



The National Day of Volunteering, the Irish Countrywomen's Association and the Irish Heart Foundation: A proposal for partnership

The National Day of Volunteering is that day of the year when we encourage everyone in Ireland to give volunteering a go, to show that – even for a minute, an hour, a day – volunteering can make a big difference and be a lot of fun. The National Day of Volunteering belongs to everyone, no matter who they are or where they live. Why get involved? Because volunteering benefits everyone and makes us all stronger. Together, we can build stronger neighbourhoods, stronger communities, a stronger Ireland.

2011 has been designated European Year of Volunteering so this year, we're pulling out all the stops to make Friday 30<sup>th</sup> September the biggest and best National Day of Volunteering yet! The theme we've chosen for this very special year is 'stick to your knitting'. Ireland has a long, strong and proud history of volunteering. More than ever before, right now in Ireland we need to do what we do best, what we've always been good at: rely on our own talents, helping each other, learning from each other and making a positive difference.

Each year, the National Day of Volunteering identifies a 'flagship' project. The purpose of the flagship project is not only to draw attention to NDV, but to provide an opportunity for as many people as possible to get involved in the day in every county in Ireland. Keeping with our theme for 2011, this year's flagship project will be a national knit-a-thon. And at the heart of the flagship will be a very special partnership between the Irish Countrywomen's Association and the Irish Heart Foundation of Ireland.

The ICA embodies the 'can do' and 'will do' attitude of volunteering. Its involvement in health, education, knowledge sharing, arts and crafts – to name but a few – have resulted in significant improvements to the lives of women, and men, in Ireland. For NDV 2011, the ICA are setting themselves a not inconsiderable challenge: to knit a record number of winter woollies 10,000! What is more, the brave ladies of the ICA will be doing their knitting in public, showing others what they know to be true themselves: that volunteering makes a difference and we've all got something to give. The winter woollies will be knitted for a very special cause: the Irish Heart Foundation. Nearly every year, 10,000 people in Ireland die as a result of cardiovascular disease. Through their knitting, the ICA will be raising awareness of the prevalence of cardiovascular disease in Ireland. The ICA will then sell their wares to raise much-needed funds for the IHA to carry out their crucial work. No better group of women to ask! The important thing to remember, however, is that everyone can get involved in the flagship: either by knitting for charity themselves, helping and supporting the ICA in their endeavours.