

Orla Dolan being presented with her award by Bank of Ireland Governor Laurence Crowley.

An NTDI student from Dundalk is about to fulfil her dream of becoming a nurse after being awarded a coveted Bank of Ireland Millennium Scholars Trust scholarship.

Twenty-three year old Orla Dolan showed such determination and drive in battling back against anorexia nervosa that she was chosen for the scholarship from more than 900 applicants around the country.

Orla was nominated by NTDI Dundalk where she recently completed a Fresh Start course, which enabled her to gain experience of nursing work.

"I managed to get two work placements during the course. One was with Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital and the other was in Drumcar. Having completed them I was more certain than ever that nursing was the right career for me," said Orla, who is the mother of a young son.

"I hadn't worked for two years because of the anorexia. That was very hard to deal with, but my son was born towards the end of my recovery and he really helped me to keep going.

"Anorexia is a very misunderstood illness and proper treatment can be difficult to access in Ireland and many of the medical staff treating me admitted that they really didn't understand it. I was lucky, but I still don't really understand how this happened to me."

Orla, who is using her scholarship fund to pursue her nursing studies in Dundalk, said she became anorexic after returning home from a stint teaching English as a voluntary worker in Borneo. "But having the course to concentrate on gives me a solid future to look forward to and really consolidates my recovery." She said that after writing in to tell the judges about herself, she was selected to go forward for interview.

"The interview process was pretty tough and it was in front of a panel of three people. They were very nice and it was quite a relaxed interview, but it



Orla's nursing ambition

was nerve-wracking nonetheless," declared Orla, who received her award from Bank of Ireland Governor, Laurence Crowley. NTDI Dundalk area manager, Michael

O'Callaghan said that everyone at the centre was delighted that Orla was getting the award. "She's a lovely girl and she'll make a wonderful nurse," he said.

Three 60 wins kudos and a nomination

Three 60 – the RTE television series which was initiated and sponsored by the Rehab Group – beat off competition from around 800 TV shows to win a nomination for one of this year’s major honours at the Irish Film and Television Awards.

The eight-part series produced by Animo TV for RTE won widespread critical acclaim when it was screened earlier this year and was one of just five nominations for the prestigious Best Lifestyle Television Programme Award at the event which was attended by a host of stars such as Pierce Brosnan and John Cleese.

Presented by Bethan Collins, the Three 60 series greatly exceeded its viewership targets, peaking at 172,000 viewers, which was seen as an extraordinary achievement for a first series pitted against the heavyweight Irish and UK soaps.

The other nominees for the Best Lifestyle Award were The Restaurant, Manchan sa tSín, Wild Trials and Show Me The Money, with the last named carrying off the award.

