



"President Mary McAleese with Mary Nally Chief Executive Officer of the Senior Help Line, and Galway Volunteers at the Launch of the Galway Senior Help Line Centre" PG.2

 *Merry Christmas To All Our Readers* 



GALWAY GETS A MAKEOVER  
- PG.2



THE WESTERN WRITERS CENTRE  
- PG. 4 & 5



WORLD AIDS DAY - PG.5



ARE YOU A MEMBER OF THE  
NEW TRIBE OF GALWAY? - PG.7

# GALWAY GETS A MAKEOVER!

By Donncha Foley

Teams of volunteers were busy all over the city and county on Friday September 26th as part of Give it A Swirl Day – Ireland's National Day of Volunteering. The events were co-ordinated by Galway Volunteer Centre and were the largest amount of projects that took place around the country. This was the first time Give it a Swirl Day has been run in Galway.

Groups of volunteers from City and County Councils, NUI Galway, Intergroup, and the Radisson visited community organisations COPE, Brothers of Charity, Spirit Centre, The GAF, GSPCA, Tuam Resource Centre, and D'Cube Ballinasloe. Work carried out including landscaping, gardening, painting and cleaning reflecting the 'Community Makeover' theme of this year's event.

"We had 12 projects happening on the day," stated Ruth Fagan, Volunteer Liaison Officer of Galway Volunteer Centre, "and everybody had a great time, as well as getting some valuable work done for the various community groups".

The GVC, businesses and community organisations have been preparing for the day since before the summer to carry out 'once-off' volunteer work on the day. "Many of those who took part on the day had

never volunteered before, and we were delighted to give the opportunity to see how enjoyable it can be" said Ruth.

Woodies and McDonagh's provided materials for a number of the projects that took place and the event was sponsored nationally by Wyeth Pharmaceuticals.

Galway Volunteer Centre is the one-stop shop for volunteer activity in Galway City and County, providing volunteering opportunities for the public, and sourcing much-needed volunteers for organisations.

**You can find out more about Galway Volunteer Centre on [www.volunteergalway.ie](http://www.volunteergalway.ie) or by calling 091 539930**



**Gabor Toth (Supermacs)  
Scoil Bhríde Shantalla**

**1. Tom Flanagan & Micheal Forde (City Council)  
COPE Fairgreen Shelter**

**2. Steve Fay, Brian House, Nigel Kenny, Mike Headd,  
Mark Kenny (InterGroup) GalwaySPCA**

## SENIOR HELP LINE OPENS IN GALWAY By Anne Dempsey

President Mary McAleese opened Senior Help Line's Galway centre recently and talked about the value of the service. "Even if you are very lost, there are people there to make sure that you can have a human connection to help you feel you matter. The help line is a place to tell the deepest things in your heart or just talk about anything at all," she said.

Senior Help Line is a confidential listening service for older people by older people for the price of a local call anywhere in Ireland, telephone 1850 440 444. The help line is open each day from 10 am till 4 pm and 7 – 10 pm, 365 days a year. The Galway volunteers, many from Active Retirement associations around the city, are part of a 270 strong team who make up the heart of Senior Help Line. Evelyn Moran is the Galway volunteer co-ordinator. "I think most of us would say we are involved because it gives us a chance to put something back.

Many of the people calling the help line feel lonely or isolated and welcome the opportunity for human

contact. Others phone with a problem or a worry. Volunteers are trained to listen empathetically, to help the caller explore their options and perhaps see a different way forward. "Many people who phone thank us for listening and say they feel much better after talking to us," says Evelyn.

Senior Help Line celebrated its tenth birthday with a conference in Galway entitled 'Reflecting on the Past & Shaping the Future' with volunteers travelling from all over Ireland to participate in the event.

