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WORLD RURAL WOMEN'S DAY

Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network (NIRWN) in partnership with Mid Ulster Women's Network this year helped celebrate World Rural Women's Day locally. Delegates travelled from all over the Province to The Marina Centre, Ballyronan, to enjoy the event.

Speaking at the event, Siobhan Doherty, NIRWN Co-Ordinator said, "This is an important date in the calendar for rural women. Last year the UN General Assembly declared that 15 October be recognised as 'International Day of Rural Women', which means that this is now a United Nations Resolution Day. As a consequence UN Member States are called to officially mark the Day in their respective countries. This then allows rural women the opportunity to ask our government what it is doing to address their right to development, to acknowledge their contributions and help improve their conditions."

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Elaine Devlin, Co-Ordinator with Mid-Ulster Women's Network went on to say "This day was set aside as a practical way of obtaining recognition and support for the multiple roles of rural women. We had a consultation today on the role of a Rural Champion, which is important to allow rural women's voices to be taken into account by the Department of Agriculture & Rural Development in defining what this might mean for rural communities. Over 120 rural women had the opportunity to have their say in how this role might be developed."

Minister of Agriculture & Rural Development Michelle Gildernew MP MLA has recognised the contribution women make to the economy, community and rural life on World Rural Women's Day.

World Rural Women's Day provides recognition and support for the multiple roles of rural women who make up more than a quarter of the world population. From the school run to calving, from running a farm based business to looking after family members, women are increasingly at the centre of life in rural areas.

The Minister said: "The vital contribution that rural women make to society can often go unnoticed. World Rural Women's Day gives us the opportunity to stop and think about the crucial role that women play in rural life. It allows us to recognise and to show our support for the multiple roles played by rural women, as family members and as farmers and entrepreneurs."



Members of Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network and Mid-Ulster Women's Network at World Rural Women's Day in Ballyronan

The event heard speakers talk about issues important to rural women. Anita Kelly, Energy Efficiency Officer for Ballymoney, Coleraine and Moyle Council areas, spoke about energy efficiency and how people can take proactive steps to ensure their homes are as energy efficient as possible. She also outlined some of the grants available to make changes to the home to improve efficiency levels. Valerie Buchanan from Drumboughil Community Association spoke of the work she and her group does in the local community to help women develop their skills and activities to promote their physical and mental wellbeing. Ailish Scott from the Foster Team in the Northern Board made a call for people interested in fostering to come forward as there is a shortage in the numbers of people involved in this important support service for children.

A number of issues were presented on the day with rural women agreeing that there seems to be an erosion of services in rural areas. Rural primary schools, post offices, hospitals – all essential services for rural women are being closed. Many fear that there will be nothing left for the next generation if there is no action to look at the sustainability of the rural way of life. Rural women's activities have been the backbone of rural community life, in terms of supporting farming and families and preserving the social capital of communities. This activity has often been viewed as a secondary activity which is not recognised or valued at the decision making or policy level. Rural women feel the need to have a voice and this was very clear by the numbers attending today's event.

LAUNCH OF CRUSHÁN MUNIA TRAVELLER GROUP

To celebrate World Rural Women's Day Crushán Munia Traveller Group was formally launched on Monday 6th October in Bessbrook Community Centre.

This event was funded by Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network and South Armagh Women and Family Health Initiative.

Over 90 people attended including travellers from An Munia Tober, Belfast, Tara Education Project Dundalk, Armagh Traveller Support group and many local travellers. They were joined by representatives from statutory organisations, South Armagh Rural Women's Network, other community organisations and local councillors to celebrate the first Traveller group in this area.

