



Ireland Involved Awards with Specsavers: 2009

Following on from the inaugural Ireland Involved Awards in 2008, Volunteering Ireland will be building on the success of the 2008 awards, with an engaging, country-wide campaign for 2009.

Marie Carroll, from Donegal was the overall winner last year and was awarded for her dedication to Bayside Gymnastics. Following the Irish ceremony, Marie went on to represent Ireland on International Volunteer Day in the European Parliament in Strasbourg. Her contribution to Irish society and, in turn, European society was honoured with Marie being awarded bronze for European Voluntary Contribution.

This year, Volunteering Ireland, alongside its new primary sponsor, Specsavers, hopes to find volunteers whose tireless work for community groups and charities across Ireland is often behind the scenes. This campaign affords us the opportunity to bring this invaluable work to the foreground. We want to celebrate and honour their commitment on a national stage and we're looking for individuals from across Ireland whose devotion to their voluntary work is making a difference.

About the Awards:

The Ireland Involved Awards with Specsavers is an awards scheme that makes a difference. It is about showcasing the work of volunteers across the country and celebrating Ireland's volunteers! We will honour ten individuals, in ten different categories, on a national stage and will select one of those ten to go on and represent Ireland at the European Parliament in Strasbourg, France on 5 December, International Volunteer Day. Working alongside our international partners, coordinated by Federation Francaise du Benevolat Associatif (FFBA), the Ireland Involved Awards is part of the European Award for Voluntary Contribution (Trophee Europeen du Benevolat).

Entering:

Entering a colleague, friend or family member is simple. Call into any of the 34 Specsavers stores in Ireland for an entry form (www.specsavers.ie) or nominate online at www.irelandinvolved.ie. Three awardees will be selected for each category and will be honoured at an awards event on the 5th November, at a Dinner hosted by the Taoiseach's Office in the Royal Hospital Kilmainham, Dublin. We will announce the 10 overall category awardees as well as the Irish Volunteer of the Year and will celebrate the amazing work of all those who volunteer in Ireland!

Identifying a nominee:

If you **know someone** or indeed **are** someone who ticks any of the below boxes, please enter! We want to celebrate THEIR work and achievements:

- Volunteers for a community group or charity on an on-going basis
- Contributes to the organisation in a meaningful and practical way
- Gives up personal time for the benefit of others in an unpaid role
- Makes a difference in the community and world around them

The Categories:

- Arts, Culture & Media
- Health & Disability
- Children & Young People
- Campaigning & Awareness Raising
- i-Care About My Community
- Education & Training
- Social Work
- Animals & Environment
- International Development
- Sports & Recreation

Volunteering Ireland:

At Volunteering Ireland we passionately believe that volunteers can change the world for the better. Our work enables volunteer involvement and engagement at societal, organisational and individual level. As a national volunteer development organisation we work to inspire, promote, support and celebrate volunteering in all its forms in order to strengthen participative democracy and build social capital. As a peak body for all organisations involving volunteers in their work Volunteering Ireland serves as a representative voice for volunteering in Ireland. We are part of an international community of practice working in this field, and are a not-for-profit, non-party political and non-sectarian independent membership-based organisation.

(www.volunteeringireland.ie)

Specsavers:

Specsavers, as lead sponsor for the 2009 campaign, wants to show it's commitment to the communities and people it serves. Each Specsavers store in Ireland is very much a part of the community it operates in. Owned and run by local opticians and business professionals, the 34 Irish Specsavers stores employ thousands of people and have tens of thousands of customers. Specsavers' sponsorship of the Ireland Involved Awards with Specsavers gives back to the communities which it serves and rewards those who dedicate their precious time and efforts to helping others. (www.specsavers.ie)

To learn more about the awards in general and all the individuals who were short listed in 2008, please visit www.irelandinvolved.ie

NEWSLETTER ARTICLE:

Irish Volunteer of the Year 2008

“*Extraordinary dedication*”, “*life-changing*” and “*touched the lives of thousands*”... that’s how Marie Carroll was described by her colleagues, parents of the children who attend Bayside Gymnastics and the children themselves.

Marie’s dedication to developing programmes of integration for children with and without disabilities over the past 30 years was rewarded by Volunteering Ireland at the Ireland InVOLved Awards 2008 when she was awarded with the top accolade of the evening.

Marie’s story is quite remarkable and an admirable example of volunteering at its best. Founder and director of Unlock Your Potential, Marie set up Bayside Gymnastics in 1976 and 20 years ago, opened her doors to encourage movement for people with disabilities - GymAbility™.

Marie’s pioneering approach to working with children with disabilities was to develop an integrated programme where those with a disability participate alongside their non-disabled partner, encouraging “respect among equals”.

The real value in Bayside Gymnastics is making a difference to the lives of the children and their families. There’s a ready made social circle, volunteers who instil confidence and enthusiasm, and the club motto - ‘Attitude is Everything’ – which translates into the children’s everyday lives.

As the first Irish Volunteer of the Year, Volunteering Ireland couldn’t have asked for a more fitting ambassador for volunteering in Ireland.

This year, Volunteering Ireland and Specsavers are hoping to uncover more inspiring people in Ireland who really make a difference to the lives of others.

To learn more about the awards in general and all the individuals who were short listed in 2008, please visit www.irelandinvolved.ie.

ANNOUNCEMENT FOR NEWSLETTER DISTRIBUTION:

Do you know someone making a difference in your community? Should their story be told? Then nominate them for the second annual Ireland Involved Awards!

These awards are about celebrating Ireland's volunteers. They are about shining a light on the work of volunteers across the country. Volunteering Ireland and Specsavers will be honouring three awardees in each of ten categories at an awards event on Thursday 5 November. A dinner hosted by the Taoiseach's Office will be held at the Royal Hospital Kilmainham, Dublin. We will announce the ten overall category awardees and President McAleese will present the final recognition to the 2009 Irish Volunteer of the Year who will go on to represent Ireland at the European Award for Voluntary Contribution. The evening will be a celebration of the amazing work of all those who volunteer in Ireland!

Entering a colleague, friend or family member is simple. Call into any of the 34 Specsavers stores in Ireland for an entry form (www.specsavers.ie) or nominate online at www.irelandinvolved.ie. Feel free to contact the team at Volunteering Ireland on 01 636 9446 or email info@volunteeringireland.ie if you have any questions.

Nominate today!

volunteering
ireland



**An Roinn Gnóthaí Pobail, Tuaithe
agus Gaeltachta**
Department of Community, Rural
and Gaeltacht Affairs

