

Press Release

14 July 2017

## **Acting for the Future and *Testimonies* – Using Theatre to Promote Positive Mental Health and Well Being**

**Acting for the Future** uses participative drama workshops, professional performances and post-show panel discussions with counsellors and clinical psychologists to promote **active healthy lifestyles, positive mental health and well being**. The project is implemented by Smashing Times in partnership with the Samaritans and Irish Association of Suicidology with assistance from a panel of advisors. We also work with a range of organisations including Arklow Mental Health Week and Sea Change.

**Smashing Times and the Samaritans are delighted and honoured to be shortlisted for the Allianz Business to Arts Awards 2017 in two categories – Best Use of Creativity in the Community and Best Small Sponsorship.** The Allianz Business to Arts Awards recognise and champion the spirit of collaboration between businesses, artists and arts organisations that develop creative partnerships; bringing the arts and artists into mutually beneficial relationships across society. The 2017 Allianz Business to Arts Awards will take place on Monday 4 September 2017 at the Bord Gáis Energy Theatre. #ABtoAAwards.

Smashing Times are also delighted and honoured to have been awarded a **GSK Ireland Impact Award** and a **Dublin Bus Community Spirit Award** for **Acting for the Future**. These awards are a special recognition for the power of the arts in promoting positive mental health and wellbeing.

**Acting for the Future** is supported by ESB Energy for Generations Fund, Arklow Mental Health Week, the Hospital Saturday Fund, Dublin City Council and HSE. This project is supported by a range of people including Senator Joan Freeman, founder of Pieta House and Patron of Smashing Times Theatre and Film Company and Karen Ward, Clinical Psychotherapist. The professional theatre performance is the highly acclaimed ***Testimonies*** by Mary Moynihan and Paul Kennedy that consists of five dramatic monologues adapted from the experiences of those who have lost loved ones to suicide, and of those who themselves have been through a mental health crisis and survived. Each performance is followed by a post-show panel discussion with a counselling psychologist and invited guest speakers from the Samaritans and other organisations. Young people and audience members are invited to discuss the issues raised by the performances.

The project reaches over 3,000 young people and adults annually and is delivered in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland to secondary schools, universities, youth and adult groups and the general public. Participants are senior cycle secondary school students (transition, fifth and sixth class in the Republic of Ireland) and senior cycle students in Northern Ireland; students from all years at university level; and young people and adults from youth and community groups and the general public. We work with a range of national, European and international partners and stakeholders to develop learning in relation to the importance of looking after your mental health. **Acting for the Future** was

independently evaluated as part of Arklow Mental Health Week and the evaluation stated that the project was **'an example of best practice in how it was organised and delivered'**.

In 2017 Smashing Times are presenting ten performances of the highly acclaimed **Testimonies** by Paul Kennedy and Mary Moynihan with post-show discussions to promote positive mental health taking place in a range of spaces including Arklow Mental Health Week and with schools in Dublin, Wicklow and Louth.

*'It was an excellent introduction to positive wellbeing and suicide prevention. It is something I would like to see discussed more in schools.'* Sandford Park National School

*'The use of drama and discussion was a brilliant way to get everyone involved.'* Transition year student, CBS Synge Street, Dublin

*'Every student in the country should be able to avail of this workshop.'* Third level student, DIT

*'It was truly fascinating to hear how the Acting for the Future Project was born. Using theatre to promote current social issues is a force to be reckoned with.'* Third level student, DIT

*'Piece 1: Hauntingly beautiful, amazing production. Piece 2: Loved how she was talking to a counsellor, very realistic. Both were amazing performances.'* Third level student, DIT

*'I found that both performances really moved me emotionally and gave an amazing insight into mental health. . . The 'Question and Answer' after the performances was very good. . . Having the Samaritans and counsellor made it very insightful.'* – Third level student, DIT

*'Today I felt that I discovered things about mental health that I didn't previously know. I felt it was a very fulfilling and enlightening experience.'* – Third level student, DIT

*'This work is excellent. . . we don't do enough emotional training [in schools] and that is why drama is so important, particularly for young people in schools.'* – Secondary School Principal, CBS, Westland Row

*'I always knew promotion of mental health was important but now I believe that it should be promoted even more and more workshops and performances like this should be available for everyone.'* – Second level student

*'The overall feedback was that Smashing Times was the most positively evaluated of all events, deeming it as the example of Very Good Practice!'* – Barbara Duffy, HSE, Arklow Mental Health Week

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