

CHANGING IRELAND

Issue 29

The National Magazine of the COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME
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Communities Combat Cuts - Bord Snip blind to positives aplenty



This publication and most projects featured are part of the
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME



COMBATING McCARTHYISM -

*There are
alternatives*

“There is little evidence of positive outcomes.”

That’s Bord Snip’s view of two of the key programmes that keep disadvantaged communities in Ireland from sinking outright - the Community Development Programme and the Local Development and Social Inclusion Programme.

It’s a pity Colm McCarthy didn’t talk to community groups on the ground or read Combat Poverty reports over the years.

But we are where we are and there’s a Tsunami wave coming our way. The surprising thing is that some people remain on the beach building sandcastles as the Tsunami comes clearly into view. Disbelief is hard to shake.

Given that the Bord Snip report is likely to become a menu-list for civil servants handed the task of identifying resources to cut, it’s time if you are a worker that you joined a trade union. If you are a voluntary management member, it is time for your project to join the Community Sector Employers Forum (www.erb.ie).

Protests by the trade union most associated with the Community Sector caused a U-turn in June on cuts of €10m planned for Community Employment schemes.

* * * * *

There is so much to build on – one of the latest CSO reports shows that the interest in volunteering remains huge, with 2 out of 3 people regularly volunteering in their communities. It’s hard to think there’s little support for the Community Sector when over two million people want to actively participate locally.

The Government has recently committed to setting up a Volunteer Corps nationwide and to supporting volunteers. Also, of note, Minister Eamon O’Cuiv has been partly dismissive in tone in his references to the Bord Snip report.

Yet, cuts implemented in January and May of this year have caused mayhem in projects at a time when demand for community services has increased threefold. The Sector needs to get the message across that for every euro invested in Communities, the taxpayer saves three euro in other costs.

But this isn’t a fight that Eamon has to make. We’ve got to make the fight, because the fact is you seldom get what you deserve, you get what you fight for. And Autumn is going to see many good community projects face the chop unless the Government gets the message loud and clear.

In the current climate, it’s no surprise that:

CDPs have set up a national representative body.

Atlantic Philanthropies has complained about the erosion of human rights.

Partnerships have proposed on-the-ground solutions to the jobs crisis.

These are but three examples of how, suddenly, everyone wants to have a say in the direction Ireland should go. Unionising is a way for workers to take action collectively.

* * * * *

This struggle is about more than a protest (albeit an important one) for Communities on September 30th. It’s about us as a society making radical choices.

Instead of closing the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, why didn’t Bord Snip recommend closing the Department of Defence and disbanding the army, navy and air corps? We’ve never been at war, yet Defence costs €1 billion per annum and was not targeted for any significant cuts (€54m).

I can only put this down to narrow thinking.

Iceland manages without a Department of Defence and it’s time for Ireland to consider such radical options if we really want to save ‘our’ banks.

It’s all to fight for!

Dedication: This edition is dedicated to the memory of Helen and Gerry Meagher, who died in 1992 and 2009 respectively.

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Disclaimer

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**PRODUCED IN MOYROSS BY
THE COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT NETWORK**

“For every €1 spent on community childcare, the State saves €8 in other services. For every €1 spent on drug treatment, €3 are saved in societal costs.”

What to do about cutbacks to communities

By Darragh O'Connor*, SIPTU

Over the past few years, the Community Sector has become a crucial pillar in the provision of a range of vital services in Ireland. It has achieved this by carving out a unique space in civic society that is neither public nor private. By avoiding the compromises that come with a profit driven necessities, and embracing the flexibility that comes from being out side the public sector, community projects have been able to respond to the real needs of communities, by being of the community.

Childcare, drug rehabilitation, youth projects, community development, training education; these are just some of the vital services that are provided day in day, often without the recognition they deserve.

In the absence of the Community Sector, the state would have to directly provide these services. The Community Sector is not a luxury, but a vital element in provision of social and community services. This is a message that the wider public must get if they are to support us in the battles ahead.

However, the Community Sector does not exist in isolation and the current economic realities are presenting us with major challenges, but also opportunities.

Already, many services have seen cuts in funding. The national drugs strategy is down 17%, CDPs cut by 15%, €4 million cut from Youth. The only certainty is that Government will be seeking more in the coming months.

“It is unfair but true that you seldom get what you deserve; you get what you fight for.”

IPTU
Community
Protest.



SO WHAT DO WE DO?

It is unfair but true that you seldom get what you deserve; you get what you fight for. The Government has hard decisions to make as they struggle to balance the books. €2 billion was cut this year, and they will be looking to cut €4 billion in 2010 and €4 billion in 2011.

The challenge for the Community Sector is to show Government and the general public that it not only delivers essential services, but also has economic benefits for the country. We cannot allow the Government to sacrifice long term social and community development for short term cuts. For example, for every €1 spent on community childcare, the State saves €8 in other services; for every €1 spent on drug treatment, €3 are saved in societal costs. These are real economic benefits, but they are not the strongest arguments we have.

There are thousands of stories of how people's lives have been changed for the better, how communities have improved because of the work of CDPs and other projects. These are some of the strongest arguments that we have, and in the face of cut backs, these stories need to be told.

Organising with a union, lobbying and protesting are the most effective tools we have to achieve this.

THE ROLE OF TRADE UNIONS

For over a hundred years, SIPTU has fought for fairness at work and justice in society. It is a democratic organisation where members organise together to bring about positive changes in their employment or wider sector.

If we believe that our projects and jobs are worth fighting for, we must organise as a union.

Joining together with SIPTU gives workers and projects the ability to speak out on major issues without the restrictions that often come with State funding.

In June, we saw how effective organising can deliver real results for workers.

After 2000 community workers marched against Community Employment training budget cuts (amongst others), the Department of Finance and FAS climbed down.

This is the strength that workers have when they stand together with their union. Union members, shop stewards and activists, working together as a union can deliver. If you want to know more about organising with SIPTU, phone a SIPTU organiser on 1890-747-881, or visit: siptu.ie/community * Darragh O'Connor is the Community Sector Lead Organiser with SIPTU.

Community Sector is unionised

SIPTU stands for the 'Services, Industrial, Professional and Technical Union' and it represents over 200,000 workers from nearly every category of employment in Ireland, including the Community Sector.

Most unionised workers in the Community Sector in Ireland are members of SIPTU, while many others are members of the IMPACT trade union, the second-biggest union in Ireland.

“Effective organising can deliver real results.”

SIPTU national day of protest on Sept 30th

SIPTU has named September 30th as a day of national protest by and on behalf of Communities struck down by over-the-top cuts in the aftermath of the banking crisis.

Over 2000 people attended a meeting and march over Community cuts in June when they had only two weeks notice of the event. More people will be seen taking action on September 30th.

The SIPTU campaign is endorsed by the National Community Development Forum, the national body for CDPs.

The Community Sector – and the people it supports – appears to have been much more harshly cut than other areas of public spending.

For more, read David Connolly's article on page 12, or visit: www.siptu.ie/community

CUTS TO COMMUNITY SECTOR: Facts and Figures



Cuts made

It appears that social inclusion work, community development work and equality work is being slashed disproportionately by the Government.

SIPTU has listed the following cuts to the Community Sector to date:

- National Drugs Strategy cut by 17% in funding for projects.
- Community Employment training budget cut by 40%, materials budget cut by 25%. (Note: This cut was later reversed, following a campaign by SIPTU's Community section and others).
- Capital Funding for Childcare Facilities has stopped.
- Community crèches are struggling under the controversial Subvention Scheme.
- Community Development Programme funding cut by nearly 15% this year (the cuts to individual projects is on average 12%).
- Supports for older people down to €727,000 from €4.3 million.
- Supports for the Community and Voluntary Sector cut by 32%.
- National Women's Strategy cut by €9 million.
- 12.5 % cut for suicide prevention.
- €4 million cut from Youth Projects.

In addition, there are the following:

- Severely poor communities overseas also hit as Irish Aid budget cut by €255 million.
- Harsh social welfare cuts imposed and more threatened.

What cuts have we left out, how are the cuts effecting your community and what collective action are you taking about it? Call 'Changing Ireland' on 061-458011 or email: editor@changingireland.ie

* SOURCE: The figure is based on the following excerpt from the just-published CWC Briefing on the 'Bord Snip' report:

"In 2008, the CDP and LDSIP programmes had a combined budget of circa €81.51 million. This was reduced to circa €72.64million in 2009, resulting in budgets cuts of 10% for the LDSIP and 8% for the CDP projects. This (Bord Snip) report suggests further cuts of €44million to the programmes – effectively reducing the budget by a further 60.5% to €28.64million for the two programmes."

Cuts threatened

There are significant implications for Community should the recommendations of An Bord Snip Nua be fully implemented. These include:

- Abolishing the Department of Community, Rural, and Gaeltacht affairs.
- Cutting €10M from the Community Services Programme.
- A €44m (meaning a 60%) cut to the budget for the Local Development and Social Inclusion Programme and the Community Development Programme and possibly an end to these programmes.*
- Abolishing the Dormant Accounts Board.
- Merging of the enterprise support function of LEADER into Enterprise Ireland.
- Cut €3.2m per annum by ending the RAPID programme.
- Phase out the CLÁR programme.
- Cuts to Community Employment and Jobs Initiative schemes, including to payments to participants..
- Cut €30m by closing down the Family Support Agency and "most of" its programmes,
- Phase out second welfare payments, eg to carers.
- Cut €60m by reducing the number of Special Needs Assistants in schools by up to 2000 (20%).
- Close down the Taskforce on Active Citizenship and halt all spending earmarked for implementing the Taskforce's recommendations.

Irrespective of whether any or all of Bord Snip's recommendations relating to the Community Sector are implemented, the Department reports that it is "currently reviewing projects to evaluate the impact of expenditure under its programme on the ground, with a view to identifying potential savings."

