

Awards launched to recognise over 3.5 million hours of care provided weekly by Ireland's family carers

Mary Kennedy and Marty Whelan launch Carers of the Year Awards 2009

(28th May 2009) Ireland's 161,000 family carers provide over 3.5 million hours of care in the home each week to frail older people, people with disabilities, terminally ill and children with special needs. To recognise the enormous contribution of Irish carers, the majority of whom do this work unpaid, presenters Mary Kennedy and Marty Whelan launched The Carers Association's Carers of the Year Awards and Young Carer of the Year Awards 2009 in Dublin today. These awards are kindly sponsored by Emergency Response.

"The phenomenal work of Ireland's family carers often goes unpaid and unrecognised" says Enda Egan, CEO of The Carers Association. "While done out of love, family caring can be very difficult with many family carers experiencing isolation, stress and illness due to their round-the-clock caring responsibilities. Our awards are a celebration of the enormous and selfless contribution of our family carers.

While the news is full of negative reports on the economy and the health services, the awards provide an opportunity to harness what is good in our society and reward those who really care."

The Carers Association's Carers of the Year and Young Carer of the Year (under 18) Awards are based on a national nomination process, whereby members of the public including health professionals are invited to nominate their chosen family carers.

All entries will receive a commemorative certificate, from which four regional carers are chosen. The National Carers of the Year 2009 will be announced at a special ceremony later this year.

Today's ceremony also announced the launch of Young Carer of the Year Award 2009, in recognition of Ireland's 5,000 children and teenagers providing care in the home.

"While the work of family carers is often fulfilling and rewarding, the fact remains that many carers sacrifice their career and lives to provide care in the home. With pressures set to escalate on family carers with a rapidly increasing ageing population, cuts in frontline service provision by the HSE and spiralling hidden costs of care, these awards are timely to recognise and reward the contribution of our carers" says Enda Egan.

Nominations for The Emergency Response Carers of the Year Awards 2009 and Young Carer of the Year Awards 2009 are available on www.carersireland.com or freefone 1800 240724.

ENDS

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Enda Egan, CEO of The Carers Association and family carers in a variety of
caring situations are available for interview.