

## THE PEOPLE WHO INSPIRED:



### CELIA LARKIN

IN recent weeks, amid talk of the impending collapse of our State, and with relentlessly gloomy media commentary, the Irish people's psyche has become so insular and anxiety-ridden that it could be forgiven for an amnesia towards the achievements this country's men and woman have to their credit. Though we face a crisis that rose-tinted nostalgia will do little to assuage, it is worth reminding ourselves what fellow Irish citizens can do, and have done. Those I have chosen represent a broad variety of humanitarian, political and cultural icons who, both internationally and domestically, led by example, an example we so dearly need at this moment in time.

## Dr STEVE COLLINS

He could have made millions, but founded a non-profit firm

**D**R STEVE Collins is someone who could have made millions from the product he developed, a high-quality nutrient and energy-dense nutritional paste for the treatment and prevention of malnutrition. Instead, he co-founded and is chairman of Valid Nutrition, a non-profit company. He has led a community-based programme that developed and established a new system of care for acutely malnourished people. The programme's success led to a worldwide resurgence in the interest in acute malnutrition, and re-established it as a priority in child survival intervention. He guided the programme from its initial conception to UN endorsement, and the resulting development of a Unicef strategy to roll it out worldwide, with an increasing consumption of nutritional paste, to 80,000 malnourished people in Africa alone. He has been completely selfless in his development of the product and in his assistance of the funding, raising more than \$10m (£7.3m) from donors and agencies to fund the work. Valid Nutrition is a service to communities in dire need, and Dr Steve Collins's work has been revolutionary. He is a reminder to the Irish people that, in a global context, our current economic strife is dwarfed by the plight of others, and that even in frugal times, we should extend the hand of friendship to those in need.



## Sr STANISLAUS KENNEDY

Help for the homeless and selfless devotion



**S**ISTER Stanislaus Kennedy founded Focus Ireland in 1985 after researching the experience of homeless women, specifically in Dublin. As a result of this painstaking work, she, through Focus Ireland, has developed a system for responding to the ever-changing face of homelessness in Ireland with unsurpassed efficiency. Her determination and drive has ensured that Focus Ireland evolved rather than remained passive in the face of what is now an endemic problem. At a time when the future of many homes in Ireland is uncertain, the work of Sister Stanislaus is particularly resonant, as Focus Ireland operates under the ethos that all are entitled to a dwelling of their own. It is reassuring to know that such selfless people exist amongst us. While Sister Stanislaus and her peers continue their work, no one will meet their dilemmas in isolation.



## Dr EDWARD M WALSH

Pioneering driving force behind the establishment of Limerick University

**I**F one person were to claim the responsibility for the establishment of the University of Limerick, it would be Dr Edward Walsh. It was he who initiated its registration as a university in an area where no comparable institution had previously existed. His influence stretched from the layout of the college campus to the system of continuous assessment adopted, commonplace among universities today but nevertheless pioneering at the time. The university has been designed with a vision to endure as a superlative facility in the centre of Ireland. People like Dr Walsh are the reason Ireland has such a well-educated workforce, and it is that workforce which will help lead us out of this recession back into prosperity.

## CATHERINE McGUINNESS

Trail-blazer for women, who continues to serve her country



**C**ATHERINE McGuinness's illustrious career has blazed a trail for Irish women throughout the last century right into the current one. Her performance as former justice of the Supreme Court would, in itself, be worthy of note, but additionally, the various roles she held in organisations such as the Voluntary Health Insurance Board and the National Economic and Social Council elevate her further into the ranks of great Irish women. She continues to perform a civic duty to Ireland as Chair of the Irish Universities Quality Board. She was the first in her field; when appointed as a judge of the Circuit Court in 1994, no woman had ever previously held that post. She also broke the silence surrounding child abuse in the State by chairing the Kilkenny Incest Investigation in 1993, a moment that reverberates particularly loudly in post-Ryan Report Ireland. Views that break the silence on crucial contemporary issues, regardless of their welcome, are a necessary adjunct to survival at this moment.

## JOHN O'SHEA

Hundreds of millions in aid for more than 50 countries

**J**OHN O'Shea is an indispensable choice for any catalogue of great Irish people. His establishing of GOAL is a testament to the impervious nature of human goodness. That a man with such a promising journalistic career would sacrifice so much of his time simply and solely for the improvement of other less fortunate lives is a remarkable feat to behold. Throughout its lifetime, GOAL has distributed more than half-a-billion euro throughout the world, in more than 50 countries. We should be immensely proud to count John O'Shea as an Irish citizen. Like Dr Steve Collins, his international work strengthens our status as a compassionate people. We require such compassion towards one another today.