



Department of Social and Family Affairs

€1m To Celebrate Families In Today's Ireland – Minister Coughlan

Mary Coughlan, Minister for Social and Family Affairs, has extended the closing date for applications to the scheme for support organisations and family groups to apply for awards totalling almost €1million to mark the UN International Year of the Family.

The once-off special awards are available to locally based family and community groups and to larger regional and national groups to mark this year, the tenth anniversary of the United Nations International Year of the Family. The closing date was the end of April but has been extended to Friday 7th May, due to the postal dispute.

"There has been a tremendously imaginative response to the scheme which aims to celebrate our families in all their forms from right across the country," said Minister Coughlan.

"Many suggestions and applications have been made via my Department's internet set and by e-mail. However, I have consulted with officials in my Department and feel it would be best to allow another week to ensure that there is as full a response as possible.

"I am completely open to suggestions as to how family groups can mark this historic year. Each award application will be judged on its own merits," said Minister Coughlan.

"I am inviting families and their support groups to apply for awards - up to €2,000 for locally based family and community groups - whether they be community groups, support groups, a street full of families, a parish council or any other such groups to assist them in celebrating the family in their area."

"More substantial awards will also be available to larger regional or national groups for once off events or projects focussing on families and family life in today's Ireland. Preference will be given to support projects of lasting value," said Minister Coughlan.

"Families still remain the basic units in our society forming a crucial social safety net for improving the well being of individual family members and promoting social cohesion more widely."

"I must also stress that families make a major contribution to economic development through their support of family members in the workforce, their contribution to the nurture and education of the next generation and their care of other dependent family members," said Minister Coughlan.

Minister Coughlan's Department of Social and Family Affairs has created a website dedicated to the 10th Anniversary of the International Year of the Family. Information on planned events, the special awards scheme and the International Day of the Family can be found at

<http://iyf2004.welfare.ie>.

ENDS April 11th 2004

Note to News Editors

Applicants are asked to refer to one or more of the general themes, in their applications, that have already featured in the family consultation forums hosted around the country last year by Minister Coughlan, namely:



Department of Social and Family Affairs

Parenting and childhood

Balancing work and family life

Relationships

Family as carer

Community support for families

Awards will be on a once-off basis and must be used and accounted for within the year.

Application forms and further information are available on the website <http://iyf2004.welfare.ie> or from:

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EU Presidency

As part of our EU Presidency programme, Ireland is hosting a major International Conference in Dublin Castle on 13-14 May entitled "Families, Change and European Social Policy" which will be one of the first social policy conferences of the Enlarged Union. The overall aim of the conference is to facilitate exchanges of views on the challenges addressing families in all EU countries and the sharing of ideas and experiences on how we can best work to meet these challenges.

The International Day of the Family will be celebrated on the 15th of May.