

## Simon Open Door 2009 Launched!

### Architects appeal to public to attend Open Door Day in aid of Simon

-Fears that Homelessness will increase nationwide in 2009 warns Simon Communities -

**2<sup>nd</sup> February 2009:** The Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland (RIAI) and the Simon Communities of Ireland today launched the fifth annual nationwide “**Simon Open Door**” campaign. On Saturday, 7<sup>th</sup> March 2009, in exchange for a €75 donation to Simon, members of the public will get an opportunity to have a one-hour consultation with an RIAI architect. Hundreds of RIAI members are participating throughout the country and members of the public can book a slot with their chosen architect via [www.simonopendoor.ie](http://www.simonopendoor.ie).

“The global economic downturn and rising unemployment rates will force more people into homelessness”, said Patrick Burke, CEO of the Simon Communities of Ireland. This year the RIAI and Simon are hoping to raise €50,000 through the campaign, bringing the total raised since 2004 to €200,000. All participating architects are giving their time for free and every cent raised will go directly to the Simon Communities of Ireland.

Commenting on the launch **Angela Brady, architect and presenter of Channel 4’s ‘The Home Show’** and RIAI Council Member said, “The current economic climate is having an effect on everyone, from people who cannot afford a home to those lucky enough to own one. Many people who had planned to upgrade to a larger space to meet the changing needs of their families are now discovering this is no longer a possibility. That is where architects can really help. Whether it’s a full-scale renovation or merely adding storage in clever and imaginative ways, architects can bring their creative design flare and technical experience to bear on projects of all shapes and sizes. The Simon Open Door is a wonderful opportunity for people to discuss their plans with an architect and give back to those in less fortunate positions.”

Patrick Burke commented, “Homelessness was a serious issue in Ireland before the economic downturn; the current recession is magnifying this issue. As unemployment and poverty levels rise, many are struggling to keep their homes and inevitably there will be an increase in the numbers of people becoming homeless. While most of us in Ireland are fortunate to have a home, for those that do not every day can be a struggle for survival. The RIAI Simon Open Door is a great way for the Irish public to appreciate the homes they have and to simultaneously help those throughout the country who do not. We are delighted to partner with the RIAI for the fifth time and want to thank all of the architects who are opening their doors and the public who will walk through them on Saturday, 7<sup>th</sup> March.”

Following are some suggested questions to ask your architect to ensure you get the most out of your session:

1. **What does an architect actually do?** Ask your architect to explain what they will bring to your project and to differentiate what they do from the work of an engineer, a builder etc.
2. **How can I spend my budget wisely?** An efficient build is not only about having a budget but spending it intelligently. An architect can help you manage your money.

3. **How can I save money *and* save the environment?** A project designed with energy savings in mind can reduce your bills and carbon footprint and increase the value of your home.
4. **How can an architect help me manage this project?** An architect has the expertise and training to run your project from start to finish. They can help you solve problems and create the home you desire.
5. **How can an architect help me to make decisions early?** Making decisions or changing your mind after the build has begun cost you time and money. Your architect can ensure that you have a clear and detailed plan in place before anyone starts on site.
6. **How will my house grow with me?** Your architect can help you consider what your changing family will need from your home as you get older and design a “Lifetime Home.”
7. **Have you done any projects like this before?** Ask to see examples of their previous work to get a sense of their style and approach. It may also be useful to gain some ideas for your own house.
8. **How long will the project take?** It is essential to get a timescale of how long the work will take so that your project can have a week-by-week plan .
9. **Can an architect help me find a builder?** Based on their experience, your architect can help you find a local builder that can complete your project to a high standard and for a reasonable price.
10. **How can you help ensure a quality finished product?** At the end of a job, your architect can construct a snag list to ensure that you are completely happy with your new room/ home.

Remember, your architect is giving you their time in support of the Simon Communities. Go to [www.simon.ie](http://www.simon.ie) to find out how you, too, can get involved with helping homeless people all over Ireland.**Simon Communities of Ireland**

The *Simon Communities of Ireland* is an affiliation of local Communities in Cork, Dublin, Dundalk, Galway, the Midlands, the South East, the North West and the Mid West. Simon delivered support and services to almost 5,000 individuals and families who experience – or at risk of – homelessness in 2007. In addition, the National Office performs a coordinating role in terms of campaigning in the areas of housing/homeless policy and the wider poverty and social inclusion agenda; best practice in service delivery and working with people who are homeless; and in the area of full time volunteering promoting excellence and providing accredited training.

Pictured L-R:

**Kathryn Meghen**, Assistant Director, RIAI

**Patrick Burke**, CEO, Simon Communities of Ireland

**Angela Brady**, Architect and presenter of Channel 4’s ‘The Home Show’, RIAI Council Member