Local outrage online over Bord Snip claims



"How dare they (An Bord Snip) say there is little evidence of the value of the (Community Development) Programme! In our community the CDP is the only infrastructure in the area, aside from our direct programmes and activities which are busier than ever.

"We have a CE project that provides employment and training to 40 local people. A youth project that has 7 qualified staff who provided developmental programmes to over 600 young people in the last 12 months, an afterschools project and a drugs satellite clinic.

We have managed to get funding to get a purpose built youth centre, refurbish a falling down community centre both of which are full to capacity every day.

"If this is not value for money then what is. If the CDP goes all this will be gone as well and this already shafted and neglected community will be left to rot."

The above comments were made online at www.nationalcdf.blogspot.com by a poster called Niamh from Little Bray Family Resource Centre CDP, beneath a story on the Bord Snip proposals.

PROJECT NEWS SNAP SHOTS

A snapshot of 2009 news from projects in the Community Development Programme



Fr. Michael Mernagh

Worker walks from Cork to Dublin

The project co-ordinator of South Inner City Community Development Association (SICCDA) walked from Cork to Dublin in the cold of last December as an act of atonement for all victims of child sexual abuse.

Fr. Michael Mernagh has long opposed abuse of powers by those in authority.

He worked closely with the late Tony Gregory (whose passing was celebrated in a special pull-out poster in a recent magazine published by another CDP, MACRO).

SICCDA, where Fr. Michael works, is a long established CDP based in the Liberties of Dublin.

To contact SICCDA,
T: 01-453-6098. M: 087-798-1067.
E: Michael.mernagh@gmail.com

Longford fundraises to keep gardens

With budgets slashed, Acorn CDP has launched a fund-raising drive to maintain two outdoor projects in Longford town.

The project runs two community gardens that have attracted a lot of young people and people from different ethnic backgrounds. Community Development worker Peter Masterson said the community gardens were set up after former mayor of Longford, Jim Keogh, proposed that "Longford people that they should have within themselves the capacity to grow their own food."

Bray project alarmed at suicides

Traveller suicides are three times the average, according to the results of a 141-page study launched earlier this year.

Jim O'Brien, project co-ordinator of Bray Traveller CDP, said the figures were "alarming", but he hoped that the report would create an awareness of the issues for Travellers that factored in the high suicide rates.

"And from a Traveller point of view, we have to openly talk about (the problem of suicides) and work with people to counter the problems and connect with services."

The author of the report is Mary-Rose Walker who works with the Traveller community as an employee of Wicklow County Council and the book can be downloaded from: www.nosp.ie/book.pdf

Monaghan sets up 'Out of Work Club'

Drumlin CDP in South Monaghan has set up an 'Out of Work Club' which meets once a week. In terms of adult education, the project runs cooking courses, computer classes, English classes and 'Walking for Health' workshops.

More info: www.drumlincdp.com

Cavan CDP trains farmers

The South West Cavan Community Development Project (CDP) in the first half of this year ran numerous courses, some of them geared especially towards farmers, including introductory computers, FETAC-level farm accounts.

More info: <http://forum.cavancommunity.ie/SWCCDP/>

Larchville-Lisduggan focus on literacy

To mention but two events that Larchville Lisduggan CDP is running these summer months, the CDP organised a day-trip with the Women's Group on July 4th, to Tipperary. Breaks for tea/coffee, scones and a sing-song are the order of the day on these trips and are a break from life's daily routine.

The CDP also runs a free reading and spelling session every Monday morning. It covers: application form filling - shopping lists - parent teacher meetings - bills - bank machine use - helping with homework, and the list goes on. T: 051-351205/351343.

E: larchliscdp@eircom.net

Wexford to show impact of projects

Feminist activist and academic, Ailbhe Smyth has outlined the biggest challenge facing the County Wexford CDPs' Network. She said it was to show policy makers the huge subjective impact on peoples psychological and social well-being unless they step in with relevant support services for people experiencing poverty.

Ailbhe was the Network's guest speaker in April.



Kay Flanagan

In Limerick, the 25th edition of Our Lady of Lourdes Newsletter, produced by the local CDP, was officially launched by 'Changing Ireland' editor Allen Meagher in the Spring. The magazine has been faithfully edited by development worker Kay Flanagan and provides fresh angles and positive news to a Community that has had to deal with very negative mainstream media coverage of the area through many years.

Meanwhile, in Waterford, the summer edition of the 'Ballybeg Newsletter' sponsored by Ballybeg CDP and Waterford Institute of Technology is now out.



CDP Network 2009

Ireland's first ever gay rural group, probably!



"I'd a 13 year old come to me last week feeling suicidal because of worries over what her family would think of her being gay... I was only able to refer her on at the time. She is ok now."

That's part of a day's work for an outreach worker in rural Ireland, in this case East Clare. The outreach worker in this case, Dee Dooley, now has cause to celebrate.

What appears to be the first rural social and support group in the country has been set up, by Dee and colleagues for local lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender (LGBT) people.

The mission statement on the group's bebo page says they are there "to help the queer community and queer curious and their friends and families in rural East Clare" and so far it has won over 71 bebo friends.

The group meets in the real world of Scariff every Friday morning.

"We were able to initiate the group's development through a Community Employment Scheme sponsored by the East Clare CDP, known locally as East Clare Community Support," said Dee.

"In 2007 Samantha Talbot, a local lesbian woman, did a Diploma in Community Development Practice. Her research findings showed there was an "overwhelming need" for a rural LGBT group in area.

Late last year, through groundwork by Samantha and Dee, the group was established. Dee first worked as a part-time women's outreach worker under the CE scheme, attached to the CDP, and today she continues the work as a volunteer activist.

"In rural Ireland, LGBT people normally have very little if anything in the way of specific support services or social outlets.

"This can lead to isolation and social exclusion," said Dee.

"In urban areas, the density of population allows for a more diverse, modern and inclusive society to develop."

In 2008, Senator David Norris launched a 'code of practice' to ensure that CDPs and Family Resource Centres are friendly to members of the LGBT Community. (See report in Issue 26 of 'Changing Ireland' on our website).

"The 'Code of Practice' was a concise and useful document for our CDP and was a useful resource in setting up our group," added Dee. "We'd now like to hear if there are other rural LGBT groups out there or are we the only one."

For more info, contact, phone the CDP on 061-640977 or Dee at 085-1186751.

E: scarriflgb@yahoo.ie

W: www.bebo.com/scarrifl

The Code of Practice is now online at www.changingireland.ie/resources.html

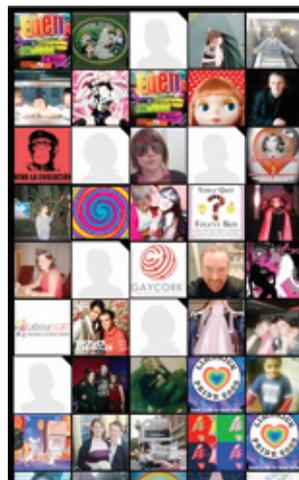
Ó Cuív deplores exclusion of LGBT people

"Many LGBT people feel isolated and socially excluded," acknowledged Minister Éamon Ó Cuív late last year.

The Minister was speaking in Galway at the launch of a report into the needs of the LGBT Community in the West of Ireland which found that 70% of respondents had experienced some form of discrimination based on their sexual orientation.

"Isolation and social exclusion are linked to poorer health, lower educational attainments, lower economic success and lower degrees of happiness and fulfillment. Conversely, embracing diversity is known to have proven effects on the individual and larger community."

"LGBT people are an important part of our community and it is appropriate that we look at ways of improving their greater participation in society," added the Minister.



Enabling Dissent

Enabling dissent is a right challenge

By Allen Meagher



The story of how the voice of the Community Sector in Ireland has been stifled has made the news – it was featured on the 'Irish Examiner's front page on July 7th under the heading: "State 'silences' voices of poor and needy".

Although the phenomenon of dissent being stifled is not unique by any means to Ireland, it had not been publicly discussed in the press before this.

The 'silencing' was first publicly discussed on May 20th in Dublin when 200 people packed into a room to hear famous dissenters give their views on why the voices of the marginalised in Ireland were so subdued when they should be heard from the rooftops.

The guest speakers were equality activist Niall Crowley, trade unionist Jack O'Connor, anti-apartheid campaigner and Civicus president, Kumi Naidoo and the founder of Focus Ireland, Sr. Stanislaus Kennedy.

RECESSION OPPORTUNITY

They made the point that recession provided an opportunity for dissenting voices to become strong a time when old certainties begin to crumble.

It is a time to bring forward alternative models of development, based around equality

rather than based around an economy. Dissent was crucial, said one speaker, in any true democracy.

The event was organised by the Carnegie Trust* and the Atlantic Philanthropies and people had to be turned away at the door such was the interest.

Carnegie's research had identified the marginalisation of dissent in Ireland as a key concern.

The aim of the Dublin seminar was to "explore the role of civil society associations in creating and supporting spaces for dissenting voices, both in Ireland and globally."

This at a time when, to name but two cases, the State invests valuable police and naval resources to arrest dissenting environmental campaigners in Mayo, while travel agency workers have been arrested for protesting over the terms of their redundancy payments.

The problem is particularly acute for groups dependent on state funding.

While one of the duties of Community and Voluntary organisations is to speak up for and with the most marginalised of people, many groups struggle to see how can they stridently oppose failing policies of the state, while retaining state funding for their organisations.

confusing access for influence.

The attitude right now of most Governments is if you just deliver services and programmes and help the poor and vulnerable and you keep your mouth zipped about the policy implications of what you are dealing with, then you are seen as the 'good guys'.

- *Kumi Naidoo*

New sources of funding are required to develop some level of financial independence within the community sector. This financial independence should be secured specifically to enable and resource dissent and the bringing forward of an alternative model of development.

- *Niall Crowley*

FUNDING CATCH 22

As one project co-ordinator from West Dublin commented, "No matter how annoyed I get at Government neglect of our area, I'm not going to endanger the funding to the 200 youths who use our centre."

