may be suited to development work abroad.

Risky work, development work

By ALLEN MEAGHER

ELAINE Fahy - a former CDP chairperson in Limerick - once had her car stolen from outside work. There was a happy ending however. The youths in her project - clever, loyal and respected youngsters - made a few quick phone calls and her car was returned, undamaged, within 20 minutes.

Development workers and volunteers in Ireland, as well as battling with government for funding, sometimes encounter dangerous or challenging people in the course of their work.

Abroad, especially in war-torn countries, development workers and human rights activists work in the knowledge that they may be assassinated. This is common in Columbia for example.

In other countries, particularly in Africa, thieves have taken to targeting westerners who are volunteers or priests, thinking they have money. Only occasionally, the motivation is political.

Overseas volunteers also risk being killed in car crashes or dying from tropical illness. While the fear of diseases like malaria can be great, there is a 17 times bigger chance of a volunteer dying in a road-crash in a tropical country than dying of ill-health.

Last year saw a new threat emerge - kidnapping and execution. While kidnappings are not new - in the 1980s, two Irish nurses were kidnapped in Ethiopia - the possibility of execution is (certainly in Iraq). Margaret Hassan, a 59-year-old from Co.

Armagh, was kidnapped last October and murdered by Iraqi fundamentalists, after working for 30 years delivering food and medicine within Iraq.

In Ireland, while the risks are significantly less, both staff and volunteers still encounter trouble, as Elaine did. It takes a highly motivated or caring person to be at ease working in this sector. Among the risks of getting involved in community development work in Ireland are the following:

Racist taunts! Sectarian abuse (particularly in north Ireland).

Abuse on the street! Slagging?

Ridicule by family members (especially of volunteers who become involved).

Targeting by criminals.

Being left without a job. Though the Community Development Programme is 15 years old, financial uncertainty and changing government policies have occasionally dogged the Programme. There is little or no long-term job security in the community and voluntary sector.

There is an increased risk of suffering illness or disease when community workers enter unhealthy environments. eg Clearing illegally-dumped rubbish.

Depression. This is a risk because of the nature of the work - poverty is a form of violence (so says Mary Robinson, for one) and can impact on those facing it daily.

Also adults often - against best practice, and due to short-staffing - work without support with vulnerable groups. They leave themselves open to false accusations.

HOW TO PROTECT STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

- A. Obviously all CDPs, being limited companies, are required to have full insurance.
- B. Training, eg anti-racism training and management training.
- C. Strong teamwork. Management takes responsibility as a group for all its decisions. Maintaining confidentiality.
- D. Encourage staff to take up the off-site support on a regular basis. Some

CDPs offer this to all development staff.

- E. Maintain professional distance between working life and social life as much as is possible, especially when the worker lives in the community.
- F. Night-time paid workers and volunteers must be able to work in a safe environment.

Unlikely lessons in Community Development - from Colombia

GERALD FITZGIBBON reports

COMMUNITY-BUILDING in the context of a war seems like folly, yet for Jesus Emilio, Maria Brigida and their community in Colombia such work offers the only positive route out of the conflict.

In August, Ireland's shores were graced by the visit by the two leaders. They came from the 'San Jose de Apartado' Peace Community in western Colombia to raise awareness here about their work and their plight. They made many new friends, including a CDP worker from Dublin and impressed everyone they met with their simplicity and purpose. They are peasant farmers who value community greatly, but live in a country at war with itself.

Said Helena O'Neill of Lourdes Youth and Community Services: "It is mind-boggling what they are doing, they are so brave. They are trying to build something very positive out of an anti-war position. I haven't been to Colombia, but I hope to go in the future. They need human rights monitors and they need our solidarity. And they have so much to offer in teaching the world how to build community out of situations of conflict."

Not many would think to look to Colombia for lessons. Yet, those who organised the five-day tour, as well as many of those who heard the visitors speak, found themselves taking powerful lessons in community development from the 'San Jose' pair.

EFFIN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER

They were invited here by Carol Fennessy, from Effin, Co. Limerick. Through Peace Brigades International, Carol spent 2003/'04 working as a human rights defender with their community.

"San Jose" is one of many new Peace Communities that are a new event in the 60-year-old Colombian civil war. The conflict until recently also involved the civilian population - caught up in battles between the Colombian state, the right-wing paramilitaries and the leftist FARC guerrillas. But these new Peace Communities have collectively decided to have nothing more to do with ANY of the armed groups. They absolutely insist on a no arms policy in their communities and concentrate on working together to build healthy, self-sufficient communities.

There are now nearly 30 peace communities and the concept is spreading fast. It is a type of social revolution the government is anxious to stem, because they want a compliant population, not communities that wish to stand up for themselves. Recent massacres bloodily prove the ferocity of the Colombian government's disapproval. Community leaders are regularly murdered by Government-sponsored death-squads.

'San Jose' and the other Peace Communities differ from the norm by refusing to fight for either side. It was obvious during their visit that Jesus Emilio and Maria Brigida are used to danger as they go about their work.

Driving along the roads from one venue to the next, they were AMAZED by the lack of police or army. It was two days before we finally saw a Garda; directing traffic on the way into Galway.

"In Colombia, you run into a road block every half-kilometre," said Maria Brigida. "There is constant intimidation by guerrilla or 'security' forces."

When going on errands, Maria Brigida told us how she often puts dirty nappies into her bag: word would soon spread and she would be waved on through the checkpoints!

"You have freedom to breathe here," said Jesus Emilio, "It's unbelievable."

Yet if the speakers were wide-eyed at their freedom of movement, they were under no illusions that all is rosy here: "You have all this freedom, yet thousands suffer from depression and mental problems, and hundreds commit suicide. There is something wrong here. Despite everything else, we don't have that in Colombia."

SAW PROBLEMS IN IRELAND

The Colombians felt these problems were connected to a decline in community.

While they were not promoting any particular ideology - caring neither for 'left' nor 'right' - they regarded it as self-evident that the current model of economic development in Ireland was undermining unity between people and breaking up community.

They also feel that this is the same model of economic development that the Colombian government wants to impose on them, except that in their country it is happening at the point of a gun.

According to Jesus Emilio: "The Peace Community embodies a different model of development to that proposed by Uribe's Government and his allies in the Paramilitaries. We want to make a good life in this area. We are almost self-sufficient in food, all of which is totally organic. We educate ourselves and others through the *Farmers' University*, where we meet to share our knowledge and hold practical workshops to improve the quality of our lives."



PLANTING HOPE

"We want to plant seeds of hope and a living peace for the future. The government wants to kill and intimidate us and the other communities into leaving this whole area, so European multinationals come in, cut down our forests and plant vast plantations of African Palm (*a lucrative cash crop used in soaps and cosmetics*). Then all that will be left for us is flee to the city, where the best to hope for would be to find a job in a factory."

The travellers gave public talks in Limerick, Galway, Charleville, Ennistymon and Dublin. They were especially taken with the work of the Irish Seed Savers in Scariff, County Clare, and want to co-operate with them to set up their own seed bank. They also met with Green Party leader, Trevor Sargent, and had a two-hour meeting with senior officials in Development Co-operation Ireland and the Department of Foreign Affairs.

It is clear that these people are attempting something new in their communities in Colombia, concentrating on co-operation, opposing conflict. They risk murderous attack for the work they do, yet will not be deterred.

By the end of the tour, all those involved had been affected by the Colombians' spirit and heroism. Ideas like *fair trade* or *community* came alive through the lens of their vision.

The travels of these simple and radical leaders through Ireland came to an end. They embraced us and ask us not to forget them, then passed through to the departure gate at Dublin Airport and were gone.

With the return of Jesus Emilio and Maria Brigida, the San Jose Peace Community is now looking at the contacts that have been made here in Ireland: they are interested in creating markets for their fair trade produce, cooperating with groups here on development education work and having volunteers come and stay with them.

