



Publication: Mayo News

Date: Tuesday, April 20, 2010

Page: L 1

Extract: 1 of 1

Circulation: 10,569

Author: ÁINE RYAN

Headline: Mayo architects open doors for homeless

Mayo architects open doors for homeless

ÁINE RYAN

SIX Mayo architect practises have this year signed up to the worthy Simon Communities of Ireland Open Door initiative. The innovative drive, now in its sixth year, has already raised over €200,000 for the Simon Community, which supports homeless people throughout the country in a number of ways.

Simon Open Door is a unique fundraising event where architects from all over Ireland provide house-design advice to members of the public in return for a €50 donation to the Simon Communities of Ireland. The collaboration is a partnership between the Royal Institute of Architects of Ireland and the Simon Communities of Ireland.

The Simon Communities of Ireland help homeless people to find homes of their own. The organisation also provides supports to enable people to remain in their homes while addressing ongoing challenges.

Speaking to *The Mayo News*, Ms Finola Reilly, an architect with participating Westport practise, Cox Power, observed that Galway Simon Community is very appreciative of the initiative.

"Marlene O'Connor, the CEO of Galway Simon Community told me that this branch of Simon has been in existence for 30 years supporting people in the west of Ireland. She said that while homelessness is more visible in city areas, there is also a hidden rural homelessness which is most evident in very inappropriate accommodation and involuntary sharing," Ms Reilly said.

Ms Reilly explained that the project invites anyone planning to construct, improve or extend their homes to have an hour-long consultation with an architect. In advance of the consultation, participants are advised to gather as much information as possible on the house or site in question. For instance, an ordinance survey map will allow the architect to advise on sun-

light and orientation, which can achieve significant energy savings as well as improve the enjoyment of the home. Planning documents and survey drawings, if they exist, are also helpful, as are photographs of the house and site in question.

The closing date for participation is Friday next, April 23, with the initiative scheduled for Saturday and Sunday, April 24 and 25. Interested members of the public are advised to sign up at their earliest convenience. Further information, visit www.simonopendoor.ie/booking. Co Mayo architects include Cox Power Architects, Westport; Axo Architects, Castlebar; McGann Scahill Architects, Westport; Mark Stephens, Foxford; Grady Carr, Westport & Simon J Kelly & Partners, Westport.