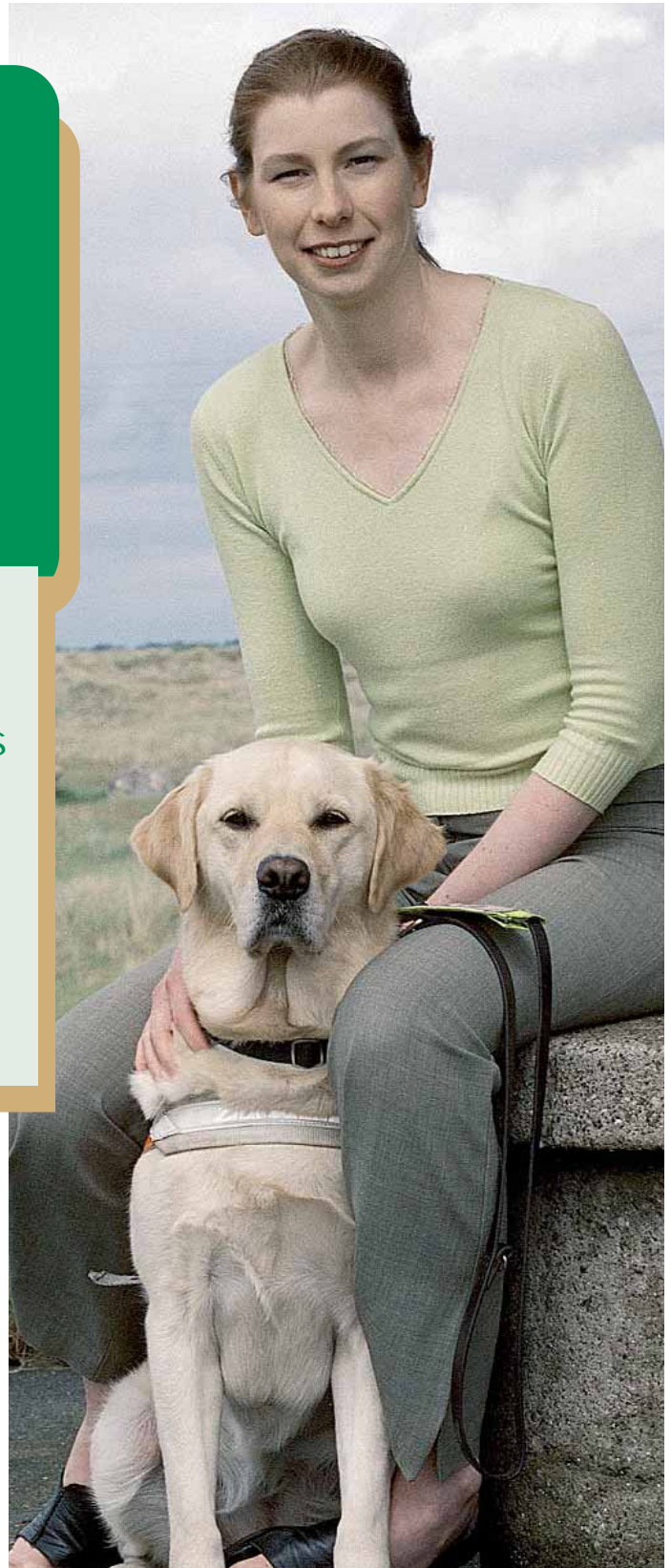
The series presented a wide range of human-interest stories including topics such as narcolepsy, stammering, teenage sexuality or agoraphobia. The series also explored attitudes on the ground to disability with regular correspondent Donal Toolan who talked to a broad array of individuals ranging from transition year students to media consultant Terry Prone.

Three 60 also featured short post card pieces exploring how difficult and inaccessible the world can be for disabled people. Each episode focused on a particular issue facing individuals with disabilities such as health apartheid, the costs of disability, the benefits trap, or stigma and mental health.

Rehab Group head of communications Chris Macey said the award nomination was a tribute to the quality of the series, but what was really important was that the viewing figures proved there is an appetite and an interest among the wider Irish public in learning more about important disability issues.

“This series has provided a platform to blow stereotypical images away and to show people with disabilities participating in

Heavyweight
soaps fail to
keep viewers
away from
Rehab-
backed RTE
series on
disability.



Bethan Collins, the Three 60 series presenter. The programme peaked at 172,000 viewers.

the world the same as anyone else - getting a job, living as independently as possible, having a family and contributing to the community.”

As a result Rehab was now involved in talks to participate in a second series of Three 60 which could re-appear on the nation’s TV screens for a new run next spring.

An extraordinary new NTDI programme is enabling hospital patients in County Donegal to receive high grade IT training even whilst undergoing kidney dialysis.

When Noel McGeever underwent a kidney transplant operation last year he knew his life was never going to be the same again. Apart from the enforced changes to his lifestyle, Noel was told he would have to give up his career as a driver.

Even in the midst of all the other challenges he had to face up to, this could have been a serious worry for the County Donegal man. But thanks to an innovative new NTDI training programme – the first of its kind in the country – Noel was able to start the process of re-training even while he was receiving kidney dialysis in Letterkenny General Hospital.

“I had to completely reassess my future career as a result of my kidney failure and transplant operation last year,” says Noel, who is now on a waiting list for a pancreas transplant operation. “I used to be a driver, but it involves too much sitting behind the wheel, and the doctors recommended that I look at other career options. NTDI’s Information Technology by Distance Learning programme offered the perfect opportunity for me to learn a new skill and gain useful IT qualifications. I’d just started the course when I received my kidney transplant, but after a short break I was able to continue my studies while recuperating at home.”

The pilot programme was instigated in 2003 by staff at the renal dialysis unit at Letterkenny General Hospital. According to clinical nurse manager, Sr Roisin McLoughlin, staff had recognised the benefit of introducing a training programme that would not only help counteract the considerable boredom associated with having to spend up to four hours a day, three days a week on dialysis, but would also offer patients the opportunity to gain qualifications and perhaps further their careers in the future.