For more information, write to sanjose_ireland@hotmail.com Or phone Ger at 087-6267635.



Carol Fennessy from Effin, Co. Limerick, took this photograph while living in Colombia as a solidarity worker. She lived in Peace Communities and is now working from Ireland to promote their work and their cause. She has been involved in bringing two Peace Community groups to Ireland to date.

Constructing community in a warzone

THERE is nothing complicated about why young men and women in Colombia arm themselves for war.

According to Jesus Emilio Tuborquio, a farmer and one of the inspirational leaders of 'San Jose' Peace Community: "People join the armed groups for economic reasons as much as anything else.

"But it is a vicious circle, because the never-ending armed conflict is also the reason why there is so much social decay and lack of community. This is the importance of the Peace Community movement...by constructing community...we are constructing an alternative to war...by becoming food self-sufficient and cultivating the values of community, we are creating a living peace, and a different society...but not with arms."



Jesus Emilio Tuborquio

Community work abroad can be deadly

EIGHT IRISH MISSIONARIES MURDERED SINCE '01

The priest and development worker, Fr. John Hannon from Co. Clare, murdered by a gang of up to ten raiders in Kenya, last year, brought to eight the number of Irish religious murdered abroad since 2001.

The 65-year-old member of the Society of African Missions was attacked at the parish house - his home and his office - in Matasia, Ngong, not far from the capital Nairobi.

The Clare priest had lived and worked for 25 years in Africa. Three years ago, while celebrating Mass, he survived a knife attack by a woman.

The Newmarket-on-Fergus born priest had built many training and education centers. Much of his development work was geared towards the provision of skills training for young women. He saw their education as crucial for their dignity and livelihood. Fr. Hannon had been involved in various other community development

initiatives.

Fr. Hannon, like many missionaries-come-development workers, lived in an isolated area. His death attracted relatively little media attention here.

COMMUNITY WORKERS MASSACRED IN COLOMBIA

In Colombia, thousands of social activists are killed every year. Being a community development worker can mean finding yourself targeted as a guerrilla/terrorist.

February 2005 saw the brutal massacre of seven members of the 'San Jose' Peace Community, including one of the leaders, Luis Eduardo Guerra, along with his wife and young child were butchered.

The people have long given up making statements to police or to state inquiries...those who give testimonies have often ended up themselves being shot or 'disappeared'.

Read more about the risks involved in Development Work on page 11.

'Changing Ireland' employs administrator



THE four-year old 'Changing Ireland' project has recruited a part-time administrator. The appointment will give the magazine scope to expand its readership and to increase its impact on the public and on key decision makers.

The new administrator, Tim Hourigan, originally from Kennedy Park, Limerick, previously worked in international banking, for the health board and for the Stop Sellafeld Campaign. He has also been engaged in much voluntary activity.

'Changing Ireland' was set up, in 2001, by the Community Development Network (CDN) Moyross, one of 190 CDPs in the state, to report on CDP work nationally. The magazine and the projects are funded by the Community Development Programme (which is administered by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs).

Readers can contact the administrator on 061-458011, Monday-to-Friday, 9.30am - 1.30pm. For further contact details, see page 2.

€2.9m for 40 youth projects

DURING the summer, it was announced that 40 groups working with youths in Dublin, and Bray, would receive a share of more than €2.9m.

The announcement was made by Noel Ahern, Minister of State at the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs with responsibility for the National Drugs Strategy when he launched a third round of capital funding under the Government's Young Persons Facilities and Services Fund.

The aim of the Fund is to attract 'at risk' young people in disadvantaged areas into facilities and activities that will divert them away from the dangers of substance abuse. The Fund supports the development of targeted preventative strategies - including sport and recreational facilities and services - primarily in the 14 Local Drugs Task Force (LDTF) areas of Dublin, Bray and Cork, where a significant drug problem exists or has the potential to develop. Projects in ten LDTF areas will benefit, including in: Bray, Bawnogue, Clondalkin, Blanchardstown, Dun Laoghaire, Tallaght, Dublin's inner city, Finglas, Ballyfermot and Ballymun.

NCCRI move

THE National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI) have moved to Third Floor, Jervis House, Jervis Street, Dublin 1. Tel. 01-8588000.

E-mail: info@nccri.ie Website: www.nccri.ie

Ferrying across the Digital Divide

By MORGAN MEE

WELCOME to the computer age! Nowadays, most of us in the wealthy countries have more computer power in our homes today than NASA used when putting the first man on the moon.

For years we've been hearing computers connecting the 'global village', but what of it? Apart from helping to organise and administrate office affairs, what use can this information technology be to a CDP hoping to tackle the causes of poverty and social exclusion?

Well, over the past couple of years a few island CDPs in the West and Midlands Region have started to find out.

Clare Island, Inishturk and Inishbofin are all islands situated off the west coast of Ireland. Their combined population of 377 people includes about 200 households. The geographical isolation of the islands and the small size of the island populations have meant that opportunities to access employment, education and medical services have been few.

Right now, gaining access to even the most basic services can be problematic. It's a long way to the hairdressers. Or the solicitor, or the bank, not to mention the secondary school. And forget about signing up for adult education evening classes.

So then, how can modern technology promote social inclusion in this context?

In late 2003, the CDPs on the three islands along with West Training & Development Ltd, the Regional Support Agency for the West and Midlands Region came up with some answers.

While it was obvious that an improved information technology infrastructure could provide local enterprise with a lift, the potential of modern technology to "enable" people in many other aspects of life surprised everyone. The vision developed to use technology "to even the playing field" as much as possible between the island communities and their mainland counterparts.

SERENDIPITY

At this stage those involved had a very lucky break. Brendan Minnish, computer expert and 'isle-ophile', was visiting Inishturk the same day as an Inter-island Network meeting was taking place. Hey Presto! Suddenly, everyone knew that the technology existed and we knew that it was affordable.

We didn't need any satellite connections or an expensive technological solution, what we needed was a wireless group data scheme. Community owned, community maintained



and community managed. *Meeting Brendan also led to us meeting a whole group of people who provided invaluable help to us. These include Christian Cooke, Paul Cunnane and Ronan Coyne.*

PROGRESS IN 2005

Over the past year, progress has been slow but steady. A co-op was formed, grant aid from the Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources has been secured and equipment has been bought, assembled and fitted. There is now broadband internet available on Inishturk and Inishbofin (Clare Island is just about to be connected). The project will be maintained by the islanders themselves, and they are learning fast.

Because there are no satellites involved the equipment can be used for real-time video conferencing, meaning that educational courses can be run on the islands using tutors based on the mainland, island patients can be diagnosed by doctors in mainland hospitals and "virtual meetings" can take place between people on the island and people based in Galway, Dublin or Hong Kong, you name it.

There is also the potential to develop something called VoIP services – VoIP is a system that allows for free phone calls between all co-op members. A bonus to all concerned.

SO WHAT NEXT!

So now what? In a few months these small isolated communities will have built their own slip-road onto the 'information super-highway', but will it really make a difference? I do think so.

Rather than wait (forever!) for some commercial internet provider to come calling, they have already built their own (superior) connection to the mainland and beyond. It took a collective effort and they had to work together to realise the vision. That has merit in its own right.

• Morgan Mee is a policy worker with West Training & Development.

The possibilities are intriguing

BY connecting Clare Island, Inishturk and Inishbofin to broadband, the Inter-island Community Network set out to improve islanders' opportunities for community education. They also aimed to minimise the difficulties associated with sea travel for older people and sick people. Here are the possible benefits they identified:

- If local business enterprises get broadband, jobs should follow
- Primary schools on the islands would be able to meet via video-conference. All three schools could 'attend' when a guest speaker visits just one school.
- By establishing a video-link between the islands and medical specialists on the mainland, remote consultations could take place.