In Ireland, as elsewhere in the world, the Government pressurises groups partly funds to keep their lips stitched and not challenge the status quo.

To hear what the speakers had to say – and solutions they propose – watch the videos we've posted on our website and on youtube, or visit Carnegie's website to download the speeches or listen to an audio broadcast from the evening.

We've posted links to the 'Irish Examiner' reports on our blog: www.changingireland.blogspot.com

* The full title is: The Carnegie UK Trust Inquiry into the Future of Civil Society in the UK and Ireland.



Speaking of speaking up

Today, in Irish society, there is a worryingly wide range of methods used to stifle the voice of those who advocate on behalf of the marginalized. (Yet) failure to criticise is failing the people in the margins who otherwise wouldn't have a voice.

- *Sr. Stanislaus Kennedy.*

When we got democracy for the first time in South Africa, we were very excited because we were invited to lots of meetings with the government on health, education and so on.... (But) we were making the mistake of

The reality is that those who are excluded from the social partnership process are quite entitled to feel marginalised because marginalised they are and marginalised their interests are.

- *Jack O'Connor*



NEWS

Editor's colleagues jailed

Former colleagues of the editor of this magazine are facing long prison sentences and/or fines after expressing dissent in Gambia.

Six journalists were convicted of sedition and criminal defamation after speaking out about the Gambian regime's failure to properly investigate the murder of a colleague, Deyda Hydara.

The West African state is ranked 137th out of 173 countries on the organisation's worldwide press freedom index. **Allen Meagher worked in Gambia as a volunteer in the mid-to-late 1990s. He wrote about the latest crackdown on journalists there in the 'Irish Times' on July 6th as the court considered the verdicts:** www.irishtimes.com

Bomb scare at Dolphin's Barn project

An army bomb disposal team was called to an April 27th community meeting run by Dolphin House Development Association, the CDP in Dublin.

A hoax bomb was found at the entrance and the meeting was postponed and the wider housing complex was evacuated while the army dealt with the suspect device.

Over 100 people had shown up at the meeting to discuss criminality and drug-dealing in the area.

The bomb-scare came days after up to 30 cars had their tyres slashed in the area, as dealers vented their anger at an increased Garda presence in the flats.

Local Labour councillor, Eric Byrne, is a director of the CDP and he said the problems were compounded by a sense of frustration that a long-promised regeneration scheme would not take place some years. He said the area has a good community infrastructure, including creches, after-school projects and an active community association.

Residents have called for full-time Garda patrols in the area.



FINE GAEL

216 ideas on Volunteering



There were 216 ideas submitted by the public in the 'Social and Voluntary' category of the www.ideascampaign.ie website. While many are original and could transform local communities, it is remarkable how many of the ideas have already been implemented – with success – by CDPs, FRCs, Partnerships and Volunteer Centres Ireland, among others. For example, a 'Changing Ireland' survey found that at least 34 of the ideas have been implemented by some or all CDPs.

However, few of the ideas have been implemented nationally and someone in Waterford may not be aware of the success in neighbouring Tipperary of, for instance, community-run organic gardens and cookery courses. If the most creative ideas are adopted nationally, it could transform society.

We've put the list relating to Community and Volunteering into one file which you can download from: www.changingireland.blogspot.com

FG's 'democratic' plan for communities

Fine Gael has launched a policy document that would subsume community organisations into local authorities and see the abolishment of many community-related groups that the party calls 'quangos'.

This policy "boosts local democracy (and) will give local communities and people more of a say as to how vital services are delivered in their areas," said Fine Gael's Phil Hogan.

As the document's title suggests, it aims to give 'Power to the People' by strengthening local authorities.

The agencies that would be dissolved or have functions transferred to Local Government include FAS Community Employment Schemes, Pobal, Dublin Docklands Development Authority, Temple Bar Cultural Trust, Western Development Commission, County and City Development Boards, and City and County Enterprise Boards.

It would result in a saving of over €70m a year from combined budgets of €900m to the afore-mentioned bodies. SIPTU has criticised the proposals, as has Fianna Fail.

Minister Eamon O'Cuiv said "the direct involvement of local communities in their own futures would be swallowed up in officialdom and bureaucracy."

To read the document, visit www.finegael.org/upload/file/Power_to_the_People.pdf

Ó Cuív wants views on Bord Snip



The Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, Eamon Ó Cuív, wants to hear the public's views on the Bord Snip cost-cutting proposals.

In an interview with Clare FM, the Minister said: "We have a report from McCarthy. I think we get some sense of what would happen the country if an economist from Dublin 4 was running the country."

"It is fair to say that Colm McCarthy has a particular view of the world. It is a very challenging view. We have to analyse everything he said and if we think he is wrong, we have to show an alternative way of doing things."

He added: "I think it is very, very different to what politicians would do. It is an interesting report. It gives us an agenda. I think that part of that agenda certainly would not be acceptable to a larger number of people."

He said everything was up for debate although it was "clear" there would have to be some cuts in public spending.

Along with many other macro-scale cuts, Bord Snip recommended closing two Government Departments, one being the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.

Neither Fine Gael nor Labour oppose that proposal.

*"Dissent is the highest form of patriotism."
- Thomas Jefferson, former US President*

Upsides To The Downturn

MORE PEOPLE want to get involved in their community and to volunteer.

A **COMMUNITY** project in north Cork saw the rising interest in volunteering and recruited a volunteers co-ordinator (part-time). The area is now happily over-run with busy volunteers.

FORMER MINISTER Michael McDowell's infamous line about inequality being good for society will only be quoted in future to show how away with the fairies he and his ilk are.

MORE PEOPLE should develop an interest in their community and ultimately in that undramatic and slow, but ultimately life-enhancing and life-saving, process we call community development.

SPEND A BIT of time learning about broadband and internet technology and you may be able to cut down the number of meetings you have to physically attend. This could also be viewed as a downside of course. Try Skype instead of the regular phone - you can see who you're talking to which is a plus (mostly).

IF YOUR community group was one of the wise owls that made provision for a rainy day, prices have never been better for organizing group trips abroad, to do an exchange or visit a similar project in another country.

YOUR COMMUNITY might recover some of its spirit and neighbourliness.

MANY MORE FAS places have been made available.

A **MICROSCOPIC** upside to the downturn is that up to June 30th you could lay your hands on any Combat Poverty Agency publication for free. (The reason, however, was that the Agency was closing down as it was absorbed into the Department of Social and Family Affairs).



INDIVIDUALS - should they/we manage to escape unemployment, debt and poverty - can enjoy living in a less materialistic society.

OUR MISSION is to work and campaign to see that the new society, however poor, is more equal, with a narrower rich-poor gap than the society created in the Celtic Tiger era. This mission gives us plenty reason to keep going regardless.



Boardmatch Ireland

Boardmatch Ireland is a joint initiative between the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants and the Disability Federation Ireland. Boardmatch has worked with a range of corporate businesses, including Bank of Ireland, AIB, Accenture Ireland, with the support of the Government to encourage and support their employees to join boards of not-for-profit organisations.

Find the volunteer you need !

By Fiona O'Connor, Boardmatch Ireland

As we face into the jaws of a depression, we have to ask is there nothing to look forward to, no upside to the downside. Of course there is! This could be your organisation's chance to plug gaps and build strengths through tapping into a deep well of skilled volunteers.

And there is a national organisation dedicated to matching your needs with a volunteer with sought-after skills.

Boardmatch Ireland was established in 2005 as a free web-based service which matches experienced business people willing to volunteer their expertise to the boards of non-profit organisations.

Did you know that Ireland has the highest rate of volunteering per capita as well as being the most generous per capita in terms of giving to those less fortunate than us? It's true.

There are over one million volunteers giving their time in the Community and Voluntary sector in Ireland. That's one in every four people.

So whilst we have a deep affection for getting sunburnt in Spain and spending money we don't have in BT's, our saving grace may be our wanting to give something back to our community.

Companies in Ireland have realised this also and many now have human resources teams and departments of social corporate responsibility. The bigger companies have staff employed to develop programmes to assist fellow employees to work as volunteers.

A long-term sustainable improvement can be gained by utilising a volunteer's strategic skills, marketing expertise, accounting or legal or administrative skills on the boards of Community and Voluntary organisations.

The individual gains skills in leadership, negotiation, persuasion and management whilst having a positive impact on a not-for-profit organisation that should reach all the way to grass roots level.

The service provided by Boardmatch is free.

To find a volunteer with particular skills, or to find out more:

T: 01-6715005.

E: fiona@boardmatchireland.ie

W: www.boardmatchireland.ie



HOUSING POLICY

Tenants First document is a gripping read

Policy documents don't usually come more gripping than the latest one by Tenants First. If everything had gone right with housing in Ireland, it would join other policy documents on the shelf. However, for a document talking about social policy, it reads like a crime-thriller.

'Housing for Need not Greed' spares nobody in power any blushes as it shows in facts and figures how poor people were dumped on during the boom as builders got even greater handouts than the public generally realise. It also shows a way out of the mess.

The aim is to overturn Ireland's current approach to public housing and to see people profit rather than developers.

The launch of the 20-page 'Housing for Need not Greed' paper in May marked the beginning of a campaign to get many others involved - from FRCs to Drugs Taskforces to CDPs to housing and homeless organisations and trade unions.

The document calls for €3 billion nationally over 10 years for proper regeneration of our towns and cities and promises it will work if it truly involves local people in its management and delivery.

Tenants First know the value of money and the funding they seek for the country as a whole is equal to that sought in October last for Limerick's regeneration alone.

The document covers the views of independent experts as well as Government experts, quotes from various studies and reports and makes its case based on facts, figures and the experience of residents on the ground.

To download and read the document online visit: www.stmichaelsestate.ie or www.dicp.ie

If you want a copy posted to you, contact Dublin Inner City Partnership on 01-8721321 or St. Michael's Estate CDP at 01-4533938.

