



NIRWN NEWS

Winter 2011 ISSUE 15

'WOMEN TOGETHER' EVENT IN LOUGHGIEL

Women from North and East Antrim, South Armagh and North Louth attended a 'Women Together' event held in the Loughgiel Millennium Centre organised by NIRWN and funded by the Community Relations Council. It was a continuation of a series of events which NIRWN has been holding with the 'Behind the Masks' programme, a cross-border, cross-community project funded under PEACE 111.

Angela O'Hagan from the Millennium Centre explained how people in her community came together to help secure funding for the Centre and how Social Economy was key to development of local services. She highlighted how groups and individuals in rural areas should consider applying to the DARD Rural Development Programme for support to help take their ideas forward as Loughgiel had done.

Clíodhna Geraghty Project Co-ordinator for the 'Behind the Masks' project explained how the programme was established being based on the



Clíodhna Geraghty from the 'Behind the Masks' Project

theory that women, no matter what life throws at them 'put on a face' and get on with it; hiding behind a mask, sometimes afraid to let their masks fall. Participants of the programme have had varying experiences of the 'Troubles', where years of unrest and violence pushed apart once close communities. This innovative project has brought women

together from both sides of the border to share their experiences and move forward collectively.

Isobel Apsley from St John's Ambulance in Larne spoke on how women from all over Northern Ireland, especially the rural areas, supported the Ulster Gift Fund for War Hospitals and Serving Forces. With the lack of supplies and warm clothing women were able to showcase their skills in crafts and knitting to provide bandages for hospitals and items of warm underwear and socks for the good of all the forces. This initiative called Women's Work and WarTime Comforts helped to save lives and became an essential part of the wartime movement.



Some of the ladies who enjoyed the event in Loughgiel Millennium Centre

Anne Morrison-Smyth from the ULLAN's Society spoke on how the Ulster Scots and Irish language have similarities and sayings with a rich linguistic tradition associated with rural life. She read poems and spoke on the many common sayings we use in every day life which have been handed down through generations and should be celebrated as part of our heritage.

Edna Walmsley, NIRWN Development Officer explained 'Over the past three years we have been building good relations with women's organisations in the rural areas of the border region. Cross-community and cross-border engagement has been extremely beneficial, offering us the chance to build relationships through participating in the events in each area.

This sharing of culture and heritage allows us to accept, understand and appreciate each other's differences rather than viewing them as negatives. We are totally committed to our new partnerships and friendships and will continue to develop reconciliation, tolerance, mutual respect and trust'.

CELEBRATION OF PEACE III FOR THE SOUTH WEST CLUSTER



The SW Cluster PEACE III Partnership recently held a celebration event at Corick House Hotel, Clogher, to mark the closing of phase I of the PEACE III Programme.

Over 100 people from the SW Cluster Council areas of Magherafelt, Cookstown, Dungannon and Fermanagh attended the event and allowed phase I participating groups to network together and showcase their work. The phase I projects were funded through the EU's Programme for Peace and Reconciliation (PEACE III) managed by the Special EU Programmes Body. Guest speakers from each of the Council areas delivered presentations on their EU funded projects. This included, Elaine Devlin from Mid Ulster Women's Network, Maggie Bryson from Cookstown District Council, Eamon McLean from Speedwell Trust and Paul Speight from the Hanging Rockers Climbing Club.

Chris McCarney, PEACE III Programme Manager, announced that Phase II of the PEACE III programme would be getting underway in early spring with a series of information events in each of the four Council areas. These would be publicly advertised and also announced on the new SW Cluster PEACE III website at www.swpeace3.eu

We would like to wish
all our readers a Merry
Christmas and a
Happy New Year



A Successful Learners Access & Engagement Programme

The Women's Centres Regional Partnership recently completed a review of the Learner Access and Engagement Programme (LAEP) in the North West. This report details how the LAEP Programme has operated to date in the North West women's centres and examines what learning can be provided to other women's centres throughout Northern Ireland.



In 2010, a consortium of women's centres from the North West was successful in tendering for a contract to provide learner support services as part of the Learner Access and Engagement Pilot Programme being rolled out by DEL across Northern Ireland. The report illustrates the success of women's centres in attracting participants is due to the unique support mechanisms put in place such as access to childcare, 1:1 support, small class sizes, and a welcoming, safe and inclusive environment.

The report will be a key piece of research for the future strategic development of the community education sector as a vehicle to engage "hard to reach" learners:

- "adults, aged 18 and over,"
- "who are not in work,"
- "who wish to join the labour market,"
- "who do not hold a qualification at Level 2 or above,"
- "who may have barriers to learning (such as caring responsibilities, disability, poor levels of literacy and numeracy)."

The report recommends that DEL continues to resource the delivery of LAEP or similar programmes in women's centres. This is imperative if we are to increase access and participation of women in the economy, given that women have higher rates of economic inactivity than men.

You can download the report from the WCRP website at: <http://www.wcrp.org.uk/> or by contacting Kelli Boyles, WCRP Co-ordinator:

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