- The Vocational Educational Committees (VECs) in County Galway and Mayo should be able to provide adult education courses to the island populations via video link-ups.
- The islanders would be encouraged to develop their skills in information technology by becoming involved in the e-initiative.
- The project could also include the smaller inhabited islands of Clew Bay.

"The potential for this project is huge", said Simon Murray (Development Worker on Inishbofin). "As well as helping to promote enterprise and employment on the islands, broadband access will be of huge benefit to the three primary schools covered".

His optimism was echoed by Donal O'Shea (Development Worker on Clare Island). "With falling populations on islands and the necessity to encourage more enterprise with local investment or investment from the mainland, broadband is essential," he said.

According to Danny Kirrane, Development Worker on Inishturk, "The success of the project will depend on our ability to get the network up and running and then to keep it that way."

- For more information, contact : Simon Murray, Inishbofin CDP. Tel. 095-45861. Or Morgan Mee, West Training & Development, Regional Support Agency & Inter-Island Community Network Society Co-operative (Secretary). Tel. 091-567827

Accessing all areas by web and wireless

By DECLAN WEIR

COMMUNITY worker and 'Changing Ireland' reporter, Declan Weir, has been heavily involved in a 'web and wireless' project in Connemara that aimed to look positively at young people and disability. Here he gives an insider's report on how the project came to life:

Coming up with a name for our radio programmes about young people and disability took almost as long as all the researching, writing, recording and editing combined. Just at the eleventh hour, Jason Ridge - one of the Transition Year participants - came up with the winning suggestion: 'Access All Areas.' We all agreed it was the perfect choice, and got back to thinking about what music to use in the programmes.

Now that we were putting the finishing touches to the programmes, it felt good to have a name for them. The other three students from Clifden Community School (Conor D'Arcy, Dearbhaile Flynn and Joey Joyce) and Grainne O'Malley of Connemara Community Radio seemed almost as pleased as I was.

'Access All Areas' fitted the bill on a number of levels. Considering the subject matter, accessibility was obviously going to be a major talking point. Also, we were looking at different types of disability and various important aspects of life such as education, employment and social activities, so there seemed to be no good reason not to go with it.

The project, developed under the working title of 'The Web and the Wireless', came about after consultation between local CDP - FORUM - Connemara Community Radio, Clifden Citizens Information Centre, Comhairle and Galway Rural Development. We had worked together on disability-related projects before, but this would deal specifically with young people and disability, and young people themselves would do much of the work.



Transition year students, Conor, Jason, Joey, Dearbhaile holed up in the Connemara Community Radio studio at Letterfrack, in January.

ALLERGIC TO MY NORTHERN IRELAND BROGUE

Apparently, my previous experience as a radio producer/presenter made me the 'obvious choice' to manage the project, and I was happy to take it on, with one proviso. The previous experience had rendered me almost allergic to my Northern Ireland brogue, so I asked for a guarantee that it would be consigned to the background!

The project developed around several themes, one of which was building awareness among young people about their rights & entitlements. Another was encouraging young people to participate in community and voluntary activities, and examining barriers that hinder such participation, especially for young people with disabilities. We looked at important issues for people with disabilities and their families, friends and carers, such as overcoming disability, dealing with disability in the family, and accessing resources and supports.

Other topics included the use of language, political correctness, and the importance of inclusion for young people with disabilities. Everything was considered in the context of rural Ireland.

We wanted to look positively at disability. The people with disabilities we interviewed told us how things had, generally, got better in recent times. Many of them were eager to focus on the positive, not to be seen as always moaning about what wasn't being done.

DISABILITY BILL IS 'WORSE THAN NOTHING'

They all said that a huge amount still needed to be done and the much debated Disability Bill was actually described by one man as "worse than nothing." Yet most of them did agree that things had improved.

For the first six weeks of 2005, we had been holed up regularly in the back studio at Connemara Community Radio as the winter howled outside, moving little bits of interviews around, piecing it all together. We were glad to ditch the stir craziness and head off on a day trip to Ros FM, a recently opened community radio station in Roscommon town.

We wanted to find out about the station's aim to act as a voice and a medium for people with disabilities to gain opportunities for training and employment. We even attempted a few old fashioned sing-songs on the journey.

The theme of our first programme was that 'disability does not mean inability'. To emphasise the point we came up with a list of names of famous people with disabilities who became known for their ability, not their disability.

JOHNNY CASH HAD A DISABILITY

The vast list was eventually whittled down to a manageable size, including Stevie Wonder and



Transition year students, Conor, Joey, Jason, Dearbhaile, ready for the road to Roscommon.

Johnny Cash, Ray Charles and Ian Dury, Kurt Cobain and Gareth Gates, Ludwig Van Beethoven and Prionsias de Rossa, David Blunkett and Stephen Hawking.

We left out more names than we included and still covered all the bases: musicians, politicians, historical figures, intellectual geniuses, artists, writers, sports stars and entertainers. The range of their talents and skills was almost as wide as the range of their disabilities which include asthma, paralysis, Parkinson's disease, epilepsy, diabetes, dyslexia and other learning difficulties, deafness, visual impairments, arthritis, physical disabilities and mental health problems.

But it was about more than famous people, we also wanted to look at the abilities that everyone has, whether they also happen to have a disability or not. We also wanted to know more about young people with disabilities in Connemara, what the situation was like for them and their families and carers. What was good and what was bad, and had things changed for the better?

DIDN'T WANT TO TALK

Unfortunately we couldn't find any young people with disabilities locally who wanted to talk about their experiences, but we spoke to their siblings and parents. We also talked to adults with disabilities about their experiences, as well as representatives of the myriad disability-related organisations that exist in Ireland today.

We researched the medical model and the social model and learned about available education and employment supports and services, and how they can have a really positive effect on people's lives. And the more people we spoke to, the more obvious it became that nobody had any confidence in the Disability Bill 2004. In fact many of the responses to our questions about the Bill were not broadcastable.

We learned that people with disabilities do not form a homogenous group. Someone with learning difficulties, the visually, hearing and speech impaired, those with restricted mobility or with so-called 'medical disabilities' all have different wants and needs and encounter different barriers, which have to be overcome in different ways.

Most of all, we learned that people with disabilities are individuals, just like the rest of us. And they would really like to be treated that way.

CDPs and CDBs: a symbiotic relationship

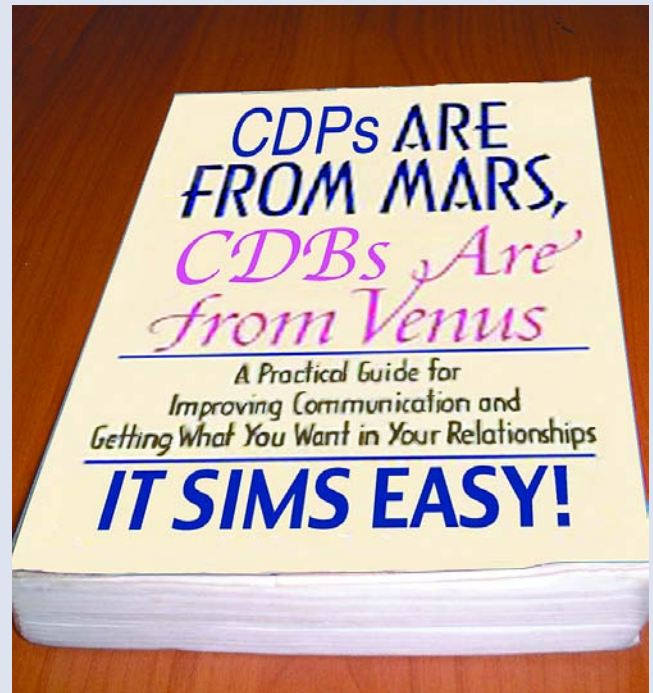
CDPs and CDBs - they sound similar, but are not, and nowadays they must work closely together. You could say, CDPs are from Mars and CDBs are from Venus. In some places, they have an excellent relationship, in others it is troubled.

