



Cork Life Centre  
*sharing the vision of Edmund Rice*

# Edmund Rice Conference Week

5<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> May 2015





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## **Biography of Edmund Rice**



Edmund Rice was born at Westcourt, the family tenant farm in Callan, County Kilkenny, Ireland, on 1 June 1762. He grew up in a relatively well-off Catholic family where he developed in faith and received a limited education before joining his uncle's business in Waterford, providing supplies for ships and for the British Navy and Army. He was respected on all sides because of his fair dealings, particularly in paying the producers for their livestock of which he was a good judge.

Edmund was very successful in business and became very wealthy as did many of his social class. He married and it is understood that his wife was Mary Elliot. She died at about the time their daughter, also Mary, was born in 1789. The infant was raised by Edmund and his step-sister, Joan, who became his housekeeper. In his grief and the turmoil of these circumstances, his commitment to God developed to the stage where he considered entering religious life.

Edmund was becoming more aware of the desires of many of his acquaintances for an Ireland liberated from English rule and of the poverty of most people throughout the land. After much discernment and the recommendations of some who knew him, including the forthright Bishop of Waterford, Thomas Hussey, he "abandons the ambitions of his class", sells his business and begins instructing boys of the poor living on the streets of Waterford. In 1802, the project begins in a stable in the town while a new school is built on the edge of the city closer to where many of the poor reside. He is determined that school will be conducted according to his improvements on the best standards of the day.

The free school, known as Mount Sion, opened in 1803. Edmund and his first couple of helpers were soon caring for two to three hundred students, providing food and clothing as well as an education that would help them in the work places of business and commerce and that would build their prayer life and knowledge of the Bible. Edmund was following the call of the Spirit into a religious life that would impact both Church and society. He and his helpers lived at Mount Sion and this was the beginning of the Christian Brothers.

The Congregation spread as other bishops sent men to join the work and begin schools in other towns. Edmund continued to be involved in Irish nationalism, helping new orders of sisters with finances and investments, Temperance, works of charity involving orphans and children of alcoholic parents as well as helping slaves to escape and hide. His life was more and more about Liberation which begins with 'welcoming strangers'. He died in 1844. Pope John Paul II beatified Edmund Rice at a ceremony in St. Peter's Square, Rome, on 6th October 1996. He became known as Blessed Edmund Ignatius Rice. His official feast day is May 5.

## Mission Statement:

To work together  
To create opportunities  
To empower people  
To reach their full potential



**Cork Life Centre**

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Cork Life Centre is a voluntary organisation offering an alternative learning environment to marginalised young people.

The Centre and its staff offer students 1:1 tuition in Junior and Leaving Cert subjects and support them in their preparation for these State Exams. The approach to education is a holistic one. The value is on the social education of young people as much as on the academic. The Centre provides students and teachers with:

- An open and friendly environment.
  - Positive trusting relationships with peers and staff.
  - Continuous support with issues and challenges a student might face during work
- With The Centre many young 12-18 year old early school leavers have achieved formal school certification. The success of the project is the mix of nurturance, individual programmes, educational certification, stimulation, fun, hard work, mutual respect and expectations.

## Programme of events

### Tuesday 5th May.

- 1 pm** Catherine McGuinness former Chief Justice and children's rights advocate is coming to speak to us on the issue of juvenile justice.
- 3 pm** Launch of Cork Life Centre Book- "What the Cork Life Centre means to me." by Br Paul Hendricks co-founder of the life centres in Ireland.
- 5.30pm** Joan Freeman founder of Pieta House will speak to staff about her work and the organisation.

### Wednesday 6th May.

- 10 am** Maureen Forrest CEO of HOPE Foundation will speak about the work of her organisation in Kolkata India.
- 1 pm** Tanya Ward CEO of Children's Rights Alliance will speak on the organisation and its work.

There will also be the Launch of the Know Your Rights a publication on children's rights that is accessible to young people. This is a project of the Children's Rights Alliance-it has been launched in Dublin but Tanya will launch the booklet in Cork at the centre during her visit.

## Programme of events

### Thursday 7th May.

**10 am**

Educational Director of Autism Charity Shine will speak about Asperger's; how it affects young people and their families; advice and guidance on how to best support young people with Asperger's educationally, socially and personally.

**1 pm**

Launch of Art Exhibition in Millennium Hall (City Hall)

### Friday 8th May.

**10 am**

Talk by Eamon Keane (Journalist, Author, Psychotherapist) representing Suicide Aware.

