



*Pictured above:* RehabCare client Maria Brady, with Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform, Dermot Ahern TD, at the Celebration of Achievement Evening in the Fairways Hotel, Dundalk.

# RehabCare in Dundalk Celebrates Success!

**T**HE LIFE OF AN IRISH POLITICIAN IS AN ENDLESS stream of official openings, presentation ceremonies and receptions. Let's face it, Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform, Dermot Ahern TD, has probably been to more official events than he has had hot dinners!

So, it would take something very special for the Government Minister to return to the stage at the end of the formal speeches to describe just how touched and inspired he had been by the thoughts and sentiments expressed. But that is exactly what happened in Dundalk

recently at the RehabCare certification ceremony. Twenty-eight people from the RehabCare centre in Coes Road, Dundalk, had gathered at the Fairways Hotel to be presented with certificates marking their achievements over the past year by Minister Ahern. They were joined by their families, friends, RehabCare staff members, representatives from the Health Service Executive and external organisations, as well as by many local employers. In fact, such a large crowd gathered to support the RehabCare service users that there was standing room only at the event.

The certificates were awarded for achievements in manual handling, the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL), Long Service Awards and Driver Test Theory.

Speaking at the event, Peter McKeivitt, RehabCare General Manager, North East/Midlands said, "These programmes have given those who use our services the opportunity to learn new skills, develop new interests and to grow in confidence. It has been an extremely positive experience for all involved and everyone at RehabCare would like to offer our congratulations on their achievements."

Among those speaking at the event were Alma Carroll and John Moore who together had conducted an accessibility audit of public buildings in Dundalk. They told guests of the problems they encountered and the most accessible buildings in the town. Other service users spoke about the importance of setting goals and about the 40 or so different programmes available at the centre.

The ceremony also marked the launch by Minister Ahern of a new RehabCare brochure specifically designed to encourage local businesses to employ more people with disabilities.

The Part-time Work Initiative brochure not only highlights the benefits of employing people with disabilities, but also provides valuable information on the many supports



*Pictured above: The staff team in RehabCare, Coes Road, with the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform, Dermot Ahern TD, (front centre), at the Celebration of Achievement Evening are (back row, left to right) Elizabeth McArdle, Rosaleen Philips, Attracta Burns, Naomi Millen, (front row, left to right) Stephen Caraher and Deirdre Quinn.*

that RehabCare provides to the business community when employing a person with a disability from a RehabCare service.

Among the local employers present at the event was Linda Stewart, proprietor of a local beauty salon. Linda spoke briefly about her positive experiences employing people with disabilities and announced that she would soon be providing employment for a third person who uses RehabCare's service for her Mizu Beauty Salon and soon-to-be opened Mizu Café in Dundalk.

Ms. Stewart wasn't the only local employer to pledge jobs for RehabCare service users. According to Deirdre Quinn, Community Services Manager, RehabCare, a total of four jobs have been secured for service users on the basis of the event in the Fairways Hotel. What's more, countless more employers have been made aware of RehabCare and the commitment, enthusiasm and talents of its service users.

The atmosphere of celebration continued right until the end of the night, when Maria Brady stepped up to the microphone. Maria, who has attended RehabCare in Coes Road for nearly a decade, brought the house down with her rendition of the classic "How do you solve a problem like Maria?" It was a performance that earned her a big hug from the Minister for Justice and proved a fitting finale to a wonderful night. ■

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