CDPs - Notice the P. It stands for Project. 'Changing Ireland' is the national magazine for Community Development Projects. They work from community development principles. The approach they take to their work is considered as important as the work itself.

CDBs - Only a 'B' in the difference in the acronym. Every city and county in the state now has a City or County Development Board. They are a relatively new arm of local government. Officials and local elected representatives sit on the board and the CDBs focus, for example, on local enterprise, and community development.

SIMs - **Sounds like a drink, but it's not.** This is Social Inclusion Measures - every city and county now has a social inclusion action plan. There is a committee to match, the SIM committee. This is the interface between community representatives and the local authority.

What have CDPs, CDBs got to do with each other? They have been instructed by the Government to co-operate and work together, by meeting through the SIM. One of the aims is to avoid duplication whereby two groups set out to do the same job without being aware of each other.



If only there was such a book.

The interface between CDPs and the State

- Strains within the system

By MAURICE McCONVILLE

NO ONE can deny that there are strained relations between CDPs and Local Development Agencies within CBDs, over the so called 'endorsement process'. The decision, by government, to tie CDPs into the County Development Board, through the SIMs groups, has created a great challenge to the entire Community Development Programme.

There is a fundamental difference in approach to social exclusion by CDPs compared with State Agencies. This has been brought into sharp focus within the SIMs, the arena in which these differences are being acted out. And strains are inevitable at the "interface between the Community Development Projects and the State".

What is so different about CDPs? To begin with they are made up of people from socially excluded target groups. Secondly CDPs see the process they use as a crucial part of their work. CDPs are trying to create a process where marginalized people are actively engaged in making decisions on issues that affect their communities. CDPs are small, representative, flexible and trusted within communities.

State agencies, on the other hand, are basically providers of services of which they

are the "experts". Many workers within the agencies are genuine people trying to do their best to deliver services in a fair and just manner. However organisational structures often prevent innovation. Rules and cautious management restrict workers on the ground. Meanwhile their agency is often viewed as being out of touch, in communities where they operate.

This may be an over-simplified picture, but it helps us understand the strains within SIMs, the length and breadth of the country. There is a basic clash between organisations seeking outcomes (product) and CDPs whose main concern is that we have a fair and equitable process.

Simply put, it is Product verses Process. And those concerned primarily with the product are unable to engage in the process.

RECOGNISING EACH OTHERS ROLE

So where does all this leave CDPs within SIMs. Both the Community Development Programme and the Social Inclusion Measures groups are based on the acceptance that there are inequalities in society that should be addressed. All of us on the SIMs are working towards equality. However, we need to recognise that we are

fulfilling different roles within this process. We must recognise and try to appreciate each other's position.

CDPs do face a major challenge working within SIMs. We are small fish in a big pond. However, our smallness is an advantage and helps us adapt more easily to changing circumstances. Community Development is about change and moving forward. We are built for change.

At the end of the day, CDPs and state agencies should be seeking similar outcomes through SIMs, i.e. equality for excluded groups, better health care, more people staying on at school, better housing and environment, more people in worthwhile jobs, more and better childcare, better facilities for youth people etc.

Finding ways to work alongside state agencies will continue to be a difficult and frustrating for CDPs but this does not mean that we should give up. We must be clear about what we want to achieve and how to get there. We must also recognise the structural constraints within agencies and help them to adapt to the new circumstances. If we can develop trust and respect for each other's role and responsibilities within SIMs, the prize will be well worth all the pain and hard work.

Listening to communities

COMMUNITY Development is about ensuring that the needs of communities are identified and addressed by local people and where appropriate, by outside agencies. Agencies are experts in their particular area of work and have resources and expertise, which can greatly benefit disadvantaged communities.

However agencies also need to recognise the resources, which can be harnessed within communities. They must be willing to observe and listen and not to be too prescriptive. Communities have knowledge, expertise and energy, which can be used in a positive and productive way, alongside agencies' expertise.

Confusing 'local' with 'community' development is unacceptable

THE recent habit by agencies to use the term *Local Development* to describe *Community Development* is significant. To many working in the field it is unacceptable, writes MAURICE McCONVILLE. This is not just an academic point, but indicates to CDPs a fundamental lack of understanding by agencies that CDPs are primarily promoting a process.

The main difference between Local Development and Community Development is that the former can take place without communities being involved. Buildings can be built; services can be set up, without any significant input from communities. The "experts" who know what is best for communities have the capacity to do this.

However, *Community Development cannot operate without the active input from the people who will be directly affected by the process of change.* This is basic to the function

of Community Development.

There are plenty of examples where local development has taken place without the communities affected being involved. Examples of this include the clearings of the rain forests in Brazil, the Aswan Dam project, or nearer to home, housing development in Ballymun in the 1960s. All of these turned out to be disastrous for local communities.

If we accept the significant difference between local development and community development then another source of conflict within SIMs "duplication" is much less of an issue. If CDPs have a different function and role within the SIMs and the community, then they cannot duplicate the work of state agencies. In fact, State or local development agencies are more likely to "get things right" if they work through local community development organisations.

CDP PROFILE:

The CorrAcla experience

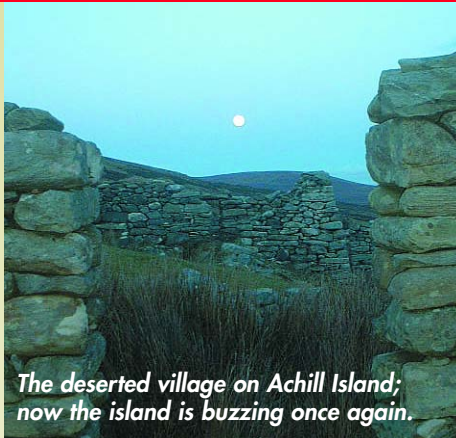
IN WINTER-TIME on Curraun, and particularly on Achill Island, people mostly go into hibernation, coming out of their homes as little as possible. Icy Atlantic winds drive the rain in horizontally and it is easier wait for the van-shop to call to your door than to head outside.

The Mayo island has a micro-climate of its own. Even in the summertime, you can experience the four seasons there in a half-hour; hailstones may greet you around one bend, sun around the next, then a spray of seawater.

This summer, the area faced another unusual threat - Achill is being colonised by a variety of fast-growing giant rhubarb. Life on the island - which is connected by a bridge to the mainland - offers the population specific challenges.

THE CDP WORK:

Interesting as these things are, CorrAcla CDP was not set up to tackle either the out-of-control vegetation or the crazy climate. Social isolation, however, is something they are concerned about. Since it was set up in December '03, CorrAcla has set up a drop-in service for all local people. They prioritise working with young people, lone-parents, people with disabilities, carers and those pushed aside by the labour market. The CDP office holds information on welfare entitlements, family law, consumer rights and so on and works closely with other agencies and projects in the area.



The deserted village on Achill Island; now the island is buzzing once again.

ACHILL CDP IS DOING:

This August, the CDP published its first newsletter, an 8-page A4 colour magazine. They published results of a survey of 12-18 year olds, which found that young people generally have a positive view of life. A healthy 22% of students are involved in volunteering while 74% said they would like to be. On health issues, 34% requested more information on contraception.

CorrAcla has assured young people that, following the survey, it will work with them to ensure their voices are heard by relevant agencies who will be implementing things the youth have recommended in the survey. A focus group of young people will be organised to decide on how best to follow up on the survey's findings.

