



# The Mayor's Community Champions Awards 2023

Thursday, 1<sup>st</sup> June 2023



Comhairle Contae Fhine Gall  
**GRADAIM AN  
MHÉARA 2023**  
*Laochra Pobail*



Fingal County Council  
**MAYOR'S  
AWARDS 2023**  
*Community Champions*

# Mayor's *Introduction*



**It is with great pleasure that I ask the people of Fingal to join me as we recognise those extraordinary individuals who embody the spirit of selflessness, compassion and community spirit as part of this year's Community Champion Awards.**

These are the unsung heroes, the ordinary people doing extraordinary things, who have dedicated themselves to serving our community for the greater good. Their kindness and unwavering commitment to helping others make an immeasurable difference to our society.

Each day, I get to witness the countless acts of generosity and altruism performed by people across Fingal. This serves as a constant reminder that amidst the complexities and challenges of modern life, there is an inherent goodness that binds us together.

Our Community Champions come from all walks of life and are performing truly wonderful and inspiring deeds day in day out. What's more, they do this without seeking recognition or reward. They remind us that kindness is a language that transcends barriers and that the simplest acts of compassion can have far-reaching effects.

Such was the great response to the call out for nominations for Community Champions, we received over 230 entries from across the County. It has highlighted the large amount of positive roles and activities that people undertake to help others, be it for sporting, cultural, health or environmental reasons.

As the Mayor of Fingal, I am humbled and honoured to bear witness to the unwavering dedication and incredible work of so many individuals, and I hope that others can also see the lasting impact this has. It should inspire everyone to strive for a more inclusive and caring society, where no one is left behind, and where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

# Mayor's *Introduction*

The great array of community service examples which have been shared with us embodies the very essence of what it means to be an engaged and responsible citizen. From volunteering at local shelters to mentoring students, from organizing clean-up campaigns to leading fundraising initiatives for vital causes, the opportunities to make a difference are as diverse as our community itself. I believe it is a testament to the deep sense of connection we share, transcending boundaries of age, race, religion, and socioeconomic background.

So, to all those who serve our community for the greater good, I extend my deepest gratitude. Your kindness and unwavering commitment to making a difference does not go unnoticed, and your impact on the lives of countless individuals is immeasurable. What's more, you have reminded us that even the smallest acts of kindness have the power to transform lives and contribute to the betterment of society as a whole.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Howard Mahony". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

**Cllr. Howard Mahony, Mayor of Fingal.**

# List of nominees



## **Brid Rushe**

Brid is one of the founders of the Le Cheile Seniors Social Group, established in 2013. She saw a need for a social group in the area for seniors and went about setting one up. Her bubbly personality has made her the Big Golden Pin keeping the group together. Brid is one in a million and Le Cheile are very lucky to have her on the team. Brid works as an SNA and has never missed a committee meeting or afternoon with the group. She is truly a community spirit that gives so much to others.



## **Christy Dunne**

Christy is the head boxing coach in Baldoye boxing club and has been a key volunteer for 20 years now. Christy looks after over 90 kids weekly in the boxing club and impacts the lives of these kids in many different ways. As a boxing coach Christy has impacted the lives of 1000s of kids from all different backgrounds; a lot dealing with their own issues outside the club. He has done all this on a purely voluntary basis, often with personal sacrifice.



## **Liam Connor**

Liam is a dedicated community worker and promoter of all things associated with GAA and the Irish language. A member of Fingallians since he moved to Swords more than 50 years ago, Liam held many positions including Chairperson of the club for 6 years. He introduced and built the hurling and ladies football codes in the club and regularly holds conversation groups as gaeilge in the club where everyone is encouraged to speak the language. Liam embraces all things cultural and generations of young people have benefited from his work.



## **Ini Usanga**

Ini has been volunteering in the community for over 20 years, organising integration activities, bringing migrants and locals together to understand each other, create friendships, and support understanding of different cultures. Ini supports youths in confidence building programmes, summer camps, and interview skills. She also supports young migrants of the LGBT community and encourages youths of migrant origins to join extracurricular activities and stay in school and keep away from gang membership and anti-social behaviours.