HOUSING STUDY

Good reasons to work in Housing

Every time the media mention housing, they talk of builders and developers. However, working in housing can also mean being engaged in a struggle to maintain individuals, families and communities. If you want to work in housing from this angle, one of the best ways to start is by studying the subject.

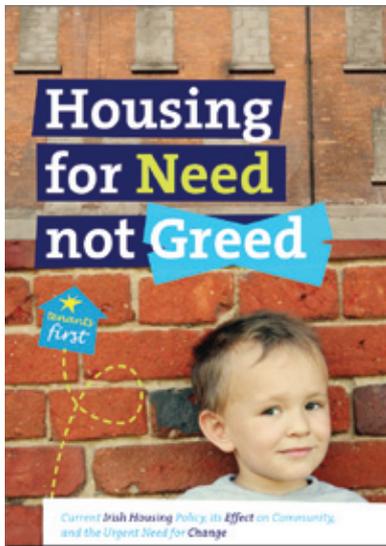
Currently, there are a half-dozen places remaining on the degree course in UCD in Housing and Community Studies. The course is run by Respond and UCD's Bachelor of Social Studies on a part-time basis over four years. The deadline for applications for the course starting in September 2009 is August 28th.

There are also certificate and diploma-level (shorter) options.

"Unfortunately market forces were never about sustainable communities and the rush during the boom years to buy-buy-buy did little for communities. If you wish to learn about building sustainable communities, the course provides a real opportunity," says Declan Markey.

"For those who perceive housing development to be peripheral to the building of communities, they have only to talk to someone who is homeless, or to someone who lives in St Michael's or O'Devaney Gardens where the market and the PPPs have failed them."

For information about applying, contact Declan. T: 0818-35790. E: bsscource@respond.ie W: www.respond.ie



NCDF overturns rent-savings demand

The National Community Development Forum (NCDF) has made communications easier between the Department and projects in the Community Development Programme.

In June, the NCDF expressed dismay at cuts by email and directives from the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs about how projects should spend the funds allocated. NCDF representatives met that month with Minister Eamon O'Cuiv and reported some progress.

The NCDF had earlier written to the Department about directives including one the Department sent which instructed projects that saved money by moving premises to return the saved money to the Department. Some projects had also complained.

That decision was reversed following the meeting between the NCDF and Minister.

At the same time, a request by the NCDF for a meeting with Minister of State for Community Affairs, John Curran, was turned down.

NCDF chairman, Seamus Murphy, says that projects are "unhappy with the way we are being targeted for greatly disproportionate cuts that put our voluntary management boards in a very difficult position. We are also unhappy with directives such as the one that asked our projects to desist from networking. Some CDPs have the term 'Network' in their project name, it is a crucial part of our work."

For more info, visit: www.nationalcdf.blogspot.com



Community Sector Facing up to Crisis



INTRODUCTION

The huge turnout for the national march for communities on June 3rd nearly overwhelmed the organisers. At very short notice, over 2000 people showed up and the union HQ could not accommodate them all.

David Connolly, President of SIPTU's Community Branch, spoke with passion on the day. He works for the Dublin Inner City Partnership.

Community workers mood is resolute - June 3rd turnout overwhelmed organisers

Report: David Connolly, SIPTU Community Branch

On Wednesday June 3, over 2000 community workers, voluntary activists and service users participated in a protest meeting at Liberty Hall and a march to the Department of Finance.

The purpose of the event was to resist the severe cuts to the sector that have been applied by the Minister for Finance during 2009, which will result in the loss of local community services and jobs in the sector. The protest was organised by the SIPTU Community branch and endorsed by IMPACT and the Community Sector Employers Forum.

Initial notice for the event was only issued

two weeks before the event and the immediate response from workers in the sector was overwhelming in support of the idea. The notices were circulated by email and the very large number of people who turned up could not be accommodated, so three separate meetings were quickly organised; two inside Liberty Hall and one outside on the street. The mood among the participants was one of deep anger at the Government but also a strong intent to prevent any further cuts on the sector.

This protest was in response to the impact of severe funding cuts right across the sector, cuts that are being applied unfairly, in higher proportion to (elsewhere). For example when the CRAGA budget is analysed, the cuts on drug task forces are between 15 and 20%; on the community development programme 15%; on Partnerships over 12%.

These direct funding cuts were much higher than the general reductions in the public sector and this issue needs to be highlighted with the Government and agreement secured so the budget in November will not target this sector again.

UNA O'CONNOR, the Secretary of the **IMPACT trade union's Boards and Voluntary Agencies Branch**, provided graphic examples of the impact of the cuts on essential services and the potential long-term damage that will be caused to individuals and families who rely on these local supports. She said that a clear message must be communicated to Government that this attack on vital services will not be tolerated.

JEAN SOMERS, on behalf of the **Community Sector Employers Forum**, expressed their support for the action. Their members are under intense pressure as a result of the targeting of the sector both in maintaining quality services and meeting the wide range of regulations that are now being imposed on employers.

She urged that all community sector employers should join the forum so that they could win recognition from the

Department of Finance for negotiating purposes.

[Editor's note: It's free to join].

PATRICIA KING, Regional Secretary with **SIPTU**, expressed the strong support of the Trade Union movement for the workers in the community sector. She acknowledged that these workers provided vital services to the poorest communities in the country. It made little sense in economic terms to reduce this sector given the significant evidence of the high return for the public money invested; especially in the context of the growing need for these services during the recession.

Many speakers also addressed the meeting from the hall and all talked of the impact of the cuts on local community services. The general view was that the local communities are being targeted by the Government mainly because they are vulnerable and less able to organise resistance, unlike the more unionised sectors in the economy.

The march that proceeded from Liberty Hall to the Department of Finance was colourful and noisy. It was led by workers from the Childcare sector pushing buggies. The huge crowd was effectively marshalled by the union stewards and escorted by the Gardai and the call from loudhailers echoed through the city streets all the way to Government buildings- "They say cutbacks: We say fight back".

This was the successful start of the campaign. A mass protest to the Department of Finance is being planned by the Community Sector Trade Unions for Wednesday, September 30th next.

To see the march online, watch it on www.inou.ie

A debate on RTE's Primetime featured the march on July 11th: www.rte.ie

The Irish Times tally on numbers at the march was incorrect; however the newspaper's coverage was the most in-depth. It's online at:

<http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/health/2009/0609/1224248401911.html>



SIPTU Meeting from the Floor

Is Féidir Linn!

The Community and Voluntary Sector in June launched a vision document outlining how the country should respond to the recession.

The document is called 'Is Féidir Linn!' meaning 'We Can!'

It was launched in Dublin at a packed function organised by the Community Platform. Among the guest-speakers at the launch was Richard Wilkinson, co-author of the non-fiction, best-seller 'The Spirit Level - Why more equal societies almost always do better'.

'Is Féidir Linn!' is a follow-up to an earlier report called 'Better Ireland' which was launched in late 2008.

For more information, or to get a download, visit:

<http://www.ul.ie/peadarkirby>,

www.communityplatform.ie or www.cwc.ie

Workers Co-op concerned

The Community Workers Co-operative (CWC) has written a paper outlining how Bord Snip's proposals threaten to destroy the viability of many communities.

The CWC is particularly concerned about cuts to programmes funded by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (DCRGA) and of the threat to the Department as a whole.

"The CWC has received assurances from the DCRGA that, for now, it is business as usual - no decisions have yet been taken. The CWC will submit a response to the Government urging that the infrastructure to enable community work be maintained at realistic levels," said Ann Irwin National Co-ordinator of the CWC in a letter to members.

The 'CWC response to the report of the SP Group on Public Service Numbers & Expenditure' can be downloaded from: www.cwc.ie

FRCs meet over future

There are 107 Family Resources Centres (FRCs) around the country and they have come out fighting as they are facing the guillotine if the Bord Snip report is fully implemented by the Government.

"Cutbacks to the Family Resource Centre programme would have a devastating impact on local economies," said Pakie Kelly, chairperson of the Family Resource Centre National Forum (FRCNF).

"Our services are needed now more than ever, so instead of closing or reducing the Family Resource Centre programme, it should be developed and even expanded," said Pakie.

"We respond to problems in our communities as they arise or - better still - we prevent certain problems from arising in the first place. Research from the US, for example, shows that investing just \$600 in targeted early childhood education in disadvantaged communities saves society on average \$15,000 per child in lower future crime rates."

The Bord Snip report recommended "that the Family Support Agency and most of its programmes be discontinued."

However, the FRCNF has called for the retention of the Family Support Agency and the €18m per annum spent on FRCs.

A campaign has been launched nationally.

More info: www.frcnf.com

Wheel wants new partnership with Govt

The Wheel called on May 19th for a new, coordinated partnership between Government and community and voluntary organisations.

"Many organisations are experiencing a surge in the demand for their services. It is vital that we act swiftly to establish a coordinated approach," said Wheel CEO, Deirdre Garvey.

Responding to the Bord Snip report, Deirdre said: "We cannot afford to cripple our community and voluntary 'infrastructure' at a time when an increasing number of people are being forced to depend on the services we provide. We call on the Government to ensure that an appropriate social, as well as economic, analysis is made of the proposed options for cuts before decisions are made."

She said, "It is not acceptable that the Government's ambition is limited to 'minimising' the impact of the proposed cuts on the most vulnerable in Irish society."

Deirdre was critical of Bord Snip proposals to disband the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.

For more visit: www.wheel.ie

Partnerships have answers to jobs crisis

Partnership companies nationally have submitted papers to politicians, government departments and policy-makers on how to respond to the jobs crisis.

An Bord Snip Nua proposes cutting partnerships.

PLANET, the network for 38 area-based partnerships, and the Community Partnership Network (CPN) which represents another 29 community-focused partnership companies, believe they are ideally placed to help solve spiraling unemployment.

They intend working on locally-identified needs and opportunities by bringing a range of organisations together at local level.

