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NIRWN HOLDS FIRST AGM

NIRWN held their first AGM on Monday 9th June 2008 in the Community Relations Council Building at The Linen Green, Dungannon.

The event, chaired by Margaret Ferguson of Community Change, was well attended and three new directors were welcomed onto the Board, Eileen Drumm from Women Making Waves, Diane Rathfield from Roe Valley Community Education Forum and Anita Mukherjee from Women of the World.



The NIRWN Board of Directors with Vince McKeivitt DARD and Andrea Patterson DSD at the AGM

When the business of the day was complete there was time for a chat over an enjoyable buffet lunch.

NIRWN WELCOMES EXTENSION TO THEIR FUNDING UNTIL OCTOBER 2008

NIRWN have been awarded an extension of their BSP funding through DARD and DSD until the end of October 2008. In the initial funded period NIRWN proved to be a great success. Below are some examples of the results we have achieved:

- ◆ **Networking Events** attended by 919 rural women
- ◆ **Mentoring events** for 101 rural women
- ◆ **Women in decision making** - 13 rural women on decision making Boards
- ◆ **New and existing groups supported** - 23 groups received support from NIRWN Development Officers
- ◆ **Peer support** - 61 rural women received peer support through the Rural Women's Policy Forum
- ◆ **Policy consultations** - 8 consultations completed with 137 rural women having an opportunity to have their voices heard
- ◆ **Training and skills development** - 491 rural women have received training from our Training Development Officer in over 42 separate training events
- ◆ **Lobbying skills** - 6 lobbying skills events with 156 rural women having benefited from training

As the regional sectoral body supporting rural women NIRWN are incredibly proud of their achievements so far and having delivered upon our initial objectives we now look forward to a period where we can look at the needs of the rural women's sector and plan to meet these needs while supporting rural women to have their voices heard.

NIRWN would like to thank all those who participated in their events and training and also to DARD and DSD for their funding and support under the EU BSP programme until the end of June 2008. We look forward to continuing our work under the extension offered.

ENJOYABLE DAY SPENT AT PALACE STABLES, ARMAGH

Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network recently held a Networking Event which brought together women from Tyrone, Armagh and Antrim. The event was organised by NIRWN's outreach workers Edna Walmsley and Majella Murphy who are working in areas of women's low and weak community infrastructure.



Women's groups from Tyrone, Antrim and Armagh who had an enjoyable day out at The Palace Stables

This was an opportunity for exchanging ideas and learning from each other and in attendance were well established groups as well as newly formed ones. After the introductions and presentations from all ten groups present, participants had an opportunity to ask questions, share good practice and learn from each other's experiences. After a very busy morning, participants continued their discussions over lunch at the Pilgrim's Table Restaurant in St Patrick's Trian. The day concluded with a visit to The Palace Stables Heritage Centre where world renowned living history interpreters took the ladies on a journey back to 1796 to meet and chat with them to get a fuller picture of life in a bygone world.

The women present felt that they had benefited from this opportunity to exchange information. They look forward to more capacity building and learning opportunities which NIRWN has to offer.

Our thanks to Gillian Campbell, Armagh Marketing and Development Assistant, Ruth and Audrey from the Pilgrims Restaurant, living history interpreters from the Palace Stables and all of the women who gave of their time to make this event the success it was.

POLICING – IT'S YOUR SAY



Whichever part of Northern Ireland you live in, if you are concerned about policing, the Octagon Suite in the King's Hall on Thursday 18 September from 7.30 pm is the place to be. The Northern Ireland Policing Board is holding a public engagement meeting where you can find out about their work and where you can put your questions to members of the Policing Board and the Chief Constable on the issues that matter to you. Encouraging people to attend, Chair of the Board's Community Engagement Committee Alex Maskey MLA said:

"It is important that the whole community has access to good policing. The Board is committed to engaging with the public and this meeting will be an important opportunity to hear more about the role of the Board and have Policing Board members and senior police officers respond to questions about the policing of our streets."

Please contact the Policing Board on 028 9040 8563 to let them know if you have any special access needs or other requirements.

NEWLY CONSTITUTED GROUP IN SOUTH ARMAGH

Congratulations to Crushan Munia Traveller Group from South Armagh who became Constituted on June 26th, 2008.

NIRWN were invited by Donna Sloan of the Women & Family Health Initiative to facilitate the constitution of the group. 'Crushan Munia' was chosen for their name as it means 'Going Good'.



Members of 'Crushan Munia' Traveller Group with Majella Murphy from NIRWN

As part of our service portfolio NIRWN supports Group Development through the provision of Action Planning. In a climate of reduced funding for work and workers we feel it is a valuable service to our members to have the opportunity of an impartial person to facilitate action planning for the future. NIRWN Action Planning takes place over two sessions of one hour each.



Action Planning - Orchard Community Group, Annaghugh

By the end of the sessions members of the group will have had the opportunity to: consider who they are as a group; review what the group has achieved to date; evaluate their achievements e.g. What went well? Why? What wasn't so good? Why?; Record the activities they would like in the future and establish how this might be achieved.