In recent months, the CDP and its premises have hosted a wide range of activities:

- Eight youngsters completed a Creative

Writing Workshop (CDP/VEC-organised).

The group will continue to meet fortnightly.

- 12 women completed a seven-week DIY course in things like home-plumbing. No need to wait for someone to call to your house to fix small technical jobs, when you can learn yourself! Another course begins shortly.
- 14 people completed a Certificate in Occupational First Aid (organised by the CDP and the Order of Malta). "The course gave me the confidence not to panic if something happens," commented one of the participants.
- In conjunction with VTOS, CorrAcla is now offering training for carers that will lead to the award of certificates to participants. Topics covered include: care support, care skills, communications, human growth and development, health and safety at work, a work placement.
- The CDP premises is the venue for monthly meetings of SAOL, a local cancer awareness group set up by local survivor Noirín Gannon.
- Training is to commence shortly in Child Protection. It is aimed at adults working with young people in sport groups, youth clubs, playgroups and so on.
- The CDP has distributed information and contact numbers for females seeking refuge from domestic violence.
- CorrAcla is also starting up a local tag rugby club with support from the IRFU.

So long as they have a good raincoat, Achill's energetic teenagers will have no excuse this winter to go into hibernation.

Fundraising - there are so many ways

IN LIMERICK, last year, St. Mary's CDP locked up a few politicians and local heroes who were not released until the public had donated thousands in a 'ransom'. In other regions, community groups are equally bold when it comes to raising funds: In September, two dozen Dublin projects battled for text-votes from the public to see which among them would pick up one of four €10,000 prizes from NewsTalk 106.

Meanwhile, people from border communities have

been panning for gold in the River Leitrim (See Project News section).

By comparison, community groups in the West are lucky to have a multi-million social investment fund available to them. Turn to page 19 and see how the Clann Credo and the Western Development Commission jointly adjudicate a loan fund that has given nearly €4 million in loan finance to community/voluntary projects in the West since 2000.

Dublin projects slogged it out for €10,000 NewsTalk prizes

COMMUNITY groups in Dublin slogged it out on live radio this month to see if they could win four prizes of €10,000. Two CDPs were in the running - Mountwood/Fitzgerald Park CDP and the North Wall Women's

For each week of September, NewsTalk 106 pitted four projects into competition with each other - the projects had to explain why they needed the money and what they would spend it on. The winners were those who received the most text-votes. The CDPs were not in direct competition as they competed on different weeks.

The 'Local Heroes' competition - while cruel on the losing entrants - was good publicity nonetheless for all concerned. This was one of the attractions to entering, said Mountwood/

Fitzgerald Park CDP co-ordinator, Marion White.

"The publicity won't do us any harm, though we are going out to win the money. It is up to us to capture the listeners' hearts. €10,000 is a decent amount. I know that if we were to go around looking for €1 off everybody it would take a long time to raise €10,000."

Mountwood were preparing to fight their corner as 'Changing Ireland' went to print.

"If we win, the money will go into our music programme and boxing programme. Our music teacher is Gerry Fehily (ex-drummer with the Hothouse Flowers). He is on his own doing it, and I would like to be able to pay for more tutors. We have great talent here. The kids sang before with Christy Moore and I'd love to see them back at it again.

"The boxing club - it would have won an award until recently for having the smallest boxing club premises (two converted bedrooms) in the country. We knocked a wall and it is a bit bigger now, but it needs more.

"There are over 20 girls boxing. We have over 100 boxers altogether, including lots of Traveller children. And there are some boxers here with disabilities. There's a right mix in the club and the children just get on with it. One of our boxers - a Traveller - is to box in the National Stadium this month.

"And getting the boxing club going has brought all the men out of their homes. They normally have little to do with the community centre, we couldn't get them involved before. But the boxing has changed all that. As for me, I was never in favour of boxing before, but I



Boxing at Mountwood/Fitzgerald Park.

am now! I just hope we get the votes and the €10,000.

"Dun Laoighaire is seen as an affluent place and it is, but there are poor parts to it that are cheek-by-jowl with the rich areas. And the affluence in Dun Laoighaire is slow to rub off on us," she continued.

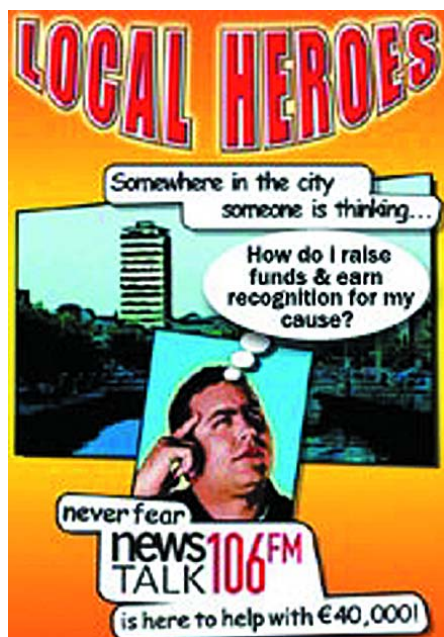
"We are up against Ballymun United, the Motor Neuron Association and Saint Joseph's School for the Deaf," added Marian.

The North Wall Women's Centre, who also entered the competition - winning publicity but not the €10,000 prize - is located in north inner-city Dublin.

The project has been providing support and educational opportunities for 21 years in the North Inner City. It is one of a dozen or so CDPs dedicated to women.

The project provides an affordable childcare service for local parents who are working and taking part in educational programmes. They have worked with thousands of women against the backdrop of some very difficult social issues such as drug misuse, high unemployment and low educational opportunities. They are soon to open an internet café to provide internet access and much needed IT training for the local community.

North Wall Women's Centre were hoping to win the €10,000 prize to develop a drop-in and outreach centre for local women. They didn't finish euro-less however. The radio station is donating all the text-voting revenue to the projects. The final amount depends on the number of votes they got.



Communities have loan access to millions

- and shouldn't give up if a bank says 'No'

SINCE 2000, Clann Credo and the Western Development Commission (WDC) have a joint working arrangement and provide social finance to community initiatives located in the Western Region.

Community groups in counties Clare, Donegal, Galway, Leitrim, Mayo, Roscommon and Sligo have benefited to the tune of €3.5 million through the joint working arrangement.

The money - in the form of loans - has gone into childcare, community enterprise centres, social housing, tourism,...

The organisations jointly evaluate funding applications from communities in the region. It cuts down on the work communities - especially ones who have difficulty raising funds from mainstream banks - have to do to get a loan. A single evaluation process gives applicants a chance to access finance from the two organisations in one application.

An example of one which received investment finance from Clann Credo and the WDC is Ballybane Community Centre, a CDP in Galway City. The project wanted to build a multi-purpose centre that would provide childcare, a space for sports and social activities, meeting rooms and office space for local support services. The community centre at the time was in need of much repair and various support services operated out of local authority houses in the area.

Ballybane CDP secured a government grant, but still needed more money. The new centre was going to cost €1.3 million. The shortfall could have been fundraised but that would have taken too long. Bank finance was not an option.

So, the project approached Clann Credo and the WDC for loan finance, the application resulted in finance being provided for a seven-year period.

If your organisation has a requirement for loan finance, contact: Tracey Hannon, Clann Credo/Western Development Commission, Dillon House, Ballaghaderreen, Co Roscommon. Tel: 094-986-1441. Fax: 094-986-1443. E-mail: traceyhannon@wdc.ie OR traceyhannon@clanncredoid.ie

TWO ORGANISATIONS: SHARED AIM

Clann Credo Ltd is a privately set up organisation; the Western Development Commission (WDC) was established by government. But the two work in similar ways and are involved in the provision of social finance to the community/voluntary sector.