“I never had any experience at all with computers,” says Noel, “so I was a little bit daunted at the prospect of starting a course which involves thirty hours of study per week. But I’ve found it easier than I expected. There’s a great support network, my tutor calls in every week to see me and



Dialysis?

she’s never more than a phone call away.

“I’d really recommend the programme to anybody in similar circumstances to myself. Because of it I feel I’m much more confident about re-entering the workforce.”

The Donegal branch of the Irish Kidney Association (IKA) donated the necessary funding for the renal unit’s three laptops and also approached NTDI about providing the distance learning course within the hos-

pital renal unit. The programme was then developed by Eleanor Campbell, NTDI’s distance learning instructor following consultation with both the IKA and the renal dialysis unit at the hospital.

“The pilot programme is an excellent example of partnership,” says Sean D’Arcy, area manager, NTDI. “The three organisations, NTDI, IKA and Letterkenny General Hospital have worked closely together,



Ann Hunter, a participant on NTDI's IT by Distance Learning programme, which is being offered to patients undergoing kidney dialysis treatment at Letterkenny General Hospital.

'My dialysis sessions just seem to fly by when I'm working on the laptop. I knew nothing of computers before I started' - Ann

No problem!

developing and implementing this training course. It's hoped to build on the success to date and develop the module even further during 2005."

The training programme, which is funded by FAS, has been widely welcomed by staff and patients alike at the hospital, and over the past year has attracted considerable interest from other renal units throughout the country.

Ann Hunter from Castlefin, County Donegal, has been receiving dialysis three times a week at Letterkenny General Hospital since October 2003. She started the IT by Distance Learning course in February 2004 and shares Noel's enthusiasm for the programme. "It's wonderful," says Ann. "My dialysis sessions just seem to fly by when I'm working on the laptop. I knew nothing of computers before I started,

but I'm amazed at how well I'm progressing. NTDI provided me with a computer and printer to work on at home, and I work away on that on the days I'm not on dialysis. The course hasn't only helped me to build up my computer skills, it's also boosted my confidence. I'm really looking forward to joining the workforce in the future and putting my new skills and qualifications to good use."



NRAC National Committee members Simon Buggy, Patrick Hargadon and Jimmy Donner on their graduation day in UCD.

Three NRAC members recently sampled the atmosphere of university life in UCD. They not only liked it but emerged from its portals with distinction.

Honoured citizens

Donning caps and gowns, three members of NRAC's National Committee were in UCD last November for a graduation ceremony in which they received NUI Certificates in Citizenship and Advocacy from the University.

The NRAC National Committee members, Simon Buggy, Jimmy Donner and Patrick Hargadon, were joined by Michelle Joyce, NRAC development officer, in receiving their certificates from Professor Mary Clayton, UCD's Vice President for Students at a special graduation ceremony in Belfield.

The course, which took place in May and

June, is the first in Ireland to be offered by a University for students with learning disabilities and is designed to give participants the opportunity to experience student life in UCD.

In total, 17 students and five supporters attended classes at the University two days a week studying everything from rights and responsibilities, communications, and active citizenship, to information technology and horticulture.

Initial feedback from the pilot year of the programme has been extremely positive, not least from the NRAC participants.

"I found the course really interesting and learned more about my rights as an Irish person," said Jimmy Donner.

"I'd advise people who get the chance to do this course. It really helped me to express myself more."

Simon Buggy from RehabCare Douglas agrees. "I'd recommend anyone who has the opportunity, to go to university and do this course. I really enjoyed meeting other students, from all walks of life, and I'm still in contact with most of them."

Said Michelle Joyce: "The Certificate in Citizenship and Advocacy course not only enabled the students to learn more about