The official opening of the Galway centre was followed by the announcement that Senior Help Line is to be established in New York to provide for a confidential listening service for older Irish migrants living there. President McAleese spoke to members of New York's Aisling Centre and the Emerald Isle Emigrant Centre - who will be trained as Senior Help Line volunteers - via a live video link. "We are just delighted that the Senior Help Line brand of caring is being exported to the US. I think it is going to be one of our very best exports," she said. (See Front Cover for Picture)

# BAILE AN CHOISTE RESIDENT'S ASSOCIATION

By Sarah Conway

Since the establishment of the estate in February 2003, Baile an Choiste on the Headford road set out a community goal to acquire a much needed community house for the locality. This goal was realised 14 months ago due to the dedication and hard work of its twelve committee members. The Baile an Choiste resident's house is not just a building; It is the voice and heart of a community which caters for everyone. Set in an area of Galway with affordable housing, it is made up of private, council and respond housing.

***"We wanted to try and get things done in the area that needed doing at the time... and once we got the community house things slowly started to happen,"***

said Chairperson Valerie Pointer. The schedule of the Community House is jam packed with weekly Resident Association meetings and Rapid meetings. It is also host to a wonderful variety of ongoing activities ranging from coffee mornings, women's groups, mother and toddler groups, to garden mornings where locals look after the estate's green areas with donated shrubbery and plants from the VEC. There are a number of exciting classes starting in the coming months with a something-for-everyone agenda including drama, creative writing, computer skills and even T'ai Chi!

The Committee also works in collaboration with Foroige Youth Club which caters for children between the ages of 10-18 from the 196 houses of Baile an Choiste and the 40 houses of Ard an Choiste. This much sought after Community House is also a warm and friendly neighbourhood centre for the estate's 60 odd children under the age of twelve. Many of these children recently participated in a Halloween party and are currently preparing for two Christmas celebrations.

These activities are mainly run by committee members with occasional outside help, "It's sometimes very difficult getting volunteers and we could really do with more," said Ms. Pointer. Much of the great work being



***"Members of Baile an Choiste's Women's Group"***

done by Baile an Choiste Resident's Association wouldn't be possible without grants from Galway City Hall and the VEC. "We also raise funds ourselves through the annual resident collection which is €10," said Secretary Ms. Vicky Leonard.

The committee work in close connection with City Hall and are a platform to represent the needs of the residents and the local area. This association has not only worked voluntarily to improve the lives of their neighbours but they have also lobbied for many small but vital necessities in keeping a safe and practical estate such as getting gas pipelines enclosed, maintaining the Zebra crossing and the provision of a children's play area. They are currently working towards getting a new bus shelter.

The Resident's Association's hard work will be seen in full swing on its first 'Community Day' which will take place in February. This day will be fun packed for all with Animal Magic, an Easter Egg Hunt and the much anticipated erection of bronze animal sculptures in the estate thanks to funds the committee received as part of an EU Arts Grant with assistance from the Public Arts Officer, Megs Morley. The Resident Association Committee comprises; Chairperson Valerie Pointer, Vice Chairperson Donal Grehan, Secretary Vicky Leonard, Vice-Secretary Mary Gibbons, Treasurer Elaine O'Boyle, Laura Porter, Paula Henry, Nora Slattery, Arafa Abubakar, Margaret Douglas and Therese Carroll Tenant who is Liaison Officer with Galway City Council and Emma Donovan who is an Officer with Respond Housing Organisation.

***Anyone interested in volunteering, sponsoring or simply seeking further information can contact the Committee at [Valerie.pointer@eircom.net](mailto:Valerie.pointer@eircom.net)***

# SpunOut.ie MAKING WAVES IN REACHING YOUNG PEOPLE

By Susan Quirke

Since its initial launch in 2005, the *SpunOut.ie* national youth organisation has emerged as a highly effective force for engaging and supporting young people when it comes to health and lifestyle issues. From small beginnings following a health service led feasibility study in the North West, the initiative has grown rapidly each year.

2008 has been particularly successful with the *SpunOut.ie* website reaching thirty thousand unique visitors per month as well as millions more through social marketing campaigns and features on Today FM, the RTE Six One news, The Irish Times and other widespread national and regional media coverage. *SpunOut.ie* was also short-listed for an Irish Web Award, an Eircom Golden Spider Award and an Irish Healthcare Award.

## A DYNAMIC YOUTH HEALTH PORTAL

*SpunOut.ie* offers young people hundreds of quality youth-friendly factsheets on health and lifestyle issues including mental health, suicide prevention, sexual health and sexuality, drugs and alcohol, diet and disability. It provides inspirational true life stories from young people who have overcome difficulties in life as well as an innovative searchable national database of localised help and support services.