Both organisations only loan out money where there will be a social as well as a



Ballybane Community Centre, Galway.

financial return and the applicant projects must be able to demonstrate their ability to repay the loan. Clann Credo accepts applications from community projects throughout Ireland. The WDC is specifically concerned with the West of Ireland, where the two co-operate in allocating loans.

Clann Credo is a Social Investment Fund founded by Sr Magdalen Fogarty and the Presentation Order in 1996. It gives loans to community groups and projects who are unable to access traditional forms of finance. For instance, a voluntary management committee may find it difficult to satisfy every demand a bank makes before advancing a loan. The investment often gives other institutions the confidence to commit more finance.

Clann Credo have financed everything from craft enterprises to organic food, accessible transport to special needs projects, community resource centres to social housing, and from childcare services to youth amenities. To date in excess of €8 million has been advanced to over 120 organisations throughout Ireland.

The WDC is a statutory body established by government in 1999 to promote, foster and encourage economic and social development in the West (comprising counties Clare, Donegal, Galway, Leitrim, Mayo, Roscommon and Sligo). It engages in policy work, rural development and operates its own €34.4 million investment fund, the Western Investment Fund. The fund includes a dedicated loan fund for the

Minister Ó Cuiv on social finance

"THIS is a new departure for a state organisation to work in tandem with a private social investment fund like Clann Credo. The arrangement has however proved to be very effective. Conventional bank finance terms may present difficulties

for volunteers such as personal guarantees required from voluntary members etc. Clearly, social finance works and points the way forward for many communities."

- Speaking last year at Ballybane Community Centre, Galway.

There's gold in them there hills

CDPs all struggle at times to find ways of involving the wider community in our work, WRITES MAURICE McCONVILLE. Well, the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment in the North have come up with a cracker. They invited people to pan for gold in the Leitrim River, which runs through the drumlins of south Down. If you got lucky, you could build a new community centre after a day's work!

Large numbers of family groups turned up

to try their hand at panning for gold. Small traces were found but not enough for a gold rush. The event was aimed at raising awareness of the ongoing geological Survey of Northern Ireland.

This idea gets a gold star from 'Changing Ireland' for originality. Any groups out there that have tried anything 'different' - let us know and we will give you a mention. Don't all rush at once.

Communities working to prevent suicides

THE surge in suicides nationally is a challenge that Community Development Projects are working to combat. The sub-projects that CDPs establish - bereavement groups, men's groups, ex-prisoners' groups, training programmes, parenting courses and so on - offer support to people, many of whom may experience depression and some of whom may be feeling suicidal.

NICK MURPHY reports

Some CDPs are working to combat suicide head-on.

The Markiewicz CDP, Decies Road in Ballyfermot, Dublin, is only too aware of the pain of suicide. Members of their community have been affected by several suicides in the last year. Billy Mangan, the project co-ordinator, said: "The recent instances of suicide here in the communities we serve made us realise the need to do something about raising awareness."

Following on the success of previous awareness-raising initiatives, which included a highly successful seminar on bullying, the CDP decided to run an awareness course entitled 'Facing up to Suicide' which will take place on October 4th and 11th. There is a major stigma attached to suicide and even by naming the course as they have the Markiewicz CDP are lessening the stigma.

The course will include speakers such as Fr Tony Byrne and Kathleen McGuire. The group suicide-prevention organisation 'Console' will also be represented.

BALLYFERMOT RAISES AWARENESS

Billy, who was appointed co-ordinator last year after a period as chairperson of the management committee said, "It may be thought that a subject like suicide would not interest the people of Ballyfermot, but we believe previous awareness-raising courses have shown that this is not the case."

"Suicide strikes people of all economic and ethnic groups. There is a worrying amount of suicides across the country every year and a disproportionate amount of victims are men. This problem affects everybody in our society."

Figures from the Central Statistics Office show that of the 448 suicides recorded by them in 2001, 356 were men. This may not even be the true figure as some may have

been classified as "accidental" deaths through medicine overdose or single vehicle accidents.

Ireland has the fifth highest youth suicide rate in the 25-member EU. We are second worst behind Finland when post-communist countries are excluded. Scotland is the worst of all, but they are beginning to deal with it and figures are now in decline for the first time since 1991.

BALLYMUN RUNS COURSES

John Murphy of the Ballymun Men's Centre is only too aware of the horrific figures:

"Suicide strikes young men in particular. We have run several 'Suicide Aftermath' courses and we have tried to reach out a hand to those who may be contemplating suicide. Unfortunately we have not always been successful. People sometimes have definite ideas of how to commit suicide and talk about their plans while others come as a complete surprise. It is very difficult and we feel there are very few supports available to us to tackle the problem at this level."

Suicide seems to strike across communities and ethnic boundaries. Pavee Point confirms that they are looking at the incidence of suicide among the Traveller community and have formed a working group on suicide. There is a suspicion that the suicide rate among Travellers is even higher than among the general population.

Meanwhile, Haris Bijedic, information officer of the Bosnian CDP, confirms that the Bosnian Community had at least one instance within the last year.

"We are not qualified to offer professional help in this area," he admitted.

RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE

Resources are available however and CDPs or individuals can visit www.nsrq.ie for information including contact details for crisis support and links to other useful web sites.

On the funding side, the National Suicide Review Groups no longer makes funding available to groups but the area of suicide prevention is one identified by the Dormant Accounts Committee as one worthy of support. The ESB's Electric Aid Programme Fund has also identified this area, along with homelessness, as funding priorities. More info: www.esb.ie

Also helpful is the National Suicide Research Foundation, based in Cork. It is an official research unit to contribute to the prevention of suicidal behaviour in Ireland. Highly regarded; it is the Irish focal point for information regarding suicide and its prevention by the World Health Organisation. Check it out on: www.nsrq.org

Communities can also look into Scotland's internationally-recognised 'Choose Life!' programme and its education and awareness-raising campaign 'See Me'.

More than 600 people took their own lives in Scotland last year (around 450 of them men) but this was down 76 on the previous year.

Officers, trained to deal with suicide intervention, have been employed by every local authority in Scotland and the World Health Organisation has applauded Scotland's approach to destigmatising suicide and promoting mental health.

OTHER USEFUL WEBSITES

Mental Health Ireland: www.mensana.org - promotes positive mental health and actively supports people with a mental illness, their families and carers by identifying their needs and advocating their rights.

Department of Health and Children: www.doh.ie - Provides information about the government health services available in Ireland.

Oasis: www.oasis.gov.ie/health_boards.html - Provides links to sites for the Irish Health Boards.

WEBSITES ESPECIALLY FOR YOUTH

www.reachout.com.au - a site that helps young people through tough times.

www.youth.ie - A site that focuses on youth in Ireland today.

www.yieldireland.com - information for young people about sexual, reproductive health and relationship issues.



National plan announced as suicide rate overtakes road-deaths

ALLEN MEAGHER reports

THE Irish Government - seven years after setting out to do so - announced in September it will set up a new suicide strategy that includes the establishment of a National Office for Suicide Prevention. An initial investment of €500,000 is promised and the programme will run for ten years.

Tánaiste, Mary Harney, made the announcement in early September as the body-count mounted with an average of almost nine people a week killing themselves. The new strategy marks a start for Ireland towards dealing with the problem.

Apart from the initial investment of €500,000, no further funding details were released. Our neighbour, Scotland, with a slightly larger population than the Irish Republic has spent close to €17.5m on suicide prevention over the last five years. Scotland has an even worst rate of suicide

than Ireland, though the tide is now turning and figures are dropping.

As in Scotland, the Irish programme will promote positive mental health in the general population, as well as tackling specific groups such as young men, prisoners and the unemployed.

The strategy also calls for a fast-track referral system for those most vulnerable and a campaign to target specific at-risk groups like the unemployed and prisoners. A bereavement counselling and support programme specifically for relatives of suicide victims will also be created.