Nationally, to date, CPN and PLANET have met with ICTU, National Economic and Social Forum and the Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed and further meetings are planned.

An Bord Snip Nua's authors did not recognise the work of partnerships or CDPs, claiming there was little evidence of the value of the work carried out by either programme.

The papers on tackling unemployment locally are online at: www.cpn.ie and www.planet.ie

25,000 non-profit organisations in Ireland

"There are over 25,000 not-for-profit organisations in the country," says Fiona O'Connor of Boardmatch Ireland, "and each is run by boards with people that volunteer their time."

Last year, Fiona says, the not-for-profit sector in the Republic of Ireland had a turnover of over €2.5 billion.

This indicates there were an estimated 200,000 voluntary board members responsible for managing €2.5 billion in spending (albeit declining)."



Have non-profits lost touch with volunteers ?



Deirdre Garvey CEO, The Wheel

Tapping into volunteering is essential now. But have non-profits lost touch with their voluntary roots?

By Deirdre Garvey

The Wheel's chief executive, Deirdre Garvey, says Community and Voluntary organisations must reconnect with volunteers if they are to survive the recession/depression:

The recession has led to a dramatic rise in the number of people registering for voluntary work. Volunteer Centres Ireland (VCI) report that some of its centres have reported a 100% increase in registrations for the first three months of the year compared with the same period in 2008. Volunteering Ireland (VI) also reports a significant increase in the number of volunteers wanting to become involved with their communities.

This should come as good news for charities at a time when funding cuts are forcing many to lay off paid staff. (A recent survey by The Wheel, found that 22% have made permanent, paid staff redundant since the beginning of this year). However, the evidence shows that many Community and Voluntary organisations are reluctant to recruit and involve more volunteers.

It is true that many Community and Voluntary organisations lack the resources to recruit, train and supervise volunteers from the large numbers who are now making

themselves available.

Administrative barriers such as delays in Garda vetting and insurance requirements may also be discouraging charities from taking on more volunteers. But, could it be that we have lost sight of the value of volunteers?

There has been an effort in recent years to professionalise the Community and Voluntary Sector, and qualified professionals, many of whom have transferred from the private sector, now fill a large percentage of the managerial positions in charities.

This has brought tremendous benefits to both charities and the communities they serve: organisations are now better governed than they ever were, and there have been vast improvements in the areas of service delivery and financial management.

But has this pursuit of professionalism also led to a shift in the culture of the community and voluntary sector? Is there now a need to reconnect with the voluntary spirit on which our sector is founded and still reliant upon?

To do this effectively, we need a coordinated national strategy on volunteering, which recognises the economic and social value of volunteering. The strategy should raise awareness and build the capacity charities over how to involve volunteers. It should provide for training in volunteer management and there should be a developed 'volunteer involvements infrastructure'. Moves are already underway to introduce a strategy in Northern Ireland and we know that the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs is considering its strategy in this area too.

Volunteering will be an essential part of Ireland's economic recovery. It empowers



“Volunteering will be an essential part of Ireland's economic recovery. It would be incredible if involving more volunteers were not to be part of the solution for us.”

“We have a duty to harness (volunteering).

If we fail, history may judge us in the same light as those who squandered Ireland's wealth during the boom years.”

individuals and communities and breaks cycles of dependency. Rallying communities towards volunteering reduces the psychological impact of recession while at the same time contributing to the development of a healthy and sustainable society through active citizenship.

But we cannot depend on a government strategy at a time like this.

Organisations across the sector should look at the opportunities that volunteers might offer to their clients, service users and communities. Of course, it isn't appropriate in all occasions, nor is it appropriate to think of voluntarism as a way to replace a paid staff member. However, these testing times will ensure that we are pushed to use all our resourcefulness, creativity and innovation to continue to pursue our missions. It would be incredible if involving more volunteers were not to be part of the solution for us.

Taking the big picture view, community and voluntary organisations now have a duty as well as an opportunity to harness this resource in order to secure the future of both our sector and country. It will require innovative thinking, leadership and a renewed commitment to volunteering. If we fail, history may judge us in the same light as those who squandered Ireland's wealth during the boom years.

Deirdre Garvey is CEO of The Wheel, the national support and representative body for community and voluntary organisations. W: www.wheel.ie

8 WAYS COMMUNITY GROUPS CAN SAVE MONEY



Every tabloid magazine in the known universe has published articles this year about “getting through” the downturn/depression. Here are our ideas for non-profit organisations!

- 1** Instead of paying an organisation for providing a trainer for a day, barter with them and offer a day’s training (in something your group/staff/volunteers are expert in) by way of payment.
- 2** If you’re with the ESB, change electricity supplier and save 10% - 13% per annum.
- 3** If you’re renting a premises, you can and should negotiate a reduction in rent with your landlord.
- 4** Remember email is free. It wasn’t around a bit over a decade ago.
- 5** You can text for free via the internet (eg www.vodafone.ie). Very handy for getting a message out to a group of people.
- 6** If you need to print something, you’ll save anything up to 20% by going green. ‘Changing Ireland’ changed over to vegetable inks and recycled paper last Autumn.
- 7** Bye-bye to paying people mad money to put a few pages of a website together for your organisation. There are companies nowadays offering ready-to-go websites (the layout is pre-set, you just add in your content) for a tenner a year and upwards. Tip – There are free websites too, but they’re a bit of hassle and very basic. Alternatively, set up a blog (a form of mini-website). It’s totally free and much easier than you think.
- 8** Seek out volunteers to support your work. Log onto www.boardmatch.ie or have a think with your colleagues and make a few calls.

These are ‘Changing Ireland’s ideas. More ideas welcome. Please leave your comments/suggestions at: www.changingireland.blogspot.com

A half-day on ‘getting more from less’

The Wheel has held seminars/workshops in Cork, Sligo and Limerick to support local Community and Voluntary groups as they face into “the greatest economic upheaval in a generation.”

Further half-day seminars are planned for Athlone, Tullamore, Dublin and Dundalk between September and November.

‘Changing Ireland’ sat in on one seminar and would highly recommend it to others.

“There are no magic wands, but the workshop introduced a financial survival toolkit, and recommend options, techniques and tools to minimise or avoid the effects of a decline in public, private or voluntary financial support,” say the organisers.

Previous participants talk about their experiences on video at: <http://blip.tv/file/1925590/>

There is a cost of between €45 and €80. For more info, contact The Wheel.

T: 01-454-8727. W: www.wheel.ie/events

Where will we end up? - some positives are on the way

There are 25,000 non-profit organisations in the Republic of Ireland and for those that survive the years ahead, they can look forward to the following positives to the downturn:

- Greater independence, creativity.
- Becoming closer to people.
- Becoming clearer on our roles.
- Finding new depth, values and leadership.
- We’ll start using more appropriate language and less of the alienating lingo that swamps newcomers to Community and Voluntary work.
- We’ll find new income sources.

Source: adapted from a presentation given by Joe McKenna (www.ventureadvancement.ie)

25 tips from a funder

You can get ‘25 Tips for Fundraising in Tough Times’, a PDF download from The Ireland Funds. Note: You are asked online to give your organisation’s name and email address prior to downloading.

Download the 13-page document from: www.irfunds.org

Long live Planet Earth!

Planet Earth is benefiting from the easing off of industrial output and the decline in fossil-fuel use. The ESB has more power than it knows what to do with at the moment.

In fact, the downturn/depression offers humanity its best chance to date of surviving climate change.

The world’s leading male politicians would never have agreed a deal to reduce pollution (economic output) and stuck to it.



*Positives are
on the way!*

CROSS BORDER GRANTS

“There seemed to be a stronger commitment to community and voluntary activity than down south.”



CROSS-BORDER VISITS RAISE MANY QUESTIONS

By Gearóid Fitzgibbon

‘Changing Ireland’s Gearóid Fitzgibbon reports on a recent study trip to Belfast by community sector workers, students of UCC’s Applied Social Science Masters in Third Sector Management:

There’s plenty of funding (despite the downturn) for initiatives linking southern groups with northern communities.

Our UCC study programme took advantage of this and earlier this year we visited a mix of state agencies and community groups from both sides of the divide in Belfast.

Our group visited INTERCOMM, where representatives of nationalist and unionist communities, former enemies, explained how they now worked together to diffuse conflicts that arise in flash points all over the city.

60 MILES OF WALLS SEPARATE COMMUNITIES

While the political leaders are working together, the communities in ways are more divided than ever, with over 30 so-called “interface areas” and over 60 miles of walls separating the catholic and protestant.

Among the highlights of our trip was a reception by Belfast’s Lord Mayor Tom Hartley. We also received brief presentations on: urban regeneration (with Cliftonville Regeneration Project), conflict resolution (by Belfast Interface Project), and community development (by Sammy Douglas of East Belfast Development Association).

“While the political leaders are working together, the communities in ways are more divided than ever.”

FORMER ‘TERRORISTS’ ARE OFTEN LEADERS

Of note, the divide and the conflict have produced a society with a complex dynamic. The people whom elements of Dublin and London society called ‘terrorists’, are in many cases prominent community leaders and elected representatives.

We found West Belfast was very vibrant, with large number of community initiatives. Irish is spoken on the Falls road, where Ireland’s only urban Gaeltacht is growing day by day. The impression gained was that there seemed to be a stronger commitment to community and voluntary activity than down south, and that this was connected to the political background to the conflict.

A BOUNTY OF STAFF AND RESOURCES

Recent years has seen large amounts of investment pour in and some organisations seem to have an almost embarrassing bounty of staff and resources. One wondered could these be better used at ground level. For example, Northern Ireland has both a Community and Voluntary Association (NICVA) and a separate organisation to network CEOs of third sector groups (CO3).

During our tour, we also made the most of the night life, sampling the Crown, the co-operative pub The John Hewitt, the Anderstown Club, and the Felon’s Club. The groups we had met gave great perspective to late night debates over questions such as:

- “We’re all committed to changing things. Why then don’t we feel anything is actually changing?”