*SpunOut.ie* gives young people a space for publishing their news and views on issues affecting them through a dynamic youth media portal and space for discussion, debate and peer support within safe

moderated forums where young people are also signposted to appropriate help services when they need support. There is also an integrated gateway to the Samaritan's email support service promoted throughout the site.

Finally, *SpunOut.ie* provides a platform for young people to engage with health and social policy makers as well as the national media thereby providing a mechanism for youth voices to influence the national agenda on health issues.

## A BRIGHT FUTURE

*SpunOut.ie* has now expanded to a core staff team of seven full-time professionals, has reached hundreds of thousands of users and has a growing national media profile reaching millions each year. It has received numerous awards including an Eircom Golden Spider for 'Best Charity and Community Website', a HSE Achievement Award and a Social Entrepreneurs Ireland Award.

With big plans for 2009, *SpunOut.ie* looks set to continue to emerge as an exciting new model for youth-led health promotion and suicide prevention in Ireland.

**More information: [www.SpunOut.ie](http://www.SpunOut.ie)**



**SpunOut.ie screen shot**

# THE WESTERN WRITERS' CENTRE

By Fred Johnston

The Western Writers' Centre - Ionad Scríbhneoirí Chaitlín Maude - has been up and about in Galway for almost seven years now, organising readings, giving workshops, offering advice and guidance to would-be writers on editing and producing texts, finding agents, and publishing their work. Since its inception, the Centre - which is the only one West of the Shannon and is a limited company with a Board that includes poets Richard Tillinghast and Frank Golden and is chaired by Aoife Nic Fhearghusa - has initiated many novel projects for the City, such as the the first-ever writers' residency in a Galway hospital at Merlin Park, a 'Poetry

on the Buses' project, and even a festival in Gort, Co. Galway. It has gradually become recognised, along with the Irish Writers' Centre in Dublin and the Munster Literature Centre in Cork, as forming a triangle of central cultural reference points. The Centre also edits and produces a monthly news-letter entirely devoted to writing and literary events, 'The Word Tree,' which is circulated to writers' groups, arts offices and libraries up and down the Western region. Taking three writers in the Irish language on a 'tour' of events from Kerry to Donegal, the Western Writers' Centre were the only Galway arts' project engaged by the Arts Council-

funded Touring Experiment last year; the Centre's commitment to the Irish language has been steady and determined and they will shortly announce a series of workshops in Irish for dramatists and screen-writers. The Centre's website also provides information on events, launches, workshops and other literary happenings and publishes new poetry and short stories. Anyone wishing to contact the Centre or submit notice of literary events in their area should contact [westernwriters@eircom.net](mailto:westernwriters@eircom.net) or telephone 091.533594 /087.2178138. The Centre is funded by The Arts Council, Galway City and County Councils and Foras na Gaeilge. "This is a writers' centre for the West of Ireland," says the Centre's director, Fred

Johnston, "but it belongs to Galway and is a living component of the arts' infrastructure here." The Centre's administrator is Marvelle Maguire. The Western Writers' Centre is located at 27 Nuns Island, Galway.



**1. Secretary and Account, Sylvia Crawford**



**2. Aoife Nic Fhearghusa, Chairperson**

## World AIDS Day

By Geraldine Mills

The recent report from the Health Protection Surveillance Centre shows that there is an increase of 7.4% in the newly diagnosed cases of HIV in Ireland which have risen from 337 cases in 2006 to 362 during 2007. That is why World AIDS Day on December 1st is one of the most important dates in the AIDS West's calendar as it is an opportunity to offer support to all those living with HIV, as well as remembering those who have died, their families and friends.

To commemorate the day, a candlelit Memorial Concert was held on 1st December in St. Nicholas' Collegiate Church, Galway. Over the years, this memorial service has grown in popularity and now enjoys huge support from the people of Galway as well as the city and county councillors. The opening address was given by Reverend Patrick Towers and it was AIDS West's great privilege to have Galway's much loved, award winning, choir, Cois Cladaigh with sopranos Sandra Shalks and Delia Boyce, perform a most memorable programme. Cois Cladaigh also performed its Christmas Concert on 29th November to benefit AIDS West. Cois Cladaigh is grant-aided by Galway City Council and sponsored by David Lohan, John O' Sullivan, the Galleon and a number of anonymous supporters.