CDPs, as well as for example Family Resource Centres nationwide, are well-placed to assist in connecting the national programme with target groups in local communities. Many CDPs and FRCs have set up local bereavement support groups for instance.

The services are sorely needed, as anyone who attended the candlelit vigil in Dublin to mark World Suicide Day earlier this month would testify.

While welcoming the initiative, Dan Neville, president of the Irish Association of Suicidology (and Fine Gael TD) criticised the seven-year delay, the vagueness over funding and the fact that targets to reduce the number of suicide deaths are not included in the programme.

Incidentally, in the Philippines, suicide is virtually

AWARENESS IS KEY!

Road 'accidents'

There are now more deaths in Ireland from suicide than from road accidents. The figures were skewed for years, in any case, because at least some of the 'accidents' are actually suicides.

Six main types of depression:

1. **Reactive Depression:** is a reaction to a significant loss or life event.
2. **Endogenous Depression:** is internally caused when there is a drop in the body's natural Serotonin chemical levels. No external factor or mood plays a role here.
3. **Secondary Depression:** where a depressive episode is secondary to another psychiatric illness. Eg. Phobic states.
4. **Nuerotic Depression:** can occur when someone has poor coping skills and is faced with a life-event. This is very common and occurs where people have a poor self-image.
5. **Manic Depression:** is where the person's mood alternates between depression and elation.
6. **Seasonal Adjustment Depression (S.A.D.):** with people who suffer from this, depression is common in winter and mania in summer.

The name is 'Aware'!

Aware is a voluntary organization formed in '85 by a group of interested patients, relatives and mental health professionals. Support group meetings are held in 60 locations in Ireland. Aware Defeat Depression, 72 Lower Leeson St., Dublin 2. Tel. 01-661-7211. E-mail: aware@iol.ie Website: www.aware.ie Counselling service (24 hours, 7 days a week): 01-6766166.

Voice of the Traveller

THE publishers of 'Voice of the Traveller' magazine must be doing something right. Recently, a prisoner wrote saying he sometimes trades back-issues of the magazine for cigarettes.

The 32-page magazine is a quarterly published in Athlone, Co. Westmeath, by the National Association of Traveller Centres (NATC) and it is distributed nationwide. It has become very popular among the Traveller population largely because it focuses on family and community celebrations as well as the wider issues of politics and training.

Its publishers claim, "It is the 'Ireland's Own' of the Traveller community crossed with 'Hello' magazine".

Certainly, the magazine makes for a recommended read for anyone from the Traveller community, or for anyone working directly with Travellers.

The magazine features news from the Traveller Training Centres, interviews with youth workers and trainees. It also features sports reports, movie reviews, a letters page, horoscopes and the hugely popular photographic pages which are displayed

under various headings:

'Celebrations', 'A Trip Down Memory Lane' and 'Remembrances'. Readers use the magazine to draw attention to family and community celebrations, including communions, confirmations and graduations. Comhairle also fund a four-page 'Know Your Rights' section.

'Voice of the Traveller' is distributed to, of course, Traveller Training Centres, and also to prisons, government departments, schools, Citizen Information Centres and various community projects.

The summer edition of 'Voice of the Traveller' will be out soon.

To subscribe, contact: Voice of the Traveller, NATC, Nestor's Complex, Monksland Retail Park, Athlone, Co. Roscommon.

E-mail:

voiceofthetraveller@hotmail.com

An annual subscription costs €17.60



Pádraig Kelly: on counselling as collusion

OUR article entitled 'Should Counselling and Community Development really go together?' in the summer edition of 'Changing Ireland' stirred up an important debate. Author Pádraig Kelly argued that the growth in counselling, rather than giving people power, is adding to people's sense of powerlessness.

He accepted that some people do "need counselling" but questioned if we are too readily proposing counselling as a cure-all.

We publish in this edition some of the counter-arguments made by readers. To refresh, however, here are some of the other points Pádraig makes:

- "It needs to be acknowledged more often that many problems (that people have) are primarily social, political and economic. People are very often victims of wider social forces. Counselling may not be the best way of tackling such problems by focusing on individuals., it may actually be colluding in the support of a wider status quo that is unequal, exclusive and unjust."
- "...Power is not equal in the counselling relationship. The client is passive and vulnerable in the presence of the professional counsellor that society often endows with magical curative powers and 'mind-reading' abilities."
- "I believe nothing and no-one is intrinsically therapeutic. Talking can be therapeutic but so also can walking, socialising, fishing, sports and hobbies."



I wonder...

I wonder does the author realise that it may be through tackling issues at an individual level that many individuals have been empowered to take on social, economic and political problems in the community.

- Michael Dillon, Men's Development Network, Waterford



To go fishing . . . is not always the answer

BEFORE responding to the article in the June/July 2005 Changing Ireland entitled 'Should Counselling and Community Development really go together?' I should say from the outset, that I am the co-ordinator of a CDP, and also half way through training to become a psychotherapist.

From my reading of Mr. Kelly's article it strikes me that his understanding of the nature of the Counselling/ Psychotherapeutic relationship is limited at best, and inaccurate at worst.

Far from representing a divesting of responsibility, counselling encourages and facilitates personal responsibility, in a manner similar to the way in which Community Development facilitates the community to identify needs and builds capacity to affect change.

Individual therapy is the fostering of an alliance. Community development is the fostering of a system of numerous alliances. It appears to me that, contrary to the view expressed by Mr. Kelly, there are more similarities than differences between the two approaches, and certainly room for both.

ARGUMENT BREAKS DOWN

With regard to the relationship between therapist and client, Mr. Kelly argues that it is one of inequality, with the therapist in a position of power and knowledge, and the client in a passive, receptive role. For me, this

By DENIS CROKE, Athy CDP

is where the author's argument breaks down completely. He is correct in asserting the primacy of relationship in psychotherapy; however it is a relationship not of power struggles, but of alliances.

The therapist maintains responsibility for the process of therapy, the holding of ethical and professional boundaries, while the client is responsible for the content of each session, for their own participation, and for deciding the relevance or otherwise of therapeutic interpretations.

Community Development acknowledges the ability and skills inherent in communities, it must also acknowledge the weaknesses, the obstacles, the challenges within communities in order to fully empower and act for change. While it may be possible to address these challenges in a group/ community setting, this isn't always useful or appropriate. It is in situations like these, that the role of the counsellor or psychotherapist may become relevant.

AN OVER-SIMPLIFICATION

It is an over-simplification of the profession to suggest that the success or otherwise of the therapeutic process is dependant on the personal attributes of the therapist. It would indeed be a great shame if qualities such as empathy, listening and unconditional positive

regard were solely the domain of a particular profession (ie therapists). The fact is, they are not.

Empathy and listening skills exist in any number of people who will never find themselves in the business of offering therapy. The distinction - between this more informal system of support and psychotherapy - is extensive training. The training provides a theoretical and professional framework which is necessary to explore in a safe and constructive way, issues affecting the ability of an individual to live as full a life as they would wish for themselves.

There are instances of anxiety, vulnerability, confusion and depression which require a professional, therapeutic alliance. It is not enough, sometimes, to go fishing, as Mr. Kelly suggests.

Tips on hiring

Community projects should ask questions before taking on a counsellor to refer people to. It is a big issue for projects.

In particular, project co-ordinators should be concerned about the type of counselling practised by anyone they agree to provide work for. The main problem for projects is that there is no one professional association for counsellors and therapists. Here are some tips from two co-ordinators with experience:

Counselling and community development go together like bread and butter

Counselling and community development go together like bread and butter. As a counsellor working with a Family Resource Centre, I was concerned with the picture of 'counselling' that Pdraig Kelly's article (see opposite page) painted. It did not adequately represent what is happening in the realm of counselling, nor did it look at the many examples of how counselling can be a process that assists and complements Community development.