At the end of the two sessions NIRWN write up the findings into a workable plan for the group for the coming year/semester. In addition NIRWN provide ongoing support; helping identify potential funding sources and available training to assist groups to achieve their plan.

Embedded into our Action Planning is democracy and ownership; ensuring everyone in the group has a valid voice and is afforded the opportunity to input into the plan and as a Group; each member can contribute to the successful execution of the Action Plan.

Groups which have participated in Action Planning with NIRWN in the last include: Orchard Community Group, Annaghugh; Galbally Women's Group, Galbally; Purple Heather Group, Darkley; Off the Cuff, Magherafelt; Time for Me, Toome; South Armagh Childcare Consortium, Cullyhanna; PWS, Aldergrove and Women Helping Other Women (WHOW), Newcastle.

If you are interested in availing of our Action Planning service please contact Louise:

Tel: 028 86 769191 **Mob:** 07894291816 **Email:** louise@nirwn.org.uk

ENROL NOW FOR 'GET ON BOARD'

NIRWN are delighted to announce the opportunity for more rural women to 'Get on Board'. We are funding a further 20 places for the Autumn/Spring semester. 'Get on Board' is the only course of its kind in the UK and was designed to break down many of the barriers to the public appointments process. This course is aimed at rural women who are interested in serving on the boards of public bodies throughout Northern Ireland. The training provides participants with a clear understanding of what it takes to be successful both during the appointments process and while serving on a Board. The only requirement for participants is that they have good communication skills.

To date over thirty women have successfully completed 'Get on Board' training through NIRWN's support and the feedback has been very positive: *Deirdre Hanna, one of the participants who completed the ten week training course in Cookstown said 'The course was an excellent opportunity for myself and other women to develop the skills and confidence necessary to apply for positions on public bodies. Courses such as this will ensure that the under-representation of women on public bodies becomes a thing of the past.'*

Course content includes: Understanding the Roles and Responsibilities of Public Bodies and Board Members; The Appointments Process; Running Effective Board Meetings; Decision Making and Understanding the Management of Public Funds. As an added bonus, NIRWN will provide mentoring support for any woman who completes the course and is actively seeking a position with a Board or Public Body.

'Get on Board' is accredited through the Northern Ireland Open College Network at Level 2 and is delivered by Belfast Metropolitan College. The location for training is likely to be in the Newry area. If you would like to enrol for the course or, would like any further information please contact Louise (Contact details above)

Please note that funded places will be allocated on a first come, first served basis.

The Equality Commission has launched a conciliation service for disabled people in Northern Ireland. The service will provide an accessible alternative to court action for those wishing to address discrimination against those with disabilities.

The conciliation service, which is free of charge, is a way of resolving disputes by helping those involved reach agreement with the help of an impartial third party.



l-r Evelyn Collins, Chief Executive of the Equality Commission with Ann Collins, Director of Shopmobility, at the launch of the Disability Conciliation Service.

Eileen Lavery, Head of Strategic Enforcement at the Equality Commission welcomed the introduction of the conciliation service saying: "Proceeding to the court is not for everyone and we trust that disabled people and service providers who are in dispute will both welcome the opportunity to meet together to find workable agreeable solutions. A notable benefit of conciliation is that it can take less time than a court case and is aimed at finding a solution that satisfies all parties – a win/win approach securing a satisfactory resolution."

To find out more about the Equality Commission's Disability Conciliation Service, contact the enquiry line on 028 9089 0890. A short guide on the Disability Conciliation Service is available on the Equality Commission's website at www.equalityni.org



NIRWN takes up new role as Chair of the Women's Centres Regional Partnership (WCRP)

As part of the good governance of the WCRP, Siobhan Doherty, Co-Ordinator with NIRWN has taken on the role of Chair for a six month period. During this time Siobhan looks forward to adopting the role for the benefit of the Partnership's key aims.

Women's Resource and Development Agency (WRDA) Co-Opts NIRWN Co-Ordinator onto their Board

Siobhan, our Co-Ordinator has been co-opted onto the Board of WRDA to bring the rural perspective to their work. Siobhan is looking forward to embracing this role and to representing rural women at this level.

MARY ROBINSON TO SPEAK AT CIVIL RIGHTS SUMMER SCHOOL



Former President of Ireland, Mary Robinson will give a keynote address at the inaugural McCluskey Civil Rights Summer School on the weekend of 23-24 August 2008 in Carlingford, Co Louth. The theme of the weekend will be "40 years on - The Civil Rights Challenges in Ireland Today - Tackling Poverty, Sectarianism, Racism and Inequality"

The Summer School will consider the significance of the Civil Rights Movement, for our society today and the continuing resonance of the issues which it addressed.

Speakers will include Brid Rodgers (reflections on civil rights and honouring the role of Con and Patricia McCluskey and the campaign for social justice), Bernadette McAliskey (National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism), Eileen Chan Hu (Chinese Welfare Association), Seamus McAleavey (NICVA) and others from the community and political sectors north and south.

For further information contact:
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