'Leadership' was the theme for this year, a quality that is clearly evident in the two guest speakers Liz Martin and Danny West who have shown true leadership in the way they have dealt with their diagnosis. Liz has been

living with HIV for 17 years and took the courageous step to put her own name to her memoir 'Still Standing, an Irishwoman's story of HIV and Hope' in 2007 while Danny West, diagnosed with the virus in the UK in 1985 is one of the longest surviving people living with HIV in the world today. While HIV positive people are now enjoying long, healthy, lives due to developments in medical treatments, one of the main stumbling blocks to living a full life is the prejudice experienced by many of them as a result of the stigma still attached to the diagnosis. That is why it was heart warming to see so many people supporting the event.

AIDS West, located in Ozanam House, St Augustine St. Galway is a confidential non- judgemental service, funded by HSE west which offers support to anyone affected by HIV/AIDS, as well as information and advice on any aspects of sexual health.

**Office Hours: 9.00am-5.00pm Mon-Fri.**

**Closed 1.00pm-2.00pm**

**Helpline Number: 091- 562213**

**Office: 091-566266 Email: [info@aidswest.ie](mailto:info@aidswest.ie)**

**[www.aidswest.ie](http://www.aidswest.ie)**



**Memorial Concert, St. Nicholas' Collegiate Church**

# A NEW COMMUNITY FORUM STRATEGY PLAN FOR 2009 – 2011 ON THE WAY

By Poul Walsh Olesen

The Community Forum's Strategy Plan is a key document. It provides an agenda and work programme for the Community Forum, outlining a number of priority issues and actions to be addressed and promoted.

The current GCCF Strategy Plan runs from 2006-2008 and will be implemented through to early 2009. At the Community Forum's quarterly meeting on the 16th of September it was therefore agreed to start working on the development of a new GCCF Strategy Plan for the period 2009-2011. A procedure and timeframe was approved, which aims at launching the new GCCF Strategy Plan before the local elections in June 2009.

The Community Forum held a start-up Seminar on the 5th of November 2008 to review the existing GCCF Strategy Plan 2006-2008, achievements to date and pinpoint key policy areas to be addressed in the new GCCF Strategy Plan 2009-2011.

At the Seminar in November, the following 8 policy areas were identified as key issues for the coming years:

- Community and Youth Recreation Space
- Social Inclusion and Community Development
- Planning and Public Transport
- Environmental Protection
- Local Identity and Heritage
- Housing
- Law and Order
- Arts and Culture

The Community Forum is currently examining and drafting specific actions under each of the 8 key policy areas, aimed at bringing about the types of change and development that are deemed necessary.

For more information about the work in relation to the new GCCF Strategy Plan please contact the Community Forum Co-ordinator.

# GROW Launches Second Young Adult Support Group

By Aideen Lovett



GROW has launched a second Young Adult group in Galway city. GROW is Ireland's largest mutual help organisation with a network of 145 groups nationwide, including eight in Galway city and county.

GROW offers community-based help and support to people who have suffered, or are suffering from mental health problems, – poor coping skills, anxiety and depression, or who are at risk of suicide.

In 2006 GROW started a group specifically for Young Adults in Galway city to address the lack of accessible support for Young Adults in the 18-30 age group. Evidently there was an urgent need for it as the group was very successful, and because of this, it was decided to start a second group to help more young adults facing mental health difficulties.

Recently, GROW appointed a Young Adult Co-ordinator, Paul Clabby, to build on the success of the Galway project. The current project's aim is to promote and develop more Young Adult groups nationwide, particularly in areas with large young adult populations. It is hoped this project will also help towards addressing the rising suicide statistics in the 18-30 age group, as they will have somewhere to go to access the support they need in time. Paul is very excited about the project, "this is a unique opportunity to bring GROW to young people in need."