The Chairperson of the new group, Kathleen Sheridan, spoke of her pride at being involved in the establishment of the group. Kathleen said **"It is important that travellers locally are given a voice and we welcome the involvement of any travellers interested in achieving this with us. We want to look at issues relevant to travellers' lives whether that is health, education, housing etc and we feel as a group we can do this more effectively"**

Kathleen also called on Travellers locally to give their support to the All Ireland Traveller Health Study, **"This study is the most important thing to happen in travellers' lives for a generation. We all need to be part of it"**

The All Ireland Traveller Health Study commissioned by UCD and funded by the Department of Health is due to begin before Christmas. The study will focus on the health status and health needs of Irish Travellers from all over Ireland and will inform future strategies. Members of Crushán Munia have been trained by University College Dublin as Peer Researchers in the ALL Ireland Study and are looking forward to beginning this very important work soon.

Deputy Mayor of Newry & Mourne District Council, Isaac Hanna, who also attended the event welcomed the establishment of the group and congratulated them on their achievements so far.

NIRWN 's Policy Officer Nora Smith spoke of the role that NIRWN plays in supporting groups of women to come together and champion their communities. Donna Sloan from the Women & Family Health Initiative who support the group and are co-ordinating the All Ireland Health Study for the area wished them every success.



Deputy Mayor of Newry & Mourne District Council Isaac Hanna with members of the Crushán Munia Traveller Group and representatives of NIRWN and South Armagh Women & Family Health Initiative

HALLOWEEN VISIT

Recently NIRWN hosted a Halloween Networking Event in Ballyclare Community Concerns which brought women from the Purple Heather and Orchard Community Groups in County Armagh to Ballyclare where they were entertained by the Evergreens Group.



Enjoying the entertainment in Ballyclare

The visitors were given an interesting talk on the history of Ballyclare and over lunch they were able to chat about their groups and exchange ideas.

After lunch the visitors thoroughly enjoyed an afternoon tea dance

and for those who weren't so energetic they were able to have a walk around the local continental market. An enjoyable day was had by everyone.

SESSIONAL TRAINERS WANTED

NIRWN are seeking to develop a register of community based trainers to deliver capacity building and/or group development training to rural women across Northern Ireland on a self-employed basis. This work requires enthusiastic individuals who can deliver practical training to groups of rural women in their own local community setting in a format that they will relate to.

Previous tutoring experience is essential and CVs should include examples of similar work.

Email CVs to louise@nirwn.org.uk or post to Louise Coyle
Development Officer-Training
NIRWN
15 Molesworth Street
Cookstown

Focus On GET ON BOARD TRAINING

Women and in particular, rural women are currently under-represented in public and political life. NIRWN's aim is to 'amplify and articulate the voices of rural women at strategic level' and one way in which we are currently working towards this is, by supporting women to avail of the 'Get on Board' training course.

What is 'Get on Board'?

'Get on Board' is a short course designed to break down many of the barriers to the appointments process. It is aimed at people who are interested in serving on the boards of public bodies and having their voices heard at strategic level. The course is well recognised, being the only one of its kind in the UK and is supported by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments in Northern Ireland. The course provides participants with a clear understanding of what it takes to be successful both during the appointments process and while serving on a Board.

Past participants

Students who have previously availed of NIRWN supported 'Get on Board' training and NIRWN mentoring are now holding Board positions in a variety of organisations and institutions from 'Community Change', The Livestock and Meat Commission to local DPPs. Helen Wilson who completed the course in Ballyclare commented: *'This course was exactly what I needed to motivate me and give me confidence to apply for a public position. Highly recommend the course'*

What does the course cover?

The course covers the following topics:

- ◆ Understanding the roles & responsibilities of public bodies and board members
- ◆ The appointments process
- ◆ Running effective Board meetings
- ◆ Decision-making
- ◆ Understanding the management of public funds

The Get on Board course is a good mix of theory and practice, for example, one week you might examine a case study and the next be in a Boardroom observing a real life public board meeting. You will study theory and practice, examine case studies observe a real life public board meeting, review the principles of public life, gain an understanding of how the appointments process works and explore what it means to be a board member on a public body in Northern Ireland.

Who is delivering the course?

