



Coláiste Mhuire gan Smál, Luimneach
~ Ollscoil Luimnigh ~

Mary Immaculate College, Limerick
~ University of Limerick ~

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Special Olympics Gold Medallist, Stephen McGrath, and Mary Immaculate College Receive Best Practice Award in Supporting Employment

Congratulations to Special Olympics Gold Medallist, Stephen McGrath, from Crecora, Co. Limerick, who was recently awarded with an Irish Association of Supported Employment (IASSE) National Best Practice Award, presented by Minister for Mental Health and Disability, Minister John Maloney for his work in Mary Immaculate College, Limerick.

IASSE is a national voluntary organisation established in 1994 with the aim of promoting and developing supported employment throughout Ireland. IASSE is the representative voice of almost 800 members in Ireland who in turn work with over 5,000 people with disabilities through a range of supported employment initiatives. IASSE operates seven regional branches throughout Ireland and this year for the first time they introduced a Best Practice Award in Supporting Employment in recognition of the excellent work that is being undertaken by member organisations and to highlight the achievements and success of people with disabilities who are availing of the supported employment model.

Stephen came to Mary Immaculate College through the Daughters of Charity Services for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities and Workaccess on a work placement offer and has been employed in Mary Immaculate College's Maintenance Division for the past six years. His role has developed and grown over the years and he now has responsibility for recycling and helping the environment within the College. This job provides both a community service and protects the environment with the added advantage of cost-saving for the College as they are recycling as opposed to land fill. Following on-going training Stephen's position is now a specialist one as he has become an expert in this field.

Speaking on the innovativeness of this work placement, **Rose Servitova**, Stephen's **Work Placement Officer with the Daughters of Charity** said *"this placement is an excellent example of Supported Employment Best Practice as it displays both inclusion and equality. It is an example of where a person is considered for a career and not just a job – where the department and role have evolved with the person by maximising his abilities and where the employer recognises the real value the person is making to the College"*. She went on to commend **Brian Kirby, Buildings Manager** with Mary Immaculate College, for the opportunity he has afforded Stephen through this placement and for the on-going support systems the College provides to Stephen. *"Stephen's colleagues do not focus on his disability but rather on his abilities and pay tribute to him for his excellent contribution. The importance of his participation in a community setting, integrating with peers and colleagues, and to be given his own area of responsibility cannot be underestimated. The increase in Stephen's self-esteem and independence are the greatest achievement of this placement."*

Congratulating Stephen on his award **Brian Kirby, Buildings Manager of Mary Immaculate College**, said *"To me, Stephen, the Daughters of Charity, Mary Immaculate College and of course the environment are all in a win win situation with this recycling project, a project I started here ten years ago. Stephen's role in this project is very important as we produce lots of waste material as is normal in a college the size of ours. He takes his work very seriously in the Recycling / Green area, has excellent punctuality and dependability and gets on great with all of his colleagues. Any company, small or large, would benefit hugely by having a member of their staff who is as hard working and as dedicated as Stephen is"*.

Stephen, who is a gold medallist holder in 11 Aside Soccer from the 2003 Special Olympics, said on receipt of the award, *"I am delighted to receive this award and to have met Minister John Maloney. It means an awful lot to me to work in Mary Immaculate College with such a lovely team of people"*.



*Pictured: Stephen with his work colleagues from MIC's Building & Maintenance Department
L-R: Joe Carey, John O'Brien, Stephen McGrath, Rose Servitova, Work Placement Officer with Daughters of
Charity, Brian Kirby, Buildings Manager with MIC, Mike Spillane & Paul Kirby*