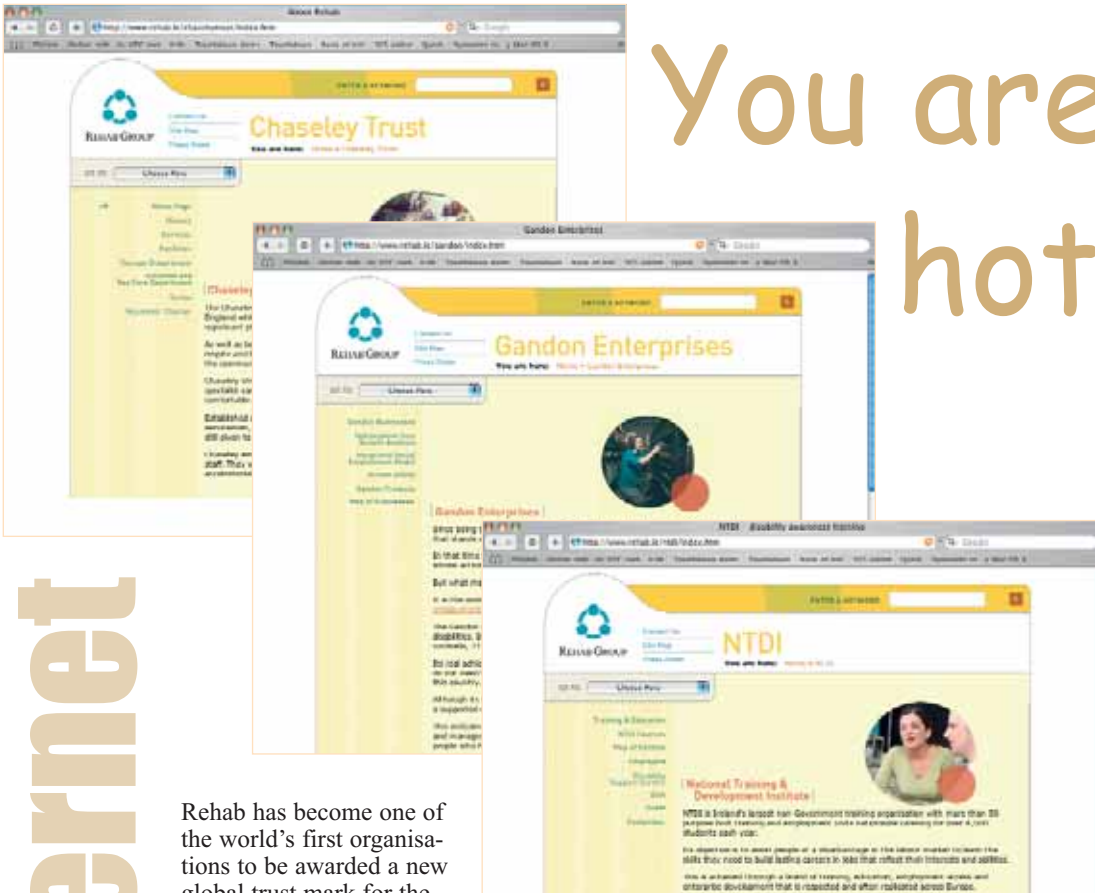
advocacy and experience University life, but as NRAC's supporter on the programme, the course offered me the opportunity to network with other disability organisations, so that in the future we can work on projects."

"I really enjoyed meeting other students, from all walks of life, and I'm still in contact with most of them."

studies

You are the hottest link!

internet



Our website has gained admirers and a new quality award.

Rehab has become one of the world's first organisations to be awarded a new global trust mark for the quality of its website.

The Group's Communications Department was one of six recipients of the W-Mark Global Website Certification at the National Quality and Excellence Awards 2004, along with organisations including Hewlett Packard, Friends First and Eagle Star.

Following the launch of the W-Mark in July, each of the award winners underwent a rigorous audit process to achieve the global recognition and certification trust mark. The W-Mark will now be rolled out globally in conjunction with the Excellence Ireland Quality Association's (EIQA) international partners.

The EIQA product, which brings together quality associations from the UK, USA, Asia and Europe, allows organisations to have their websites independently audited under a number of criteria to ensure excellence and best practice. Ireland is the global headquarters for the certification process.

Speaking at the awards presentation, Mr Paul O'Grady, Managing Director, EIQA said: "Customer trust is the key ingredient for conducting successful business over the Internet. A well designed website represents an opportunity to attract customers and the first impression is vital for the development of customer trust.

Enterprises and organisations that excel in inviting customers into their businesses



Liz Klein, member of the W-Mark advisory board; Chris Macey, head of communications, Rehab Group and Paul O'Grady, managing director, EIQA at the presentation of the W-Mark Global Website Certification.

through website excellence will grow their business and develop a brand value faster than their competitors. We are delighted that the first global companies to be certified are Irish and look forward to celebrating their success."