# List of nominees



## **Barney Greene**

Barney, a north County Fingal legend at 91, is the organiser of the Annual Barney Greene Tractor run that, over 15 events, has raised over €138,000 for St. Francis Hospice. This year's event had 168 tractors, the largest ever number and raised €10,300. Every year, the event shows the incredible organisation skills and energy that Barney has; an event that everyone looks forward to every January for such a great cause.



## **Ger Kenny**

Ger never stops working to provide for the autistic community. She set up PLAN; they provide workshops and talks for parents to help empower them to help their autistic children. Little Seeds is a social club for autistic children and teens. There are occupational therapy sessions, art sessions and loads more. It's just so amazing and we'd be lost without PLAN and Little Seeds.



## **Michael O'Driscoll**

Michael is the definition of a community minded person. He single handedly maintains the gardens in our entire estate, which are kept immaculate at all times. The pride he takes is really something to admire. In addition to that he makes sure to check in on all elderly neighbours for shopping etc and recently had to stay with one lady who had had a stroke for 30 minutes while waiting on paramedics to arrive. I would go as far as to say he saved her life that day. The world would be a better place if there were more like him.



## **Helen Flaherty**

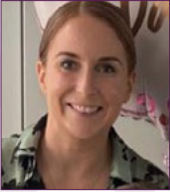
Helen has been teaching English Classes voluntary in the Donabate Portrane Community Centre; she spends extra hours there planning new lessons for life skills through cooking, making jewellery, and informing participants of events they can go to. Countless hours given every week with such kindness to help the non-English speaking community to integrate and be included in social events held in the community; to help them bond and make friendships through inclusion.

# List of nominees



## **Lesley Anne O'Brien**

Lesley Anne has worked tirelessly and selflessly for a number of years, advocating for appropriate levels of healthcare and support for children who have had to endure the discomfort and pain associated with their disability. Additionally Lesley Anne is a linchpin for information, guidance and assistance within not only her own community but far afield. All this she has accomplished with grace and dedication.



## **Jenny Brady Byrne**

Jenny works with kids with autism and other additional needs. Outside of her working hours, she calls to their houses, babysits, makes visuals, and makes appointments for the parents. She volunteers with Skerries Autism Friendly Town at all their events. She is a huge part of 130 families around the Fingal area. And she never looks for any thanks; she just loves being able to help.



## **Samantha O'Flanagan**

Samantha has become the cornerstone of our community, including organising regular litter picks followed by a community coffee, which ultimately led to the set up of our Residents Association and Neighbourhood Watch. It also led to neighbours, who moved in during Covid having the opportunity to meet their neighbours, and has massively improved the sense of community, and instilled a sense of pride in the area. She does a massive amount of behind the scene work that she never looks for credit for.



## **Levi Omokaro**

Levi works for the community through volunteering and dedicating himself to community work, especially the new Ukrainian members of the community. He teaches them English, helps them to organise classes, fill out their forms and giving them direction. This young man has been doing much for his community and he deserved to be encouraged to do more. He is ready to drive the community forward.

# List of nominees



## **Linda Scanlan**

Linda is the definition of a Community Champion and her many volunteer roles clearly show the high esteem she holds for her community. She volunteers with Gravity Autism Support, running weekly classes for teens with ASD, monthly family events and is responsible for organising Summer Camps, Parties and events to bring families of children with ASD into the community. Linda also dedicates her time to Special Olympics Ireland, encouraging and helping so many achieve their goal.



## **Peter Walsh**

For the past nine years, Peter has single handedly kept the area around Mary Brennan Park clean and litter free. Peter just goes quietly about his work and is never deterred come rain hail or even snow! Even after a few stays in hospital he still returns and goes straight back to work. We would really like to acknowledge Peter's contribution to the Village of Blanchardstown and the great example he provides.



## **Margaret Harris**

Margaret and a small group of local helpers hold an annual Irish Cancer Society Charity Walk in the Ward River Valley Park, Swords, every autumn. The event started after Margaret received a cancer diagnosis herself in 2003, which she beat, and has taken place every year since. The event has grown from around 30 participants in its first year to hundreds taking part each year since, raising over €100k down through the years for the Irish Cancer Society.