- “Have we all lost our critical commitment down south, been softened by social partnership?”

Fun nights were had!

MURALS SAY LESS NOW

The group met famous mural artist Danny Devenny who spoke of how, in the midst of censorship, the murals fitted into the local oral culture by igniting and maintaining the local narrative. Today, they continue to play a part, despite attempts by the Arts Office to “re-image” and commission “neutral” murals of George Best and sunflowers.

DECOMMISSIONING ATTITUDES

However, as the recent riots and bomb scares have demonstrated, though the guns are decommissioned, the ideology of conflict keeps the mindset of conflict in commission. It was a point of debate among the study group whether some of museums and monuments in the nationalists community were about remembering their struggle or served to justify the role of armed conflict as a political tool to a younger generation.

For community groups in the south, making links with loyalist communities can play an important role in building peace and trust. Causeway Youth provide sponsorship for youth exchanges, while Co-operation provides support for relationship building with broader range of civic, community and youth groups.

MORE INFORMATION

The study visit was organised by Dr. Feilim O’hadhmaill, course co-ordinator of UCC’s Applied Social Science Masters in Third Sector Management, a two-year, part-time course.

There are almost 25 students on the course, each of whom work in areas such as adult education, Family Resource Centres, addiction counselling, homelessness, community and youth work, housing, mental health, and Garda youth diversion projects.

For information on funding cross-border initiatives, contact:

www.cooperationireland.org/ and
www.causewayyouth.org/

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING FOR A COMMUNITY WORKER...

“The most important thing for a community worker is to have people skills, to go and communicate, knock on doors, not just be stuck in an office,” says Avila Kilmurray, Director of the Community Foundation Northern Ireland (CFNI), an independent grant making trust.

Avila made the comments during our visit to Belfast and there was a refreshing lack of jargon in her presentation, which some attributed to the CFNI being a non-government, self-funded organisation.

According to Avila, “Community Development has been colonised by the language of the corporate sector and by statutory bodies, leading to a disempowering of people.”

She said the professionalisation of community work has not always been beneficial. She pointed out how many community and neighbourhood groups folded up when the paid community worker arrived.

If workers spend most of their time filling in forms, then Community Development becomes “how good you are at governance” and community groups end up fundraising just to maintain their worker!

In this situation, the task of community development is almost to go back to the basics, to repair this damage, and do basic community development training.

NEW RESEARCH ON SOCIAL CAPITAL

The Community Foundation Northern Ireland has just released new research on Social Capital (aka Social Assets). The research argues that attention should be paid to such assets since they are pivotal in assisting the development of even the most deprived local communities.

The report defines Social Assets as “networks of relationships within and between communities together with the level and effectiveness of community organisations in particular areas.”

A full copy or summary of this report can be downloaded from: www.communityfoundationni.org

**For more information, contact Kat Healy at the Foundation.
T: 028-71-371 547.
E: khealy@communityfoundationni.org**

LETTERS

46, Sandyhill Gardens,
Ballymun.
Dublin 11
Tel. 01-6585919

OLDER BALLYMUN VOLUNTEER SEEKS YOUNG ONES

To the Editor,

I found a copy of ‘Changing Ireland’ (Issue 28) and like Nick Murphy, I too started on a C.E. scheme. It was an award scheme for older people and I couldn’t believe the talent and commitment out there.

All older people needed were motivation and encouragement. They were willing to do most of the work themselves. The project was quite successful for years and when I turned 66 and was forced to retire I continued on with my group of volunteers.

We now have a very active group called Active Living Ballymun and have quite a lot of activities, from computer classes, arts and crafts to bowling and dancing.

Just one snag but it’s a huge one. We are all getting older and we need help. Not with the office procedure, we can handle that, but with the games.

Age and Opportunity do a training workshop called PALS but we need some younger people willing to do this training and come to help us. With all the cut backs I’m not sure where to go with this, hence this letter. Can you help?

[Ed – Can readers with suggestions contact Ellen]

We need volunteers to help with the Tai-Chi, Social Walk, Petanque (a type of French boules) in the Albert College Park, and any other outdoor activities during the summer months. As our funding has suffered the dreaded cut-backs this would mainly be volunteer help and if some young people intended to take up a career in physical training or coaching we could be a good match.

Congratulations again on your Issue 28, Spring ’09 edition, it was a very good read.

*Ellen Reddin,
Active Living Ballymun,
Dublin*

* The author requested to stay anonymous.

UNPRINCIPLED DEMANDS

Dear Editor

In the recent code of practice sent to all Community Development Projects by the Dept CRAGA, it states one of the core principles of community development is empowering and building the capacity of local people to run and manage their own projects.

All projects have been informed by the Department of CRGA that they have to get charitable status. Within the same code of practice it also states that when a project applies for charitable status that no worker in a project can be a director or be on the management committee of another project.

I am one of the people that this directly affects.

The project I am a member of has spent time and commitment mentoring me to become an effective member of my community. Through that support I went to university and got a diploma in community development and then proceeded to get a job as a development worker in another project.

Is the Department telling me now that I can no longer volunteer in the project in my own area and in doing so am I being discriminated against?

I love volunteering in my local area and enjoy most of all seeing the good work done by the project. I would hope that the Department will see sense and take this matter up with the relevant bodies so that those of us who still have so much to give to our local areas can continue to do so in the future.

*Yours sincerely,
Voluntary Member Board of Management.*

DEPT. REPLY: A spokesman for the Department confirmed that a worker from one Project cannot be a director of that or any other Project under Company Law requirements for companies having charitable status with the Revenue Commissioners. There is no restriction on voluntary memberships of a sub-committee of a board and the Department is supportive of and actively encourages volunteering in the Community.

NEWSFLASH!
HELPLINE DOWN
(temporarily)



Horace is An Bord Snip's First Victim

Apologies but Horace McDermott our intrepid Agony Uncle (well not so much agony as serious discomfort) is unavailable this issue. Meanwhile, our many regular callers to the 'Help Me Horace!' helpline have been left without their usual service and we apologise profusely.

It's all as a result of the recently published Bord Snip Nua report, because Horace is now working 24/7 to bring legal proceedings against the Government for theft of intellectual copyright theft and wrongful dismissal.

He contends that when he worked as a fresh-faced (albeit faceless) bureaucrat in the Dept of Social Community, and Family Affairs, he put forward a range of cost-cutting measures that landed him in trouble and ended his fledgling career in the civil service. (cf Issues 1 and 2 of Changing Ireland).

Horace's proposals were to:

Disperse socially excluded people by moving them out of disadvantaged areas, thereby stopping these areas being labelled disadvantaged and thus saving on the need for RAPID, CDPs, FRCs, Area-Based Partnerships and a host of other superfluous programmes.

Put all Social Welfare recipients in hostels, feed them on cheap chips and give them €19 a week for cigarettes in direct provision in line with "international" best practice. The early deaths from smoking and poor nutrition would save on pensions, etc.

Locate the hostels on the Blaskets and the other islands around the coast. That'd kill two birds with one stone as it'd repopulate the islands and regenerate the Gaeltacht.

Revitalise the Irish language in a very cost effective way by broadcasting only TG4 (without sub-titles) onto the island TVs forcing people to learn Irish or be bored to death.

Put the now-empty houses in the formerly disadvantaged areas on the market, selling them at affordable prices. This would have solved the housing crisis without fuelling the property boom.

Now 8 years later, An Bord Snip Nua have stolen many of Horace's radical proposals and gone even further. But, instead of being castigated by Government, as Horace was, the Cabinet is considering how to implement them.

Horace has been found to be a man ahead of his time; however, if the Programme gets savaged he will become a man with a lot of time ahead of him.

We in 'Changing Ireland' are quite alarmed by Horace's deteriorating mental health. He was last seen waving his union card in the air at a SIPTU campaign meeting while quoting the great Scottish hero Mel Gibson from the film 'Braveheart' - "They may take away our funding but they can never take away our FREEEEDOM!"

NEWS

SIPTU campaign prompts U-turn on CE cuts

Workers and community volunteers led by SIPTU mounted a successful campaign in June to have cuts to Community Employment Schemes reversed. €10m was due to be cut, at a time of rising unemployment, when the schemes needed to be expanded if anything. Thankfully, the CE schemes will survive for now. **There is a link to the full story on our blog: www.changingireland.blogspot.com**

Govt commits to a Volunteer Corps

The Government, on July 21st, said it will implement three of the ideas suggested by citizens relating to Community and Voluntary activity. Two of those are:

1. Create a new Volunteer Corps to engage the unemployed in community and voluntary work in Ireland and internationally, without losing their unemployment benefits.

2. Build capacity and awareness in community and voluntary groups to enable them to 'employ' volunteers effectively.

For more, visit: www.ideascampaign.ie

'Examiner' accepts it wronged community - A win for Moyross and for all disadvantaged communities

'Changing Ireland' works behind the scenes in a number of areas and in recent months we scored a victory against the mainstream media on behalf of disadvantaged communities across Ireland.

Moyross was maligned by the media in March and for the first time, on behalf of the community, we decided to pursue those responsible.

We wanted to show that communities, and especially disadvantaged ones, have both the right and ability to protect a community's name from exaggeration and false media reporting.

We succeeded in getting the 'Irish Examiner' - through a complaint processed by the Press Ombudsman - to make amends to the community for an exaggerated report published on March 21st. It published corrections online and in print in May.

We also brought a case to the Broadcasting Complaints Commission concerning exaggerated reporting on the Gerry Ryan Show. The Commission delayed beyond the norm in replying, denied the validity of evidence on the ground and eventually sided with the broadcaster. http://www.bcc.ie/decisions/jun_09_decisions.html

In winning one case and causing a stir with another - both cases incidentally taken in relation to a single week's coverage of the community here - we've proven that yes, communities can take action to get the media to follow professional and ethical journalistic practices.