The course and its content belong to Belfast Metropolitan College and will be delivered by their tutors. NIRWN, in addition, will provide mentoring support for any woman who completes the course.

How long does the course last?

The course lasts for 10 weeks beginning on Monday January 12th - Monday March 9th 2009
Sessions take place from 10.00am – 1.30pm

Where is the course held?

The next course is being held at Fermanagh House, Enniskillen

Is the course accredited?

The course is accredited through the Northern Ireland Open College Network at Level 2.

Are there any entry requirements and how much does the course cost?

There are no entry requirements and the course is FREE.

How do I book a place?

Places are allocated on a first come, first served basis



Some of the participants who have completed the Get on Board Course with Louise Coyle, NIRWN Development Officer (Training)



For further information or to book your place contact Louise Coyle at NIRWN
Tel: 028 86 769191 Mob: 07894291816 Email: louise@nirwn.org.uk

OLDER PEOPLE GET ADVOCATE



Dame Joan Harbison

There's a new voice speaking out for older people in Northern Ireland. The former head of the Equality Commission, Dame Joan Harbison has been appointed as Older People's 'Advocate' with Junior Ministers Gerry Kelly and Jeffrey Donaldson

jointly announcing the appointment. This is an interim measure pending the establishment and appointment of a Commissioner for Older People. Dame Joan will take up the post on Monday 1st December 2008.

Both ministers met with Dame Joan at Parliament Buildings to congratulate her on her appointment, which will run from December 1.

Gerry Kelly said: "Minister Donaldson and I are committed to addressing the issues which affect older people and today's announcement clearly demonstrates that we are delivering on our Programme for Government commitment to provide a strong, independent voice for older people.

"I have no doubt that given Dame Joan's experience and commitment she will make a significant contribution towards tackling those issues which are causing concern for older people. Her appointment is most welcome".

Jeffrey Donaldson added: "This is an important development for all older people in Northern Ireland particularly given the current economic downturn and the problems faced by older people in dealing with rising costs.

"Dame Joan will help us to not only identify and address the current problems faced by all older people but she will also provide us with independent advice on what needs to be done, based on her extensive experience of working with older people and the many age sector organisations."

MAKING CONNECTIONS



Latinoamérica Unida (LAU) is the Latin American Community and Cultural Association for Northern Ireland. The organisation promotes good relations between the rapidly growing Latin American community and its neighbours through events and activities that raise awareness and promote cultural diversity.

They are currently organising 5 session programmes that will take place across rural areas of Northern Ireland to provide women with a better understanding of rural life in Latin America and the relationship with Irish and European rural life.

During the sessions participants will explore and research a topic related to Latin America, e.g. salsa dance, Mexican cookery, poverty, migration etc. Each session will last approximately 2 hours. Refreshments will be provided as well as travel and childcare expenses. When the sessions are completed participants will display their learning at the next International Women's Day event which will be held in March 2009.

If you are interested in participating or you would like further information please contact Rhina on 07753422322 or email: info@latinoamericaunida.com

WRDA CELEBRATES ITS 25TH BIRTHDAY AT AGM

On 21st October the Women's Resource & Development Agency (WRDA) celebrated its joint AGM and 25th Anniversary at the Edge, Belfast. Past and present WRDA Directors came together at the AGM, to celebrate 25 Years of service, which culminated in a timeline presentation of the organisation.

WRDA was started in 1983 with the aim of taking education out into the community during the difficult years of the Troubles but a quarter of a century on, the Agency has developed beyond original expectations and now not only has the group delivered training to local community groups across Northern Ireland, it also runs a successful social economy business, Community Direct.

Margaret Ward, Director of the WRDA, said "This is an important step forward as it enables us to develop our own income so that we can continue to work in communities and help women to access education."

For further details on this event and on the history of WRDA please visit their website at www.wrda.net

NORTHERN IRELAND RURAL WOMEN'S NETWORK

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