



NIRWN NEWS

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NIRWN WINS PRESTIGIOUS AWARD

Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network were awarded the Progressive Award for “Innovative Action With a Particular Regional Impact” at the CFNI Community Awards 2007. The awards were presented by Sarah Brown, wife of Prime Minister Gordon Brown, in a ceremony at the Foundation's Belfast headquarters on Friday 7th December. The Community Awards annually celebrate outstanding achievements of groups and individuals working in the community and voluntary sector.

NIRWN are delighted to be recognised for their innovative work within the rural women's sector. The award was presented to Siobhan Doherty, Co-Ordinator of NIRWN and Mary Duggan, Chair of NIRWN. Speaking at the event Siobhan said “This is a very proud moment for NIRWN. As a relatively new organisation, to be recognised as having such an impact regionally, is just wonderful for us”. She went on to say “Over the past 15 months over one thousand rural women have benefited from NIRWN training, from networking events, group development activities and policy consultation. NIRWN's aim is to articulate and amplify the voices of rural women at a strategic level and to receive an award for regional impact proves that the Organisation is successfully working to this aim”.



l-r Dr Joan Smyth Chairman for Progressive, Prime Minister's wife Sarah Brown, Siobhan Doherty NIRWN, Mary Duggan NIRWN and Mary Black CFNI

NIRWN would also like to congratulate **South Armagh Rural Women's Network** who won the McClure Watters Award for best practice in respect of voluntary financial management. Majella Murphy and Patricia Buckley were at the Community Foundation to collect the award on behalf of the Network.

Each of the award winners received a vase donated by Belleek Pottery in Co Fermanagh. The Community Awards are sponsored by the Progressive Building Society.

GILDERNEW WELCOMES CHILDCARE REPORT

Rural Development Minister Michelle Gildernew MP, MLA has been presented with the Report of the Rural Childcare Stakeholder Group during a visit to Ardboe SureStart. In June 2007 the Minister took the first step towards more accessible childcare for rural families by commissioning a Rural Childcare Stakeholders' Group to take a fresh look at the question of childcare in rural areas.

She said: “I asked the Rural Childcare Stakeholders' Group to identify the main factors affecting access to childcare in rural areas, including special-needs childcare, and consider ways to advance matters.”

The report identifies the main factors that affect access to childcare in rural areas and makes recommendations on how current and future provision can be improved. The minister continued: “I intend to work with my colleagues across the Executive to ensure good quality, accessible and affordable childcare is available in every part of the country. As a starting point, at least 5% of funding of the Quality of Life measure of the new Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 is targeted towards children and young people. In addition I plan to establish a Rural Childcare Programme as part of my department's anti-poverty and social inclusion framework and I expect it to be operational by Autumn 2008”.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2008 – MAKING WORLD CONNECTIONS

Over 120 women, men and children attended a cultural celebration in the Bridewell, Magherafelt recently to celebrate International Women's Day 2008. The event, co-ordinated by Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network, Rural Community Network and the Latinounida America Association, brought all walks of life together under the theme of 'Making World Connections'.

An inspiring collection of objects and photographs were brought along to the event demonstrating just how many connections the people who attended had with other parts of the world. The evening incorporated workshops and culminated in singing and dancing displays from across the globe.

Siobhan Doherty, Co-Ordinator with NIRWN said "I found the event inspiring and fun. We were delighted with the massive turn out and with the diversity of our community represented at the event. Everyone participated in full and even though we thought at one stage we were going to run out of space, participants were allowed the opportunity to discuss their world connections, examine their understanding of our differences and similarities across the world and basically do this to the backdrop of great



Members of Omagh Women's Area Network who displayed some of their handicrafts at the event

cultural entertainment laid on for the night".

Charo Lanao-Madden, Good Relations Officer with Rural Community Network said "The central topic of this event was making connections and that is exactly what happened on the evening".

Sonya Whitfield from Dunganon attended the event and said "I really enjoyed the evening, it was fun learning - we all learned something and we all shared something". Another participant, Caroline Maguire from South Armagh also enjoyed the social event saying "it gave us time to reflect on similarities and differences".



Rasharkin Women's Group who performed their unique style of salsa celtic dance

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY CELEBRATIONS IN GALBALLY



Members of Galbally Women's Group who celebrated International Women's Day in Galbally Community Centre

Galbally women's group with the support of Dolores Mc Nulty and NIRWN came together to organise the celebrations for International Women's day in Galbally Community Centre.

On this, the 100th anniversary of the day 15,000 women marched through the centre of New York demanding shorter hours, better pay and voting rights, the women of Galbally celebrated in style. While they did not march through the centre of Galbally there was a coming together of women to

celebrate all that has been achieved regarding women's equality. Majella Murphy, NIRWN congratulated the group on their many achievements since formation and urged them to continue their good work.

Jacinta Reel from the Women and Family Health Initiative (WFHI) in South Armagh delivered a Capacitar session. Capacitar is a national and international network of empowerment and solidarity based in California. "Capacitar" is a Spanish word meaning to empower, to encourage, to bring each other to life. The session was very well delivered by Jacinta who is an expert in this field. She was supported by Una Walsh chairperson of Women & Family Health Initiative and treasurer South Armagh Rural Women's Network Lunch was provided by Galbally Women's Group and to bring the celebrations to a conclusion Dolores gave a warm thanks to all for coming along.