Our website: www.changingireland.ie



Our blog: changingireland.blogspot.com

Our work:
leading by example

Our News

In recent months, 'Changing Ireland' has:

- Scored a win for disadvantaged communities who are often slandered in the mainstream media. We brought a case to the Press Ombudsman and won.
- Set up a blogspot for the magazine, moved into video and expanded our website.
- With CDP management backing, we worked with the National Community Development Forum, the new national body for CDPs, advising the members on communications.
- Worked with projects in Wexford in planning the delivery of free media skills training to CDPs in the county.
- Worked with the Journalism Department in the University of Limerick to deliver free media skills training to volunteers and workers in communities across the city.

We also:

- Supported adult volunteers to work in 'Changing Ireland's office.
- Took part in an exhibition mounted by the Cork Traveller Visibility Group.
- Cuts costs in line with every other CDP.

Finally, we've continued, since our 'green' issue last year, to publish our magazine using vegetable inks on recycled paper and we remain the greenest national magazine in Ireland today.



Home FRIDAY, JULY 31, 2009

Welcome to the 'Changing Ireland' NEWS BLOG
Always keeping you up to date on Community & Voluntary sector news.

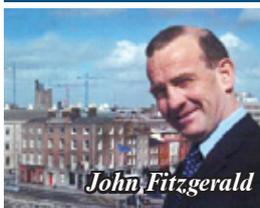
NEWSFEED
Department of Community, Equality and Local Government
Volunteer Centres Ireland
Changing Ireland

The Celtic Tiger never goes to bed
The Corkman ... pages has put forward recommendations for cut backs in rural areas, including the abolition of the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.

Community spirit is alive and well in Ireland, according to a report by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) that makes minced meat of the widely held view that community spirit and volunteering declined during the boom years.

Philanthropic body backs ERA

Atlantic Philanthropies has urged the Government "to reverse the damage done" to Ireland's equality infrastructure by "quickly restoring critical funds for human rights agencies now." Atlantic criticised the treatment of the Equality Authority and the Human Rights Commission and backed the campaign by the Equality and Rights Alliance. For more: www.atlanticphilanthropies.org or www.ericampaign.org



John Fitzgerald

2009: Kids on a conveyor belt to criminality

A National Housing Conference in Sligo in April heard that vulnerable children in Limerick "are on a conveyor belt to criminality" unless there was intervention to deal with the root causes of the city's social problems. Former Dublin city manager John Fitzgerald, who chairs the two State regeneration agencies in Limerick, said intervention would avoid "stupid, unnecessary expenditure into the future".

For more, read about Tenants First's solutions to our problems on page 21. Their full report is online at: www.stmichaelsstate.ie or www.dicp.ie



A delegation from the National Community Development Forum

A delegation from the National Community Development Forum with Minister Eamon O'Cuiv, in Galway, at one of the new body's first meetings over cutbacks to the Programme.

CDPS SET UP STRONG NATIONAL BODY

Community Development Projects are now represented directly by a national body set up in recent months by volunteers and workers. It is timely as the economic crisis has started to hit disadvantaged communities hardest.

The new body is called the 'National Community Development Forum' and it has the full backing of CDPs in the Community Development Programme.

A study launched in May found 99% of projects wanted a national office to represent their communities' interests. Government support was not forthcoming and the projects have now organised themselves.

The new body had a precursor which, in April, highlighted the rise towards 50% unemployment rates in the poorest parts of the country and called for a national response.

The chairperson is Seamus Murphy, a volunteer from Dundalk.

The NCDF is working with SIPTU on a campaign that will culminate in a national day of protest by communities on September 30th.

The new body invites people to participate and has a web presence at:

www.nationalcdf.blogspot.com

Community work:

Good practice promoted

Community workers (aka Community Development workers) consider themselves professionals. However, it is only this year that minimum professional standards are being agreed and promoted.

As with any other profession - from dentistry to policing - the idea of having professional standards is a basic one.

Now, there are recognised values and principles that underpin community work and what can be expected of community workers and others using community work approaches.

A report on this subject lists the key principles, expectations and ethical boundaries relating to professional practice.

'Towards Standards for Quality Community Work: An All Ireland Statement of Values, Principles and Work Standards' has been promoted around the country through workshops and has been very well received. The workshops - run by the Community Workers' Co-op - ended with a national seminar in Dublin in June which sought to "frame local experiences in an analysis of the intersection of democracy, governance and social exclusion."

We're not quite sure what that means, but it makes the right noise. One thing that professional Community Development workers will have to cop onto is the use of lingo. Apparently, we'll get better at using ('employing'?) words as one of the positive outcomes to the recession/depression. Don't believe us - read about the other positives on pages 11 and 15.

The 'Standards' document was written by a group from across the Community Sector and from throughout the island of Ireland. It's actually a very important piece of work and a mind-opener for people working in Communities.

To get a copy of the 'Standards' document, visit: www.cwc.ie among others.

Consultants hired to study Programmes

A review by a private company called the 'Centre for Effective Services' is awaited by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (DCRGA).

The review aims in the first phase to investigate the international evidence base about 'what works' in community development programmes, to benchmark the LDSIP and CDP against the findings and make recommendations where appropriate.

The review is into the effectiveness of the Local Development Social Inclusion Programme (LDSIP) and the Community Development Programme (CDP).

The CES is funded by Atlantic Philanthropies, the Office for the Minister for Children, and DCRGA. Atlantic Philanthropies has committed a budget of €5.2 million to the project between now and 2013 and the CES states that "this will be matched by Irish government funds."

It is believed that the CES is working to a deadline.

The CES is unlikely to meet community groups on the ground or the local people they support during the first phase research, as this phase is mainly office-based. The CES is, nonetheless, due to meet with the National Community Development Forum, the national body for CDPs, at the NCDF's request. Further meetings with stakeholders including CDPs are anticipated as the Review moves into its second phase which is to implement recommendations flowing from the first phase.

The CES describes itself as "a partnership between government and philanthropy to promote evidence-based policy and practice in child, family and community services across the island of Ireland."

It states it aims to "support service providers in accessing expert advice when they need it and assist them in developing the technical, scientific and organisational capacity..."

For more, visit: www.effectiveservices.org

Books to Borrow Buy or Win!



'One Wild Life: A Journey to Discover People Who Change Our World'

For 11 months, Clare Mulvaney from Dublin travelled the world documenting the stories of those who try to change it at grassroots level.

The book reads as a who's who of social entrepreneurship in Ireland today but also tells stories of people who rise to challenges around the world. If you're engaged in community work, this is definitely one for you.

And what inspired 31-year-old Clare? A message on a fridge-magnet that read: "Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it."

Ruairi McKiernan, founder of Community Creations and

www.spunout.ie, was one of dozens of people Clare interviewed. Here's Ruairi:

"When I first started out I had a relentless drive for change and I suppose the energy, ideas and enthusiasm of being in my mid twenties - without an office or an income - was the best advantage I could have possibly had. I couldn't have foreseen the zillion barriers I've since come up against. I think therein lies the power of resourcing young people - they have less baggage and will kick down walls with gusto."

Ruairi later told Clare about being baton-charged by police at a meeting of the World Economic Forum.

'One Wild Life' is making a mark internationally:

"The dizzying array of reasons these people became committed change-makers kept me hungrily turning pages for more," says London-based Social Enterprise Magazine'.

Clare's book is as much a travel-diary as a book of social enquiry, documenting her highs and lows as she travels from India to Kenya and dozens of countries in between to track down people who are changing the world.

She doesn't pass off being pick-pocketed by hungry children in Mozambique as a reason not to return. Rather the opposite, since Clare used to work with children who left school early in Ireland.

She eloquently, and without crying over the lost wallet, describes the dreadful life-chances facing children in Mozambique. She just didn't expect them to be drunk.

'One Wild Life' provides a wide-open window into the lives of people living in poverty and those working in solidarity with them around the world.

You'll get a better feel for life on the streets through Clare's book and more inspiration to visit those streets than you're likely to get on a degree course in 'Development Studies'.

And by following her dream, Clare has now probably become one of the people she set out to meet.

You can win a copy of the book by answering a simple question in the competitions section at www.spunout.ie:

What do you want to do to make a difference in your lifetime?

'One Wild Life' is available in all good bookstores.



'The Spirit Level: Why More Equal Societies Almost Always Do Better'

This non-fiction best-seller by Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett shows that more unequal societies are bad for almost everyone - rich as well as poor.

A ground-breaking book, it is based on 30 years research and opens up a major new approach to improving our health, happiness and environmental sustainability.

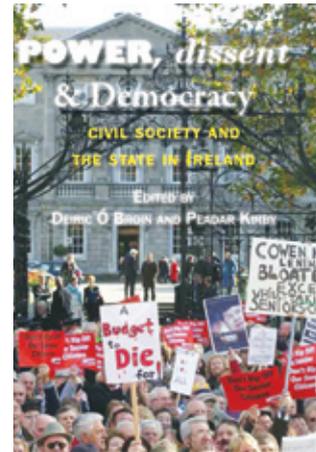
It demonstrates that achieving greater income equality is the key to addressing our social ills and improving quality of life for everyone.

The 352-page book has become a top 20 Amazon bestseller and it's been reviewed in dozens of publications including the Guardian, Sunday Times, New Statesman, Newsweek, the Irish Times and Irish Independent.

"This is a book with a big idea, big enough to change political thinking," said John Carey, Sunday Times.

"It is a sweeping claim, yet the evidence, here painstakingly marshalled, is hard to dispute" admitted The Economist.

'Power, Dissent and Democracy: Civil Society and the State in Ireland'



This timely book assembles key experts who provide an analysis of the state of civil society in Ireland today.

In particular, they subject state discourses on 'active citizenship' and 'social

capital' to a badly needed critical review. It is edited by Deiric O'Broin and Peadar Kirby.