The *W-Mark* enables organisations to have their websites independently evaluated to globally recognised standards. They are rigorously audited under a number of headings such as: consistency and appearance; privacy compliance management; navigation, data and information security management and customer service commitment. A certification report is issued to the organisation following the initial audit. There are two audits per annum conducted to ensure consistency in awarding the quality mark.



Rehab Group chief executive, Frank Flannery accepts a National Quality Excellence award on behalf of the Rehab Group from Paul O'Grady, managing director, EIQA.

Disability organisations want to work with the Government to address fundamental flaws in the Disability Bill.

The Disability Bill 2004, one of the most long awaited pieces of legislation, is one of four elements that the Government announced in September as part of an overall National Disability Strategy, with the aim of supporting the participation of people with disabilities in society.

The Bill is currently before the Dáil and the coming months will see amendments proposed by many organisations, including Rehab Group. To date, the process of developing the Bill has involved much consultation, which is set to continue.

In April 2003, Government asked the National Disability Authority (NDA) to convene a Disability Legislation Consultation Group (DLCG). This group consists of eight umbrella organisations, which between them represent over 507 disability organisations, and many thousands of people with disabilities and their families. The NDA chairperson, Angela Kerins, who is also director of public affairs and group development, Rehab Group and the chief executive of RehabCare, is chairperson of the DLCG.

The DLCG members worked closely together to establish the core elements that were required for new disability legislation. These included an independent assessment of needs and access to appropriate services within agreed timeframes; advocacy services; access to mainstream services for people with disabilities - i.e. people with disabilities being able to use the same services as everyone else; physical access to public



Taoiseach Bertie Ahern at the launch of the National Disability Strategy, Alexander Hotel, Dublin last September. On left: Members of the Disability Legislation Consultation Group outside Leinster House last year.

services; accessible public information; disability awareness training for public bodies; and the enforcement of the 3% employment target in public service employment. Following many meetings between the DLCG, Government officials, Ministers and the Taoiseach, the National Disability Strategy, was published in September.

The DLCG has now comprehensively examined the Disability Bill 2004. A num-

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The long road to equal rights

ber of fundamental flaws have been identified including the definition of disability, the lack of a clear right to an independent assessment of need and the lack of a right to progress on identified needs. Other items identified as requiring amendments in the Bill include the need to make the complaints system accessible; the need for a more independent appeals system; the need for clear ring fencing of disability funding; the need for a clear definition of public services; taking account of the needs of people with disabilities in planning undertaken by Government and public bodies; and a requirement for a review date for the legislation. The DLCG wishes to continue to engage with Minister Fahey and officials to address these fundamental flaws and

hope to meet the Minister and Taoiseach regarding the Government's response.

"We recognise that there are fundamental flaws in the Bill, but we are willing to work with the Government to address these," said Angela Kerins. "The Comhairle (Amendment) Bill itself needs some amendments and we would like to see disability included in the plans of all Government departments, not simply within specific sectors. Without doubt there have been significant improvements within the whole area of disability in recent years and we would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge this, but as the cliché goes, there has been a lot done, but there is an awful lot more to do. People with disabilities should have the rights to the necessary

supports to enable them to access the same rights as all other citizens in Ireland,"

The three other elements of the National Disability Strategy are the Comhairle (Amendment) Bill, providing for the provision of advocacy services to people with disabilities by the state agency, Comhairle; six Sectoral Plans, for certain Government Departments, to outline how they will implement measures to improve their services to people with disabilities, and a multi annual funding package to implement the strategy.

Rehab Group personnel have participated strongly in the process, with Rehab Group chief executive, Frank Flannery, representing the Not for Profit Business Association on the DLCG, in addition to Angela Kerins' role. Rehab Group recently made a submission to the Joint Oireachtas

Committee on Justice, Equality, Defence and Women's Rights, and the Rehab Group pre-budget submission called for adequate investment to ensure that the multi annual funding element of the National Disability Strategy was sufficient.

The next few months will be important as the Disability Bill progresses through the Dáil and amendments are put forward. Rehab Group will continue to participate in the consultation process. By reaching consensus and working together with other disability organisations and Government agencies, it is hoped that flaws can be eliminated and that the new legislation, when enacted, will provide an appropriate framework to ensure the equal participation of all people with disabilities in society.