## **Larry Healy**

Larry works tirelessly in Dublin 15 leading Porterstown Panthers in jogging/running, cycling, hiking, and swimming. The Porterstown Panthers is a community voluntary group of like-minded people and Larry ensures the group actively live happier, healthier lives through exercise and engagement with each other. Larry organises jogging training sessions for all levels of fitness and ensuring everyone is involved and no one is on their own. Larry will always go beyond for anybody, and we are so truly grateful to him and to know him.

# List of nominees



## **Mary Buckley**

Mary works vigorously for the love of her community and its people. Mary is simply formidable, enhancing Rush for all, by establishing and developing trusting, respectful relationships with FCC, liaising with local businesses, farmers and tradesmen and dedicating hours and hours of her own time to manual intensive labour each and every week. She plays a vital role in the development of a welcoming Rush, planting, weeding, sweeping, edging, cleaning up areas at Spout Rd, on the main street, and at the 'Welcome to Rush' sign.



## **Val Farrell**

Val is the founder member of Sunshiny Days Summer Project. Over the past few years it has become more than just a summer project; it's a club run by dedicated volunteers under the guidance of Crosscare. The amount of work Val puts in behind the scenes is phenomenal. From organising trips for the children throughout the year, to getting funding from anyone willing to help with the clubs finances. She has a really great way with all the children who love and respect her so much.



## **Sabine McKenna**

Sabine is a powerhouse when it comes to voluntary community work in Skerries. Her selfless determination and drive are unique; a natural leader who has organised and facilitated so many local initiatives. One piece of her recent work that stands out is the open orchards project in which she was pivotal in seeking funding for the first three sites. These open orchards will provide many benefits for the community of Skerries, from biodiversity to the provision of 0 food miles produce for residents.



## **Michael Fitzgerald**

Michael is the groundsman at St Peregrines GAA, Camogie & Ladies Football Club in Mulhuddart and he has been doing that very valuable job on a voluntary basis for almost 30 Years. In his younger days Michael was a top man with the OPW parks department.



# List of nominees



## **Paul Bird**

Paul is a champion of the environment and a committed community volunteer in Lusk. Since his retirement, he has walked tens of thousands of kilometres of the local hinterland with his litter picker, camera and trusty sun hat/umbrella, to take a photo of the beauty of the local wildlife and assist in making their homes and feeding areas more suitable and free of litter. His latest campaign is trying to highlight the nuisance that discarded vapes have on the local environment.



## **Rebecca Nolan**

Rebecca is an athlete and a volunteer in Donabate Portrane Special Olympics Sports Club. Most of the 100+ athletes in the club are under the age of 14 years old and Becca is a wonderful role model to them. Becca is a consistent volunteer at club training sessions. The younger athletes look up to Becca; she has a lovely way of working with them. Becca has trained for and been selected to travel to Special Olympics World Games in Berlin this June, as a basketball official. She is a wonderful role model.



## **Susan Moran**

Susan is a gem for Sanctuary Runners in Fingal. Having been involved as a volunteer since 2019, she epitomises the Sanctuary Runner values of solidarity, friendship and respect for each member of the community in Fingal. She makes time each week to meet new members in Baleskin Reception Centre, many of whom have just arrived in Ireland. With the increase in people coming to Ireland, Susan has never been busier and has had to ensure new members in Ballymun and Santry are also welcomed in the same way. She does all this with a smile on her face and a hug for everyone.



## **Jimmy McDonald**

Jimmy is a local hero in Fancourt Heights; he works tirelessly keeping the estate looking well. The entrance to the estate has been transformed by Jimmy with shrubs and flowers and he keeps the grass and verges cut and in pristine condition. The Estate had a piece of waste ground where people were dumping rubbish; he has turned it into a wonderful nature garden with a bug hotel and bird boxes and fairy doors. Not only is Jimmy our wonderful gardener but he also helps older neighbours with their gardens and DIY.



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