

Centennial Celebrations

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A crowd of over 400 people gathered in Hotel Kilkenny on Thursday 6th December 2007 to join with the Committee members, staff and students of County Kilkenny VEC to celebrate its Centenary Year.

The evening was marked by a number of special events and began with the launch of an Exhibition of Student Work at 3pm by Chairperson, Cllr. Dick Dowling. The evening's proceedings were officially opened at 7.30 pm by Mayor Marie Fitzpatrick



Mayor Marie Fitzpatrick who complimented all those who had been involved in the provision of technical and vocational education in County Kilkenny VEC over the years and remarked on the achievements of its many students both adult and mainstream not only in Kilkenny but all over the world. The Centennial Lecture was given by Dr. Tom Collins, Professor of Education at NUI Maynooth who traced the significant legacy of technical and vocational education over the past century and the contribution which it has made to the Irish education system and to society in general. He outlined the challenges facing the next generation where knowledge will be the precious 'commodity'.

This year to commemorate the Centenary of Vocational Education the VEC awarded a series of Centennial

Medals and Certificates of Excellence in recognition of outstanding achievement by students from its schools and centres across a range of subject disciplines.



It also established scholarships to NUIM Outreach campus to be completed for by Adult Students taking part in VEC programmes at FETAC level 5 or equivalent. The Centennial Medal for Music went to Aisling Hill from Abbey Community College who performed her pieces on the night. The other Centennial Medal winners were Suzanne Donovan (Art) Scoil Aireagail; Monica Skehan (IT/Secretarial) Grennan College; John Norton (Construction Studies) Coláiste Mhuire; Stephen Dunne (Engineering) Coláiste Cois Siúire; Jane Naddy (Home Economics) Duiske College. Certificates of excellence were presented to the best entries under each category from each school and centre not selected for the Centennial Medal Award.

The highlight of the evening was the launch by the VEC of its history 'A Century of Change – One Hundred Years of Vocational Education'. Chairperson, Cllr Dick Dowling officially launched the book and complimented its author Tony Patterson for all his painstaking work in trawling through the minute books and compiling the story of the development of



technical and vocational education in the county in such a detailed fashion. In his ensuing presentation Tony Patterson, himself a member of the VEC Committee, outlined the origins of technical and vocational education with the setting up of the first Joint Technical Instruction Committee in the county in the early 1900's the publishing of the First Annual Report in 1907 and the leasing of a premises on Parliament Street (now the ACC building) for the setting up of an evening school initially and subsequently a day school. The history documents the setting up of the 'model school' system and the establishment of the City Vocational School at the Model School on Ormonde Road (now Ormonde College). It outlines the introduction of the Vocational Education Act in 1930 and the subsequent setting up of the VEC in Kilkenny. The various chapters document the establishment of vocational schools in different parts of the county and illustrate the struggles of many local communities to develop schools in their own local areas. It also documents the introduction of the Junior

and Senior Cycle and Vocational Preparation and Training Programmes (now Post-Leaving Certificate Courses) and some of the interesting debates concerning buildings, staffing, finance and governance over the years. As CEO Rodger Curran remarked, “it acts as a social commentary on the changing nature of Irish life over the decades and illustrates how national policy impacted on the development of vocational education in the county”.



In concluding the CEO paid tributes to all those who are or have been involved with and supported Vocational Education Activities during the past century. He especially thanked all the committee members, CEOs and staff who served County Kilkenny VEC so faithfully down through the years.

He congratulated all the award winners and their families and wished them an exciting and rewarding education journey in the years ahead.