## **Keynote Speaker:**

**Catherine McGuinness.**



Judge Catherine McGuinness, former Supreme Court Judge and former President, Law Reform Commission Judge Catherine McGuinness was born in Belfast and educated in Belfast and Dublin, studying in Alexandra College, Trinity College Dublin and Kings Inns. She was called to the Irish Bar in 1977 and to the Inner Bar in 1989. Judge McGuinness was appointed to the Circuit Court bench in 1994, and has served as a judge in the High Court and the Supreme Court. In addition to her prestigious judicial career, Judge McGuinness also served on An Bord Uchtala (the Adoption Board), the Voluntary Health Insurance Board, the National Economic and Social Council, and the Second Commission on the Status of Women. Furthermore, she has acted as chairperson of the National Social Services Board, the National College of Art and Design, the Employment Equality Agency, the Kilkenny Incest Investigation, and the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation. She received the Rehab 2010 People of the Year Award for her pioneering and vast contribution to Irish life, including her contribution as an advocate for children's rights reform. She is currently chair of the Irish University Quality Board, the National Council of the Forum on End of Life in Ireland, and Adjunct Professor of Law in NUI Galway. She is Patron of the Irish Refugee Council.



## **Keynote Speaker:**

**Joan Freeman.**



Nine years ago, founder and former CEO, Joan Freeman, a practising psychologist, closed down her own counselling business and dedicated her time finding out how she could help people who were suicidal - what would be beneficial to them and help them get through their dark time. After three years of research, she opened up Pieta House, which quickly became a respected and recognised service for those who were suicidal.

Having counselled many people in the past who were self-harming, Joan realised that this was a topic never discussed and rarely understood, and she decided to also help people with this debilitating issue.

From humble beginnings, Pieta House has grown to almost 180 therapists and administration staff, and the demand for our service hasn't let up. To that end, in 2014 alone, 5,000 people came through their doors suffering from suicidal ideation or engaging in self-harm.

## **Keynote Speaker:**

**Maureen Forrest.**



Maureen Forrest is founder and Hon. Director of The Hope Foundation since 1999. The foundation, which will celebrate its 15th anniversary this year, now funds more than 60 projects touching the lives of 25,000 children who were born with few choices and very little hope. Beginning as a goal volunteer Maureen was inspired to set up HOPE and to focus her work with the street children of Kolkata. Born and bred in East Cork, Maureen now lives 10 miles from where she lived as a child, although she spends four months of every year in Calcutta working for her charity. Beginning with six volunteers she began her work. Today working with committed people and organisations HOPE is changing the lives of children in Kolkata. HOPE fund and support projects in health, nutrition, child protection and education. They also advocate for better services and seek ways to support access to Government Programmes. HOPE believes in sustainable development partnering with 14 local Indian NGOs and currently funding over 60 projects for street and slum children and their families in education, child protection, nutrition, drug rehabilitation, and vocational training. As well as these front line projects, HOPE has created innovative programmes to highlight and tackle complex cultural issues, such as child labour and child trafficking.

## **Keynote Speaker:**

**Tanya Ward.**



Tanya Ward is the Chief Executive of the Children's Rights Alliance since 2012. Previously, she was the Deputy Director at the Irish Council for Civil Liberties (ICCL) where she worked for eight years. She has also worked with the Irish Centre for Migration Studies, the Irish Refugee Council, the Curriculum Development Unit and the City of Dublin VEC. A former lecturer in human rights on the MPhil in Ethnic and Racial Studies, TCD and the Masters in Equality Studies in the UCD School for Social Justice, she is a former board member with Campaign for Children and played a major role in the children's referendum of 2012. She was also a former Vice President for the International Federation of Human Rights (2008-2011). Tanya has graduate and post-graduate degrees from UCC and a LLM in Human Rights from Queens University Belfast as well as a Certificate in Managing Community and Voluntary Organisations from the National College of Ireland. She has a keen interest in international human rights monitoring and lectures widely on this topic and has authored several reports on a wide range of issues including Garda, judicial and criminal justice reform, equality law, education, anti-racism, separated children and children's rights.

## **Keynote Speaker:**

**Laura Crowley.**



Building Blocks School Support Service under the auspices of SHINE(Irish Progressive Association for Autism) is a service that targets a range of issues including communication, academic, social and bullying, as well as challenging behaviour issues. The service is operated by Laura Crowley, BA ECS(hons) MA Ed(Open) who has been working within the area of Autism for the past 14 years. Laura approaches each case individually, and will work to increase skills, and target deficits in order to assist the child in moving forward and reaching their full potential. Laura works closely with schools to provide individualised support and guidelines, but can also provide parents with assistance and support.

## Keynote Speaker:

**Eamon Keane.**



**Suicide Aware**  
*light in darkness*

Suicide Aware is a Cork based Voluntary Organisation founded in June 2009 whose aim is to help deal with the issues of depression and suicide in Ireland.

### Objectives

- To set up educational workshops for the purpose of creating public awareness and understanding of mental health, depression and suicide.
- To set up relevant community committees which are identifiable in local areas, to act as facilitatory centres for anyone in crisis.
- To facilitate training of volunteers in programmes which help identify people at risk of suicide and steps to be taken in these circumstances.

Keane is a former RTÉ producer and a former Newstalk current-affairs presenter and novel-writer. A classically trained pianist, in recent years he has returned to his first love of music while also pursuing his career as a counselling psychotherapist. Keane also does charity work and offers significant support to Suicide Aware and it is in this role that he visits the centre today.

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