

Launch of Third Age Knitting Bus Project - 'Knitting the Generations Together'

"I've knitted cushion covers, tea-cosies, bed covers but never ever have I knitted a cover for a bus!" declared President Mary McAleese at the launch of the Third Age Knitting Project 'Knitting the Generations Together' at Collins Barracks on September 21.

"Great things come out of knitting, beautiful products that make your heart soar" she said, adding that one of the great things to come out of this project is the passing on of skills and the fostering of relationships between old and young.

The launch featured the Third Age knitting bus clad in a jumper in rainbow shades knitted by Shuttle Knit Ltd, a craft cooperative based in Wicklow Town. Earlier the President boarded the colourful knitting bus and met with older knitters and children who are participating. The project will promote contact between the generations through primary school involvement, teach children to knit, and raise awareness of the value of older people in school and local communities. The Knitting Bus will visit schools during the year.

Third Age is a community organisation which celebrates the value of older people through local, regional and national projects. Third Age has over 1,000 volunteers throughout Ireland, older people all, working variously as active listeners on a help line, as tutors to foreign nationals, as peer nutritionists, as advocates for frailer older people, and more.

David Coleman, clinical psychologist, author and broadcaster gave the keynote address at the launch on 'Bridging the Generation Gap: the importance of older people in the life of a child. "Children miss out when they are disconnected from older adults. An initiative like the Knitting Bus that tries to bridge the gap between the generations is to be applauded. Children deserve to know, to learn from, and to be shaped by their elders," he said.

In the Knitting Bus project, primary schools throughout Ireland are invited to knit with Third Age who will support with knitting patterns for children and hints and tips from established knitters. Schools will manage the project with the support of parents, grandparents, and local knitters. The initiative is also Third Age's curtain-raiser to EY2012. Next year, 2012, celebrates the European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations. "Over 150 primary schools have signed up already, and we look forward to working with many schools throughout the academic year. We feel this project which promotes meaningful contact between the generations is a valuable one, and fits very well with twin aims of the European Year," says Third Age CEO, Mary Nally.

For more information, contact Knitting Bus Project co-ordinator Andrina Moore at 086-8185618 *end*