

FÁILTE to ABLE!

In an exciting new development for the ABLE Awards, Rehab and the Excellence Ireland Quality Association, in conjunction with Fáilte Ireland, the national tourism board, have embarked on a new campaign targeting the award at the hospitality and tourism industries.



Pictured: National Learning Network's current and former students, (left to right) Donncha O'Donovan, Caoimhe Murphy, Julija Jakovleva and Paulo Segurado.

THE JOINT INITIATIVE follows on from the launch of the ABLE Awards in June 2008 as the new best practice standard and quality mark for accessibility. This new initiative with Fáilte Ireland replaces the Validated Accessible Scheme for hotels, restaurants, self-catering accommodation, bed and breakfasts and wider tourism attractions, which has been in operation since 2002. With more than ten per cent of people in Ireland living with a disability, the award provides the tourist industry with an opportunity to grow market share by adhering to the highest standards available in the areas of accessibility, customer service and employment for people with disabilities.

John McEntee is the Business Development Manager with Rehab Enterprises. He says that the reaction of business in all sectors of the economy to the awards has been very positive. "People are reacting well to the initiative and see it as positive, not only for those with disabilities, but for anyone who has an accessibility need – people with luggage, people with buggies, etc. Businesses see the awards as sitting well with other quality awards that they have received and recognise the value of offering accessibility not only to their customers but also to their staff.

"We currently have 40 outlets engaged in the assessment process and are hoping to have our first ABLE graduates before the end of the year, which promises to be a major milestone for the awards. Our ultimate aim is that ABLE will become a key part of the way we do business in this country and we are looking at partnering with other organisations like Fáilte Ireland to spread the ABLE word to other sectors. We are very excited about

where we are going and have already had some very positive discussions with other organisations which we are very confident will progress in the coming months."

Deirdre Fitzsimons is a Human Resources Manager with the TIFCO group of hotels, which includes the leading Dublin hotels, the Burlington Hotel, Clontarf Castle Hotel, Crowne Plaza Northwood and Crowne Plaza Blanchardstown. The hotel chain has just embarked on the assessment process for the ABLE Awards. "We initially became interested in this award as we are constantly improving our product for our stakeholders. It is a vital part of TIFCO's business strategy to be recognised as an equal opportunities employer; we have always been known to strive towards product and service excellence, ensuring that our products are user-friendly and accessible to all.

"As with every project TIFCO Hotels undertakes, we have to ensure that it is measurable and that we are able to benchmark our results and we are very pleased with the progress we have made to date with the ABLE Awards." ■

Who to contact

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