

Refurbished charity

The Roscommon Women's Network board, staff and volunteers celebrated the opening of the newly refurbished charity shop Social Enterprise recently.

Tara Farrell, Chairperson of Roscommon Women's Network opened the celebrations by welcoming the large crowd that turned out to mark this occasion. Tara specially welcomed Cathaoirleach Cllr Orla Leyden, Deputy Eugene Murphy, Cllr Ivan Connaughton, Cllr Kathleen Shanagher and also Pat Murtagh, Senior Executive Officer Roscommon County Council.

Tara stated that the refurbishment was funded by the Roscommon County Council Community Facilities grant 2017 and the refurbishment work including all carpentry and painting was carried out by the very talented local artist, Michelle Fallon. Michelle spoke at the event and explained that she ran creative upcycling workshops with the RWN volunteers and trainees in early 2017 under the Roscommon County Council environment initiative "Find it, Fix it, Flog it". Michelle said "I am delighted to see the Creative Corner being added to continuously and the volunteers tell me that the customers



Helen Hunt, Babara Ryan, Mary Kelly, Fidelma Shaughnessy, Stephen Ryan, Teresa Sweeney, Marie O'Brien, Alice Cahill, Karen Joyce, Imelda Flanagan, Jan Haywood at the re-opening of the Roscommon Women's Network Shop in Castlereagh. Pic. Liam Reynolds

are loving it". Tara explained that "The RWN Charity shop was first opened as a Pop up Shop in June 2014 by over 40 volunteers to cover the overhead cost of the RWN Resource centre which was under threat of reduction of services following budget cuts of approximately 40% over the previous years. These

and sourced rails and mannequins from wherever they could get them, they put calls out for donations of clothes from strength to strength."

Now 3 years on, volunteers continue to open and operate the shop 6 days a week all year around" explained Tara.

much, I booked taxis to get in and out from Castlereagh to Williamstown two mornings a week, until RWN worked with Local Links to set up the Local Community Bus. The bus is very good for the town's people and I would be lost without the bus, well done to Nora and all in RWN for getting it going. I can't

creative corner was developed in the shop with the support and inspiration of local artist, Michelle Fallon. Michelle spoke at the event and explained that she ran creative upcycling workshops with the RWN volunteers and trainees in early 2017 under the Roscommon County Council environment initiative "Find it, Fix it, Flog it". Michelle said "I am delighted to see the Creative Corner being added to continuously and the volunteers tell me that the customers

mined women were, Yvonne Platt, Alice Cahill, Jackie Dempsey, Lorraine Campbell, Maia Mathieu, and Elisa Franzoni. The pop up shop proved such a success that the RWN Voluntary Board agreed to make it a more permanent fixture," she explained. Tara then pointed out "where you are standing now, was back then an unused building with cement floor and a little worse for wear with no electricity or heating. The volunteers painted it

us today and those who have moved on still call back to visit now and again".

Tara then called upon a few of the current RWN volunteers to say a few words. First up was Imelda Flanagan. Imelda welcomed everybody and thanked all for coming out to make the day special for her and all the other volunteers and staff. Imelda added "when I started volunteering at RWN in 2015 I had no transport to get into work, but I liked it so

from Ballinlough spoke next. Barbara spoke of how she is a volunteer with RWN since the shop started out in 2014, how she really enjoyed the company and the fun and the banter with all the different people of all different age groups and backgrounds working in the shop. "It is a continual learning experience" explained Barbara "As I live in a very rural area I appreciate the opportunity to get in here to meet the others, share my

shop reopens



Ballingare ladies who made a donation to Nora Fahy to help out with the charity shop re-launch in Castlereagh pictured with Cllr Orla Leyden. Pic. Liam Reynolds

skills, learn from others and be involved in doing something so worthwhile and beneficial to everyone involved, the RWN, and to the entire community. Barbara concluded "good wholesome positive connection with the shop and the community."

Then Mary Kelly, a woman originally from Dublin, living in Castlereagh for many years now addressed the crowd as she has been volunteering in the shop from the early days. Mary said that coming to the shop to volunteer was a "lifeline for me and I really enjoy working with the other volunteers for the sense of achievement and the fun and laughter, I think it is like Bewley's in Dublin," she said.

Next up to contribute was David Ryan, a young man from Ballinagare. David words were "I came into RWN through Roscommon Employabil-

ity for two weeks work experience and I am still here, that was two years ago!" As Tara Farrell later remarked "David's words were short but said it all, that's the magic of RWN." Tara thanked the four volunteers for their contribution and re-launch of the shop.

Tara then called on Cathaoirleach Cllr Orla Leyden to officially open the refurbished RWN Charity Shop. "I am honored to be asked today to open the shop in my capacity as Cathaoirleach of Roscommon County Council. Having served on the Roscommon Women's Network voluntary Board of management for 10 years it is like coming home, well done to Nora Fahy and Maria Harris for their tireless commitment and dedication and Tara Farrell

and the progressive Board of RWN for their ongoing work and all the volunteers in the shop and with the local community project in general and TUS staff working in shop," she said.

Orla continued "It was great too to meet the members of the Roscommon

forward to them making a presentation at a meeting of Roscommon County Council in the early spring. The Roscommon Manifesto Group is empowering the participation of women in local decision making and politics and promoting equality. This is such important work and I will do everything I can to support RWN Manifesto Group".

Tara then thanked the Ballinagare Ladies Club for donating the proceeds of their recent fundraising raffle to the RWN. The Chairperson of the Ladies Club, Teresa Ryan, presented the cheque to Nora Fahy, RWN Project Co-ordinator.

Just before Orla along with lead volunteer Karen Joyce unveiled the special Christmas window display Tara called on Pat Murtagh, Roscommon County Council to say a few words. Pat congratulated the RWN and especially all the volunteers on an outstanding achievement and a beautiful shop premises.

He went on to say that the County Council was proud to support such initiatives in the community and he hoped that there would be other opportunities to provide further support in the future.



Tara Farrell, Pat Murtagh, Nora Fahy and Michael Connelly at the re-opening of the charity shop in Castlereagh. Pic. Liam Reynolds



Cathaoirleach of Roscommon County Council Orla Leyden with Karen Joyce at the re-launch of the new window display at the RWN charity shop. Pic. Liam Reynolds