SECTOR NEWS

LAUNCH OF EDUCATION REPORT AT STORMONT

The Women's Centres' Community Based Education report was launched on 20th February, 2008 in the Long Gallery, Stormont. This report reflects months of collaboration between the community based women's centres, the Women's Centres Regional Partnership (WCRP) and Women's Support Network (WSN) who compiled the report. The launch was hosted by Anna Lo, MLA and Member of the Assembly Committee for Employment and Learning.

The report details how women's community education provision is a key component of Northern Ireland's active and vibrant community learning sector. The local accessibility and diverse range of programmes reach the most disadvantaged communities and provide women, who may have had a prior negative experience of education, a route back into learning. This report further details this vital work and provides an opportunity to hear from the beneficiaries in their own words through personal accounts and case studies. Anna Lo, described Women's Centres' roles in their community as essential and significant. "The women's community based education sector", she said, "is equipping women with skills, knowledge and confidence to become active citizens and motivated employees in Northern Ireland. The women's centres greatly contribute to the elimination of the current barriers to education and training for women, especially in areas of disadvantage".

If you or your organisation would like to receive a copy of the report please contact WSN, 109-113 Royal Avenue, Belfast, BT1 1FF, Tel: 028 9023 6923 or email: info@womenssupportnetwork.org, who have a limited number of hard copies available, as well as CD copies.



L-r Siobhan Doherty (NIRWN), Margaret Logue (Derry Women's Centre), Anna Lo (MLA), Patricia Haren (WSN) and Margaret Ward (WRDA) at the Launch of the Education Report in Stormont

Launch of Women's Centres Regional Partnership 16 April 2008



WCRP is a partnership of the Women's Resource & Development Agency, the Women's Support Network in Belfast, the Women's Centre in Derry and NIRWN. The Women's Centres Regional Partnership (WCRP) brings together centres in the most disadvantaged parts of Northern Ireland. On 16 April Social Development Minister Margaret Ritchie launched their strategic plan - taking the group forward into 2009.



Social Development Minister Margaret Ritchie with the WCRP partners at the Launch

The WCRP works directly with 14 frontline women's organisations including seven in Belfast, four in the North West as well as three serving rural areas. These women's centres offer literally hundreds of courses each year ranging from ICT and Sage Accounts to food hygiene, maths and English skills as well as a wide variety of personal development courses. And while the women are attending the courses, they are able to have their young children cared for in the centre's crèche. For many women it will be their only opportunity to improve their chance of getting a job since leaving school. "This Partnership will be able to effectively articulate the vital importance of childcare and community-based education for

women right across Northern Ireland. It's all about 'joining the dots' so that we are working together as a united force to strengthen the voice of community based women's organisations", said Siobhan Doherty, WCRP Director. "Together we have a stronger voice and together we can work to benefit thousands of women in Northern Ireland", Siobhan added.

Contact details for all of the partners and for WCRP can be found on their website www.wcrp.org.uk or you can contact Tiziana by email: info@wcrp.org.uk or tel: **028 90230212**

NIRWN gives Lecture at Rural College

NIRWN were recently invited to deliver a lecture on 'Rural Women in Northern Ireland' to the Part Time Year 1 MSC Rural Development students at the Rural College, Draperstown.



Rural Development Students at the Rural College

A lively afternoon was spent with the students who participated very enthusiastically with our interactive lecture. In addition to being introduced to NIRWN and our work students also had the opportunity to:

- ♦ consider how much they knew about rural women already;
- ♦ examine a government policy document and consider what the key issues for rural women might be;
- ♦ devise a lobbying campaign strategy to address an issue affecting rural women.

A key theme emerging from the day was that; as rural services are diminished, rural women in their variety of personas: young, elderly, mothers, farmers etc are most at risk from becoming further isolated and disadvantaged.

The Northern Ireland Policing Board Women's Reference Group

The NI Policing Board have set up a number of reference groups to facilitate community engagement including minority ethnic communities, women, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and older people. NIRWN sits on the Women's Reference Group which is comprised of representatives of women's organisations along with members of the Policing Board. It has a number of functions which include:

- ♦ Promoting understanding between the Policing Board, PSNI and the Women's Sector, especially promoting understanding about gender issues.
- ♦ Providing feedback to the Board about the priorities, needs and issues as seen from within the communities.
- ♦ Providing opportunities for the Board to meet with members of the communities and
- ♦ Feeding into the development of the NI Policing Plan.

Having met a number of times the Women's Reference Group has agreed draft Terms of Reference and elected a Chair (May DeSilva Director of Women into Politics) and Vice Chair (Patricia Lyness NI Women's Aid Federation) and has agreed to meet quarterly throughout 2008.

For further information on the Women's Reference Group please contact Siobhan at NIRWN on 028 86769191 or email: siobhan@nirwn.org.uk

NIRWN AGM

NIRWN will be holding their first AGM on **Monday 9th June 2008** from 11am to 1pm in The Linen Green, Dungannon. Anyone interested in attending should contact Paula at 028 86769191 or email paula@nirwn.org.uk



We're on the Web

NIRWN are pleased to announce that we have a new website. You can keep up to date with all our news and events as well as the important issues affecting rural women by logging on to www.nirwn.org.uk

Aware Defeat Depression

Volunteers Needed!

We are looking for volunteers to facilitate support group meetings in your local community and provide information about depression and the work of the organisation. Full training and support provided.

Contact: Pat (Aware Defeat Depression)
10 Clarendon Street
Derry BT48 7ET
Tel: 028 7126 0602
Email: info@aware-ni.org
Web: www.aware-ni.org

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