Paul has had first-hand experience of mental health problems himself, and started attending a GROW group three years ago. Paul says "when I first attended GROW, I was suffering from anxiety and depression. I found it very difficult even to do the most basic things and found life a struggle. I was able to discuss these issues at the weekly meetings and I received great advice and support from people who used the GROW program to overcome their own mental health problems. It was a place where I could talk openly about these issues and not be judged."

GROW Young Adult groups meet every Wed. and Thurs., and groups open to all ages meet every Mon. and Tues., all are at 7.30pm in 20A Mill Street (opp. Galway Volunteer Centre).

**For more information contact Paul 086-0873677 or Aideen 086-8032731, GROW INFOLINE 1890 474 474, or visit the website [www.grow.ie](http://www.grow.ie)**

# ARE YOU A MEMBER OF THE NEW TRIBE OF GALWAY?

By Gearóidín Ní Ghioballáin



## ***Gaillimh le Gaeilge's search begins for the best bilingual business in Galway***

Gaillimh le Gaeilge, the organisation responsible for the promotion for the Irish language in business in Galway city are currently looking for the best bilingual business in Galway city. Gradam Sheosaimh Uí Ógartaigh the annual business Award that 'recognises', 'honours' and 'celebrates' all the great bilingual work done in Galway City is now open for nominations.

This prestigious business Award offers the chance to any business/organisation using the Irish Language in Galway City to win a 'fantastic combined business package' to the value of €15,000. This 'amazing business package' is sponsored by Galway Advertiser, Galway Bay FM, Snap Printing, Údarás na Gealtachta and Galway Chamber. This year, Gaillimh le Gaeilge welcomes Galway Airport on board with four return flights to Edinburgh for the Gradam Sheosaimh Uí Ógartaigh Winner!

The Winner will also receive Séala Sheosaimh Uí Ógartaigh a 'Q Mark' for the Irish Language in Galway city, developed by Galway County & City Enterprise Board as well as a beautiful piece of sculpture especially designed by Pádraic Reaney symbolising the 14 Tribes of Galway, with one "present day Tribe" representing the winner of Gradam Sheosaimh Uí Ógartaigh and future winners to come.

This fantastic prize will be awarded to the best business in Galway City that demonstrates a visible, genuine and creative use of the Irish Language within their business, thus impacting on their staff and the bilingual image of the city.

Last year's winner of Gradam Sheosaimh Uí Ógartaigh, Siobhán Feeney from Corrib Removals and Storage outlines the benefits of taking part in this prestigious event.

"At Corrib Removals & Storage we were honoured

and excited to win the prestigious Gradam Sheosaimh Uí Ógartaigh award 2007. In the weeks leading up to the award, there was such enthusiasm and excitement amongst staff, and also customers.

We were delighted with the publicity the business received from local media, both before and after winning the award. With the publicity surrounding the award, our efforts in promoting the use of Irish were recognized and it definitely resulted in an increase in business."

Gaillimh le Gaeilge provides a 'Gaeilge sa Ghnó' service, free of charge to help businesses/organisations prepare for the award.

**If you are interested in getting involved with Gradam Sheosaimh Uí Ógartaigh, contact Gaillimh le Gaeilge's office on 091 568876 or email [eolas@gleg.ie](mailto:eolas@gleg.ie). Contact us today!**

Gearóidín Ní Ghioballáin,  
Bainisteoir Tograí/Project Manager  
Gaillimh le Gaeilge,  
Teach Uí Chiaruáin,  
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Fón: 091 568876 [gearoidin@gleg.ie](mailto:gearoidin@gleg.ie) [www.gleg.ie](http://www.gleg.ie)



***Prionséas Ó hÓgartaigh, Siobhán Feeney, Corrib Removals, Winner of Gradam Sheosaimh Uí Ógartaigh, An t-Aire Éamon Ó Cuív T.D. and Caitlín Nic an Ultaigh, Cathaoirleach Ghailimh le Gaeilge.***

