



President Mary McAleese Visits Irish Wheelchair Association, Tuam.

11.01.11 Tuam, Galway: President Mary McAleese visited the Irish Wheelchair Association's, Resource and Outreach Centre, during her whistlestop tour of Tuam, today, (Tuesday, 11th January 2011). The centre which provides a variety of services to people with physical disabilities living in the community on a daily basis, is an essential facility for up to 80 people with limited mobility.

President McAleese was welcomed at the centre by Irish Wheelchair Association (IWA) members, staff and volunteers, she was then brought on a guided tour of the centre by IWA's CEO, Kathleen Mc Loughlin and Tuam CE supervisor, Maggie Woods. The President was introduced to members participating in a cookery class, and individuals who are currently undertaking a FETAC course. The tour also provided the President with the opportunity to view many paintings, drawings and crafts which had been made by members during art classes which are regularly held in the centre.

Kathleen Mc Loughlin spoke of the importance of the centre to the local Tuam members during the President's visit: " IWA operates a network of Resource and Outreach centres in every county in Ireland. This centre is one of fifty seven which aims to provide opportunities and support services to people with limited mobility so that they can lead full, active and independent lives in their own communities. The services available at IWA Resource and Outreach centres can be for social, educational or training purposes".

She continued, "In these tight times, with reduced funding sources, we are doing our very best to avoid cutting the essential services we provide to our members in their own homes and in the community. We rely heavily on fundraising to allow us to continue to provide vital services in our local communities, and I would like to thank the community in Tuam for their continued support".

Currently, IWA Tuam, provides a five day service covering a twenty five mile radius around the town. The Association offers a wide variety of programmes including personal development training, arts and crafts, cookery and computer courses.

The Tuam Branch of IWA was established by a group of volunteers in 1976, and the day centre was built in the late 1990's. Volunteers remain an essential component of the services provided today, and new volunteers are always welcome. Without the assistance of volunteers; holidays, social nights and fundraising events would not be possible. IWA Tuam is a vital part of the local community and is a hub from which disability awareness is promoted.

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For further information please contact Anita Matthews IWA Communications Department on 018186456 or anita.matthews@iwa.ie.

Notes to editor:

The Irish Wheelchair Association (IWA) is a national organisation dedicated to the achievement of full social, economic and educational integration of people with physical disabilities as equal, independent and participative members of the community.

IWA was founded in 1960 by a small group of wheelchair users committed to improving the lives of people with physical disabilities in Ireland. Fifty years later, IWA continues to provide services nationally, including 57 resource and outreach centres; assisted living services; motoring advice, assessment and tuition; youth services; training and education; holidays; wheelchair sales and rental; and sport.

IWA has gone on to become an important provider of quality services to people with limited mobility throughout the country, since its establishment in 1960. Today, our Association is made up of a vibrant network of 20,000 members and 2,300 staff, as well as many dedicated volunteers.

Together we work to achieve greater independence, freedom and choice for people living with a disability.

As a community-based organisation, IWA aims to:

- Identify the needs of people with limited mobility living in the community
- Empower people with the skills and support to help them address their identified needs and to participate in society
- Create awareness of the rights and needs of our members amongst policy makers, service providers, and the public
- Advocate with and on behalf of people with limited mobility for improved services and benefits
- Provide and promote appropriate services