Writes SIBEAL de BHULBH

There may be instances where the social/political elements that lead to inequality and poverty are not addressed in a solely 'individual' approach to therapy or counselling. But my experience is that this is much less common nowadays. (There have been progressive developments in therapy/counselling since the 1980's).

The approach that I was trained in is an example of how the therapeutic arena is attentive to the difficulties that people experience in their lives as often being 'socially determined' (whether as a result of their class, culture, gender or some other category that can undervalue and undermine the person).

A 'systemic' approach to therapy/counselling grew precisely for these reasons – that problems are not individually seated, but usually come into being 'in relationship'. Since the 1970s, it has been recognised that the symptoms that an individual displayed (in counselling) were often contextually related. The many Feminist thinkers, writers and practitioners in the 70's and 80's and beyond played a very important part in highlighting the role of power in relationships of all kinds and the societal bias that favours some, and dis-empowers others.

Michael White, a proponent of 'Narrative Therapy' summed it up: "When it is understood that people's relationships with problems are shaped by history and culture, it is possible to explore how gender, race, culture, sexuality, class and other relations of power have influenced the construction of

the problem. By giving consideration to the politics involved in the shaping of identity, it becomes possible to enable new understandings of life that are influenced less by self-blame and more by an awareness of how our lives are shaped by broader cultural stories. This opens up a range of possibilities for action that are not available when problems are located within individuals."

Another leading therapist, Charles Waldegrave from New Zealand, says that therapy can be a vehicle for addressing some of the injustices that occur in a society." He admits that therapists that do not address such injustice "may be inadvertently replicating, maintaining, and even furthering existing injustices."

A 'Just Therapy' approach is one that takes into account the gender, cultural, social and economic context of the persons seeking help. This is one of the practices towards which I, and I know many others strive. For example, our code of ethics directs family therapists to:

- be particularly concerned with activities that promote co-operation and dialogue, foster the appreciation of diversity and promote equality and justice.
- encourage the participation of the wider community in the designing and delivery of services.
- encourage the participation of the wider community in the regulation of practitioners.

Using this approach assists clients to become strong enough to participate, and get strength from their communities. Certain difficulties such as domestic violence or sexual abuse can carry with them heavy burdens of shame, and it can take some building-up before someone feels blameless enough to share with others.

Regarding the perception of the counsellor as 'expert', possessing special knowledge, this was not the school of thought I was trained in as a therapist/counsellor. In fact one particularly strong facet in the 'professionalisation' of therapy is a

heightened awareness of the position one takes in relation to another. I continually question myself regarding any possible abuse of power.

On the point of misuse of power and the 'expert' versus client relationship, I think it is important for all staff and workers in a community development context to evaluate their own sense of power or themselves as 'experts' in their work. Workers and indeed volunteers can also misuse power in the name of community development.

It is true that support groups are sometimes more suitable for a particular person and their circumstances. On occasions, therapy or counselling will precede that process, or follow it.

I would also agree that the more time and activities a person can spend that gives them a sense of peace and joy, like fishing, etc, the better.

While the Family Resource Centre has been operating a counselling service for a relatively short period of time, it has proved to be an invaluable resource to community members. Due to the availability of individual, back up support, many local people have been supported to become more actively involved in volunteering with the centre around issues which will improve the lives members of their community.

The counselling service also has the potential to tackle issues which are voiced in the counselling service but remain hidden in the community. In this way – the centre is provided with a mechanism whereby it can respond to community issues.

For example, in our community, it has resulted in links between the counselling service and the local school to address issues which are emerging through the provision of a counselling service. This completely contradicts the assertion in Pdraig Kelly's article that counselling serves to individualise problems.

- **Sibeal de Bhulbh, who wrote most of the above article, is a counsellor with the Hospital Family Resource Centre in Co. Limerick. Also contributing was her colleague, resource centre co-ordinator, Mary McGrath.**

g counsellors

1. Ask what type of counselling they practise?
2. Do they accept social causes influence individuals?
3. Check out their qualifications.
4. Have they professional indemnity insurance?
5. Does the counsellor have a supervisor?
6. Get another professional counsellor to vouch for them. Do not rely on merely a recommendation from a client.

LEADER and Partnerships expected to unify

THE government are moving closer to aligning local, community and rural development organisations - particularly with regard to LEADER companies and Partnership companies. The two will be, to the most part, required to adopt a unified structure by the end of next year.

The idea is that they be organised to provide full city and/or county coverage

and to link more strongly with community-based groups. There are no major direct implications of this initiative on the Community Development Programme, though it does seem projects may be expected to work more closely within the new structures.

As indicated by government last year, the process of increased cohesion will be co-

ordinated by the local County/City Development Boards.

Significant funds are being made available to support these cohesion measures.

The changes afoot will be examined in more detail in the Winter edition of 'Changing Ireland' due out in early December.

Disabled fight 80% jobless rate disaster

- employers, trade unions and disabled people join forces

MINISTER for Social and Family Affairs, Seamus Brennan, asked in August why there were still people on the dole when so many immigrants are getting jobs. People with disabilities may have felt offended: around 80% of them are unemployed.

And it is not because they do not want to work. But, giving up a medical card when you have a disability is not something you do lightly. If you take a job, you lose the card. There are other reasons too, but in general, jobs are not there for people with disabilities, especially in the private sector.

However, this year could mark a turning point. Ireland has become the first country in Europe where employers and trade unions have teamed up to examine the reasons behind the high unemployment levels among people with disabilities.

The 'Workway' initiative was founded



Workway, founded by employers and trade unions, aims to open up more job opportunities to people with disabilities.

by Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC) and the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU). The initiative is also designed to do something about the crazy unemployment levels - by raising awareness and addressing barriers to increase the employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

IBEC director, Maria Cronin, reacting to a Workway policy document that highlights key barriers to employment for people with a disability, said, "It is, for example, very unhelpful that people with disabilities are required to give up medical cards and other essential social provisions, if they take up any form of employment."

The Workway initiative is currently:

- Raising awareness of the need to increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities and the issues associated with that activity.
- Identifying barriers to employment from the perspectives of employers and disabled people.
- Involving all parties in the search for practical solutions.
- Imparting information to assist in the integration of disabled people in the workplace.

- Informing public policy makers and service providers of the implications for developing employment and training services in the future.

Earlier this year, a range of resource materials were put together with the input of disabled people. Involved in the process was Martin McBride from Donegal who is a member of the Community Development Programme's Disability Equality Specialist Support Agency (DESSA) and also the Donegal network of People With Disabilities in Ireland.

The 'Workway' resources are for anyone - employer, disabled, ministers - wishing to find out about un/employment and disability. They include:

- 'The Way Ahead - The Workway Policy Document', a document that proposes solutions to the unemployment crisis among people with disabilities.
- A Guide for job seekers with a disability
- The Workway website.
- A Disability Training Module for employers.
- Disability in the workplace DVD.
- A Pre-Employment template - to address deficits at pre-employment stage.
- Joint IBEC/ICTU employment guidelines.

This includes sections on: Recruitment & Selection, Job Analysis, CVs, Interviews, Disclosure of a Disability, Training and Career Development.

The 'Workway' initiative is as relevant to CDP voluntary management committees as to private-sector employers. Check out the website: www.workway.ie

You can also contact Martin McBride, Portsalon, Co. Donegal. Tel. 074-915-9159.

The 7 Objectives of Workway

The following are the seven basic objectives of Workway:

- Raise awareness
- Explore skill availability and labour shortages
- Identify barriers to employment from the perspectives of employers and people with disabilities
- Involvement of all parties in finding practical solutions
- Impart information to assist with the integration of people with disabilities
- Link in with existing networks
- Inform public policy makers and service providers of the implications for developing employment and training services.

