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The **Royal Institute of the Architects** of Ireland (**RIAI**) and the Simon Communities of Ireland have launched the seventh annual **RIAI Simon Open Door Weekend**. People in Donegal can log on to www.simonopendoor.ie to book a one-hour consultation with the local **RIAI** architect of their choice in return for a 50 donation to the Simon Communities of Ireland. All architects give their time for free and every cent raised goes directly to the charity. Over a thousand people took part in the initiative last year and almost 250,000 has been raised to date. This year, the Simon Open Door will take place over Saturday and Sunday, May 7 and 8.

One of the themes of this year's campaign is sustainability and low cost changes that will help people to make their house a home while also reducing their energy bills. The Simon Open Door Weekend provides people in Donegal with an opportunity to change the way they look at their home and see if they are using their space in the smartest-and greenest- way. Improving the energy efficiency of a home does not have to be costly and the Simon Open Door architects will be giving advice on small improvements that can deliver a big difference in terms of both energy usage and costs.

Antoin and Tarla MacGabhann from MacGabhann Architects, Letterkenny are one of the participating architects in Donegal. They have been architects for 20 years. They are taking part in the Simon Open Door Weekend because, "The **RIAI** Simon Open Door Weekend gives Donegal people a chance to improve their own home while also helping those who are experiencing homelessness. During your hour long consultation, you can explore your options - to create more space to suit a growing family, or to make your house more energy efficient to live more sustainably and keep down the bills. There is no project too big or small- architects can give advice on anything from extensions to insulation, boilers, windows and lighting."

Also speaking at the launch was Mary Lee Rhodes, Chairperson, Simon Communities of Ireland. She said, "The current economic crisis is impacting on us all, but most heavily on those the margins of our society; people who are homeless, people who are at risk of homelessness and people with many related needs. Simon Community is about believing in people; believing in the people who turn to the eight local Simon communities around the country eve-

ry day, believing in the thousands of volunteers and Simon supporters, and believing that with the appropriate housing, care and support people can and do leave homelessness behind. Now, more than ever, we need the support of the public."

She added, "We are delighted to once again partner with the **RIAI** on this excellent initiative. On behalf of everyone at the Simon Communities of Ireland, I want to sincerely thank all the architects who have signed up to give their services free of charge again this year and to those members of the public who's donations demonstrate the kindness and generosity being shown to Simon during difficult times."