

Minister Harney Launches Carers Association's Search for Ireland's Carer of the Year 2007

Minister for Health, Mary Harney has launched The Carers Association's search for Ireland's Carer of the Year 2007 today in Civic Offices, Wood Quay, Dublin 8. The Carers Association, the national voluntary organisation representing Ireland's 150,000 family Carers, has launched its Carer of the Year Awards to recognise and reward the contribution of Ireland's family Carers.

Awards will be presented to four regional recipients selected from a nomination process. These recipients will go on to attend the Carer of the Year Awards Ceremony in Dublin in April 2007 where the overall Carer of the Year will be announced. The launch today also announced the introduction of a new award for Young Carer of the Year (under 18).

"We are delighted to be launching our Carer of the Year Awards for 2007", says Enda Egan, CEO of The Carers Association. "These Awards are important for recognising the enormous contribution of family Carers who cover a range of caring situations for loved-ones in their own home, often with little acknowledgement. The nomination process will give the nation the opportunity to highlight the enormous contribution of family Carers and we are encouraging family, friends, health professionals, neighbours and so on to nominate their choice for the Carer of the Year Award".

"Given Ireland's increasingly ageing population and the difficulties associated with caring in the home, it is vital the work of family Carers is appreciated", says Mr. Egan. "Community and State resources would be placed under enormous pressure to provide the 3.5 million hours of work per week provided by Ireland's family Carers. By the very nature of their caring role, family Carers experience much stress, frustration and isolation. However, it must also be remembered that caring is a role more often than not undertaken out of love and can be very rewarding and fulfilling experience".

Family Carer, Anne Hughes from Tullamore has provided care for her autistic daughter Debbie for almost 28 years and says "The one thing that keeps me going is love. Debbie did not choose to be this way. She doesn't have the ability to care for herself and despite the negative aspects of caring I do the best I can because I love Debbie". Rosemary Kratschmar from Dublin cares for Sammy with Downs Syndrome (13) and finds that, "Being in the house 24/7 as a carer can be very isolating, however I would be lost without my Sammy. Sammy has brought nothing but joy to us and to others and I think he brings out the best in people. He certainly brings out the best in me"!

Moira Skelly from Dublin caring for her daughter Ciara (11) who is autistic and suffers from Cerebral Palsy and epilepsy, says, "No matter how hard the day, looking at Ciara's smile, listening to her giggle and sing Barney is enough to make any struggle worthwhile".

Regional Award winners will receive a commemorative Award and a weekend break in Ireland. The Young Carer of the Year will receive a lap-top and the overall Carer of the Year will receive a special Award and a week's holiday for two to Sicily. Nominations forms for The Carers Association's Carer of the Year Awards 2007 are available nationwide from today or through your local Carers Association. Call 1800 24 07 24 for further details of see www.carersireland.com.

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