# [ POETRY CORNER ]

## The Zimbabwe Sun

by Mavis Chito

To know you was part of me  
To feel your warmth touching  
Even my most inner soul  
Was to have you around.  
Look across all the blue spread around the sky!  
And the most precious jewel was your eye  
Shining right through the whole land.  
I could have you for 365 days a year  
Without missing a day,  
Come rains or high winds, you would disappear  
For a short while and still come back,  
Smiling your lovely smile every single day!  
You would open your eye at sunrise and  
Close it at sunset,  
And never would I bother to say thank you

Oh, how I wish you were lighting up these gray skies!  
If I were to come back to you ever again,  
I would thank God for the best blessing He gave us  
As a nation,  
I would cherish you as a forever friend  
And bask and soak in your warmth,  
To remember you forever  
Whenever I am  
Where you are a seasonal visitor

*Mavis Chito is a native of Zimbabwe. She has lived in Galway for the past seven years and is currently attending a class in Creative Writing at Galway Technical Institute facilitated by Kevin Higgins.*

## Nadir

by Tom Lavelle

In the narrow, sun-shy days  
Between the solstice and the eve  
As the year dithers on death row  
We trudge onwards, our spirits unlevel  
Star search dark umbrella skies  
Keep a hungry eye out for  
Likely saviours, trinities of wise men  
Our ears sharp for bells that appeal.  
We observe the rituals, take stock  
The bleakness bears reminders  
Of the past year's plenty spent  
The blackbird's song calls us on  
Its gold beak a glint of summer  
From the cage of a skeletal tree  
The new year rears its reluctant head  
Yawns, stretches its legs, kicks on  
With or without our resolution.

*Tom Lavelle is originally from Mayo but has lived in Galway for many years. His poems have appeared in West 47, The Cúirt Annual, Revival and Boyne Berries. He was also shortlisted for the 2008 Over The Edge New Writer of the Year.*

# SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITY FORUM AGM

By Poul Walsh Olesen

There was a great turnout for the Community Forum's Annual General Meeting (AGM), which was held on the 2nd of December 2008 in the Menlo Park Hotel.

In her Annual Report, Ms. Nuala O'Hara, Chairperson of Galway City Community Forum, outlined some of the highlights in 2008. She welcomed the more than 25 new members who have joined the Community Forum in the past year and thanked the Community Forum for the privilege of serving as Chairperson. She expressed her gratitude to the Department of Community and Enterprise, the Forum's Steering Group; the Community Forum's Representatives and all the other Forum members who have taken active part in running the Community Forum.

On the night, nominations were put forward for the election of the new Steering Group for 2009. The new Steering Group for 2009 is as follows:

- Ms. Nuala O'Hara, *Tirellan Heights Residents Association*
- Mr. Jim Aherne, *ALA*
- Mr. Edwin Brennan, *Galway Lawn Tennis Club*
- Ms. Lorriane Carroll, *Fana Glas Residents Association*
- Ms. Kathi Dillon, *Westside City Development Project*
- Mr. Tommy Flaherty, *Ballybane Community Resource Centre*
- Mr. Donncha Foley, *Galway Volunteer Centre*
- Mr. Derrick Hambleton, *An Taisce*
- Ms. Sheila Mangan, *Tirellan Heights Residents Association*
- Ms. Nuala Nolan, *Western Family History Association*
- Mr. Frank Okonwo, *Progressive Friends Association*
- Ms. Sinead Roche, *Threshold*
- Mr. Stan Sjothun, *Claddagh Heritage Society*
- Mr. Brendan Smith, *Sandyvale Lawn Resident's Association*

Ms. Nuala O'Hara thanked the members of the Steering Group who had chosen to step down this year; Ms. Rose Kavanagh; Ms. Evelyn Moran; Ms. Helena Dixon Caffola and Ms. Maria-Alejandra Gonzales Perez, and expressed her hope that they would continue to be active members of the Community Forum.

**Please contact the Co-ordinator at 091-536844 or [communityforum@galwaycity.ie](mailto:communityforum@galwaycity.ie) for a copy of the Co-ordinators Report or the Treasurers Report for 2008.**

galway city  
**community forum**  
forum pobal chathair na gaillimhe

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Community Forum Co-ordinator: Poul Walsh Olesen

\* The views expressed in this Newsletter do not necessarily reflect the views of Galway City Community Forum or the Community & Enterprise Department of Galway City Council.