The authors note: "Ireland is a deeply divided society at a point of transition. There is a sense of malaise at the direction taken over the past decades. Some people look to civil society to develop a new national social project, to lay the foundations of greater justice, equality and sustainability."

The book fills a gap in the literature on contemporary Irish civil society and should attract a wide readership among both concerned citizens and students on third-level courses.

The contributors include Mark Garavan, Peadar Kirby, Mary Murphy and Fred Powell, among others. The contributions come from Dublin, Galway, Cork, Limerick and beyond.

'Power, Dissent and Democracy: Civil Society and the State in Ireland' is for sale priced €20. The 200-pager is published by A&A Farmar.

RESOURCE SECTION - 33 TIPS FOR SUPPORTING FAMILIES OF PRISONERS

WHAT IS CASP?

Clondalkin Addiction Support Programme (CASP) is a community based addiction treatment service which was founded in 1995. It takes a Community Development approach to its work and was set up by members of the local community in response to the high usage of illegal drugs in the area. From its initial home in Quarryvale Co-operative and Quarryvale Community Centre, CASP developed a range of programmes focussing on the broad range of individuals affected by addiction. The project also supports the families of prisoners.

CASP provides a holistic community based service focusing on the physical, psychological, social and spiritual needs of drug users and their families in North Clondalkin. The service is open from 9.30am to 9pm five days a week, and on Saturday and Sunday mornings for medication. It has its offices on the Fonthill Road.

For more info, or to contact Sharon at CASP. T: 01-6166750. E: comdev@casp.ie W: www.casp.ie



By Sharon Harty



Some partners can be living in dread of their loved ones or partners being sent to prison. For others it comes as a complete shock. For some it isn't a new experience.

But if it happens to you, or you know someone going through it for the first time, these are a few things to take onboard. This advice-sheet was written by Sharon Harty of CASP with the aim of informing our readers - particularly people in local community and family support groups - who find themselves face-to-face with someone whose partner, or in rare cases a child, has been sent to prison.

Doing what's best for the children:

1. Many arrests take place in the home. This can be very traumatic, especially if children are present.
2. Older children may be just as traumatized, especially when their friends get to hear about it.
3. Children may worry about where their parent(s) are. Will s/he be coming back, etc? They may also feel they are in some way responsible. If some of these fears can be dispelled, then the child(ren) will be happier and more content.
4. Make time to listen to children, allow them to ask questions and make time for tears and anger.
5. Their opinions should not be ignored.
6. Be honest and open.
7. Share your own feelings. Don't exclude them by saying nothing.
8. Seek advice - contact local family support / youth services.
9. It is usually better to tell them the truth.
10. Some effects children may encounter include the children becoming babyish, fretful, clingy, isolated, anxious, attention seeking or aggressive.

11. Some children however may be perfectly comfortable with the facts of imprisonment.
12. Mothers with partners in prison can be tempted to compensate their children for the loss of their father by spending more than they can afford on birthdays and Christmas.
13. However, some women may feel they are better at managing money without their partner, especially if their partner had an alcohol or drug problem.

Children Visiting the Prison:

14. If you do decide to take children, it is a good idea to prepare them for being searched by practicing 'standing like a tree'.
15. Pre-visit behavior can include sickness, irritability, excessive quietness or over excitement.
16. Go to the toilet or get a drink so that a teenage visitor gets time alone with their parent.
17. Don't force the young person to come on the visit.
18. They can write letters. There's no email.

Maintaining Family Life:

19. When a partner enters prison, the family becomes a one parent family and must adapt to a new way of life. It can be felt that the prisoner is powerless to solve these problems from inside the prison.
20. The first visit or two may feel overwhelming because you will have so many practical things to talk through.
21. However, there can be comfort in looking forward to the visits. They can be the high point of the week for prisoners. Good visits can sustain both partners.
22. Undoubtedly, some couples will run into difficulties. Maybe the partner did not know about their partner's activities before being convicted.

Shame and Guilt:

23. For some families, the nature of the offence is a source of shame.
24. Some women partners feel a great sense of guilt, as if the offence was somehow their fault.
25. Other families report being harassed by neighbours. Keep a record of dates and events - useful if you need to call in the Gardai or the local authority.
26. It is normal for family members of people in prison to feel angry, let down, disappointed and ashamed. These feelings are normal and family members are not guilty - no matter what other people think.

Practical Issues:

27. After the shock of the guilty verdict, family members may be faced with other issues such as money problems and transport to the prison.
28. In most cases, the prisoner's solicitor will be able to pass on information to families regarding which prison s/he is being sent to.
29. The first visit to the prison can be worrying and frightening. All visitors including children and babies will be searched.
30. The presence of the drug detection dog can be used as a reason for a visitor to refuse to carry in drugs for a prisoner.
31. If you are feeling lost and need to talk to someone, it can be tempting to discuss your worries with the partner of another prisoner, but it may get back to your partner, perhaps being misinterpreted along the way.
32. It can be helpful to speak to someone outside the family.
33. You could ask to speak to the welfare services attached to the specific prison you are visiting. In the Dublin region, there are a number of prison links workers whose contact details are available through the Local Drug Task Forces. Local community development initiatives or family support services may also be able to offer support.

Further advice in print and on the web

A much fuller, unedited advice sheet from Sharon is published in the Resources Section of our website and it explains the dos and don'ts in a much more comprehensive way. Log onto: www.changingireland.ie/resources.html

In addition, CASP have developed an information booklet for parents, partners and family members of people in prison which includes common questions about the prison system and how it operates. Please phone CASP: 01 6166750 for copies.



www.changingireland.ie



Click on image above to play series in order, or select a single topic from menu on right

Visiting Prison : Some Tips

- [What is CASP?](#)
- [What to expect on your first visit](#)
- [Do you tell the kids that their parent is in jail?](#)
- [How adults and kids react differently to prison visits](#)
- [What if a teenage child refuses to visit the prison?](#)
- [Preparing a child for their first visit to prison](#)
- [Do you spoil the kids to compensate?](#)
- [Who can accompany kids on prison visits?](#)
- [What if you're asked to smuggle drugs into prison?](#)
- [Do you tell the prisoner bad news?](#)
- [What if the prisoner is suicidal?](#)

Over 1000 view our prison tips on youtube

CASP's Sharon Harty and 'Changing Ireland' editor Allen Meagher teamed up to produce a series of short video clips repeating the advice published here on youtube.com

Not everyone reads 'Changing Ireland' and video can inform people with low literacy skills. And there was nothing on the internet anywhere giving advice on film to families of prisoners.

With no publicity, our series has attracted just over 1000 viewers in a short time. Until we linked the 11 videos into a series, we had beaten Amy Winehouse into second place when you searched for "prison visits" on youtube.

For volunteers, activists and community workers seeking comprehensive advice, Sharon's full-length, unedited advice sheet is published online on: www.changingireland.ie/resources.html

DIY community broadcasting in a day (or two!)

Can't get RTE around to film your family fun day/childcare cuts protest/community bookshop launch? Who cares!

RTE only broadcast something once, whereas with Youtube it's broadcast for as long as you like. And you decide what's broadcast. It's easier than you might think. You might have the latest fancy mobile phone in your pocket, or have a €150 camera at home. At the very least a friend has one. That's a film crew you have to hand!

Shooting the film is as easy as hitting the right button twice (once to start filming, a second time to stop) and hey, presto!

You've filmed your event, maybe you even interviewed some people.

Now for the supposedly scary bit – the technology. Presuming you have a computer, you need to:

Register with Youtube. It takes from 5 minutes to half-an-hour (depending on how comfortable you are with computers).

Check have you a camera-card-reader. If not, walk by any fancy electrical store and head straight for a discount store such as Euroshop. You'll get a card-reader for €2. You might pick up a five-inch high camera stand for another €2 while you're there.

Connect the card-reader to the computer, stick the card in, then upload the film file onto Youtube.

Like learning anything new, you'll get the hang of it after the first or second time. Once you're done, email and text everyone you know about your upload and ask them to add comments.

Ireland's Community spirit is alive and well!

- CSO says 2 out of 3 regularly engage in volunteering /community activities

Community spirit is alive and well in Ireland, according to a report by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) that makes minced meat of the widely held view that community spirit and volunteering declined during the boom years.

The report echoes views expressed to 'Changing Ireland' last year by a Volunteer Centres Ireland spokesperson saying volunteering had not gone into decline.

The CSO statistics show, on average, almost two-thirds of people in the Republic of Ireland regularly took part in voluntary or community activities.

Nonetheless, there remains a crisis in community participation levels in disadvantaged areas, particularly among those with low education, the unemployed, people in poor health, immigrants and older people.

Irish Times journalist Carl O'Brien reports



that "community ties seem particularly healthy" and says the CSO figures challenge the belief that the boom years eroded community spirit.

For web links to Carl's July 30th report and an editorial in the Irish Times, go to our blog at:

www.changingireland.blogspot.com

Irish Rural Link says cuts report is "sinister"

Irish Rural Link (IRL) has published a 27-page critique of Bord Snip's "sinister" proposals.

The 300-member organisation says one of the report's main weaknesses is that it "hides the fact that cuts across a number of departments may impact on the same individual."

Two-thirds of Ireland's poor live in rural Ireland.

IRL said Bord Snip showed "disregard" for community groups, adding that "the lack of consideration for the community and voluntary element of work countering social exclusion is one of the most sinister underlying themes."

IRL's board is seeking a meeting with the Taoiseach and Minister for Finance as soon as possible.

For more details and for a link to the report, visit:

www.changingireland.blogspot.com

Volunteers in our midst!

Pictured are volunteers Gearoid Fitzgibbon, a reporter with 'Changing Ireland' who was with us for three weeks in June and Breege Moynihan who is currently with us. 'Changing Ireland' has opened its doors to supporters who have volunteered with the project in recent months. Gearoid has now moved abroad, to Palestine, where he will continue to work as a volunteer, on a 3-month placement with an NGO in the West Bank.

