

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

# **BRIDGING THE AGE GAP THROUGH THE 'ART' OF CONVERSATION**

- Intergenerational "Women's Work" Project Exhibition Opens in Ennistymon, Clare

**Ennistymon, County Clare, IRELAND, 10<sup>th</sup> May 2007** – A groundbreaking art exhibition examining the relationship between young and old will be launched at the Courthouse Studios and Gallery, Parliament St., Ennistymon, Co. Clare on Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> May. An Open evening for the public, meanwhile, will take place on Friday, 18<sup>th</sup> May from 4-7pm.

The 'Women's Work' Project is the brainchild of local artist Sara Foust and explores the traditions and changes faced by the women of North Clare throughout the past 70 years. The initiative involved numerous meetings, held at the Ragairne Room in Ennistymon Community Hospital, between over 60 women and nine transition-year girls of Scoil Mhuire Ennistymon.

According to Ms. Sara Foust, Director, Women's Work Project, "*The modern Ennistymon Courthouse Studios and Gallery, located in the heart of North Clare, has been transformed into a series of intimate sitting rooms with loving portraits, and stories about the community and the lives of women through the years. The exhibition celebrates the one thing which unites a diverse group of women young and old, one thing which has brought them together over the past 6 months - the Women's Work Project*".

"*The women have enthralled the teenage girls with recollections of herbal cures, cooking on the open hearth, old-fashioned childcare, butter making, and other details of everyday life of a woman growing up in Clare over the past 70 years. In return, the young women have paid careful attention and have each researched their own topics through the interviews*", Ms. Foust continued.

Research undertaken throughout the Project has been compiled and presented in a variety of ways in the exhibition. There are hand-bound books made by the girls with recipes of baking and herbal cures, a compiled account of the daily life of a Clare Countrywoman, an account of the local techniques of butter making, among others. The books are presented in tableaux with collected photographs taken of participating women

in Ennistymon Community Hospital. Visitors to the gallery will also see a collection of portrait drawings by one of the students, as well as a photo-essay depicting the faces of women young and old.

Commenting on the role of the transition-year students in the Project, Ms. Foust said, *“The project offers discovery-based learning to students in their transition year, and collaboration with older participants through a partnership with the local community hospital.”*

Ms. Foust explained, *“Within the format of the Project, each student pursues a line of inquiry of their own choosing, developing this original material into a unique end product. This self-directed learning leads students to develop critical thinking and creative decision-making abilities.”*

Also on view throughout the week long exhibition will be a documentary film, made by Fergus Tighe, about the ‘Women’s Work’ Project. For months, the local filmmaker followed the course of the project with his camera, shooting footage of interviews, baking lessons, and bookbinding workshops.

Meanwhile, the intergenerational Project has facilitated Reminiscence therapy, headed by Diversional Therapy Clinical Nurse Specialist Mary Lucas, for the participating women.

*“Sharing these stories helps the women young and old to understand and preserve the cultural heritage of ‘Women’s Work’”,* Ms. Foust concluded.

The ‘Women’s Work’ Project Exhibition opens to the public on Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> May and runs from 12-4pm each day until Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2007. An Open Evening for the public will take place from 4-7pm on Friday 18<sup>th</sup> May.

The ‘Women’s Work’ Project has been developed in collaboration with the ECHO Community Group, and funded by the Arts Office of Clare Co. Council, Health Services Executive Services for Older People, Ennistymon Community Hospital. The initiative is grant-aided under the LEADER National Rural Development Programme. Individual members of the North Clare Community have also supported the Project.

For further information contact

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