

HOLYWELL STEW



Stirring up the community in Derry/Londonderry

Imagine you work with a great organization with big ideas for expanding your reach or delivering your mission. You have four minutes to convince 60+ strangers that your idea is the best one in the room.... *Ready? Set? PITCH!*

This is the premise behind the Holywell STEW, a series of local community-based crowdfunding dinners held in Derry/Londonderry and supported by The Ireland Funds. Hosted by the Holywell Trust, an organization which for over 20 years has facilitated community development and peace-building work in Northern Ireland, the STEWS have provided local nonprofit organizations with visibility, a chance to network, and refine their message to the community.

"Holywell Trust is about building relationships and partnerships within the local community between agencies, organizations and individuals trying to help people to help themselves," explains Gerard Deane, Director of the Holywell Trust. "We're about improving lives. That is essential. We are in the heart of Derry/Londonderry and we are a place where difference is celebrated and shouldn't

be feared. Everyone is welcome. There is never a closed door."

The model is simple: for a small fee of £10, members of the community come for dinner within the bright and cross-community welcoming space of the Holywell Trust. A meal is shared at communal tables and four projects take turns pitching their work for positive change. Questions are fielded. Ballots are cast by those attending and the winning organization takes home all the money collected at the door.

Just as important as the small sum won however, is the exposure each organization gets to the community. Attendees of the dinners often form relationships or pursue volunteer

opportunities well after the evening is over. In addition, long before the four-minute pitches are given, each organization is given training in how to present succinctly, confidently and without presentation materials.

Through the STEWS, the local community has been engaged to micro-finance several nonprofit initiatives ranging from La Dolce Vita: an arts projects aimed at those who have suffered from domestic abuse, to Me4Mental: a project supporting those with mental health issues. Grants from The

Ireland Funds have allowed the STEWS to cover all costs of running the events so that the entire sum collected can be given to support local nonprofits.

"Presenting at the STEW was an amazing experience," says Patricia Flanagan from the winning Me4Mental project. "When they announced we won I swear I nearly had a stroke. The funding we took home helped with our first

year's rent and benefitted us in a big way. Over 3,000 people struggling with isolation and mental illness have come through our community center doors since we opened in April (of 2018) and the STEW gave us our first chance to reach more people in the community."

Success looks bright for future STEWS. There is a waiting list of organizations that have expressed an interest in pitching and the dinners are at-capacity with people sometimes being turned away at the door. With continued support, this initiative should grow small seeds into big, rich ideas serving the community of Derry/Londonderry and beyond.



The Me4Mental team learning of their organization's win

Gerard Deane

Director of the Holywell Trust



"The people at the dinners have commented that this project is something we need to treasure and nourish. It was seen by those that came as a model of community enagement and an expression of Derry/Londonderry 'doing for itself'-capturing the true spirit of the city."



The Holywell STEW: a new micro-financing project supported by The Ireland Funds

Pitchers from the Holywell STEW event in June 2018: Ciaran Murray (Your Derry), Michéal Stapleton (Soul Shakedown Festival), Stephanie English (Jigsaw Project) and Conor Doherty (Your Derry)

