

THE PEOPLE WHO INSPIRED:



PATRICIA REDLICH

True courage is the unblinking capacity to see things as they are, the steadfast belief that they can be better, and the unwavering determination to bring such change to pass. It requires imagination, faith and self-reliance. Those who lend us courage do so by feeding our souls with beauty, hope, dignity and self-respect. And they do so not by preaching, but in the daily exercise of doing the right thing. In their varying ways all lynchpins of a civil society, they are my choice.

MYRTLE ALLEN

Mother of the good food movement, she also took on EU



MOTHER of the good food movement in Ireland, Myrtle is a very reluctant heroine. She says she simply saw good food as important, and loved cooking what her husband grew on the family farm, minding her family's health with proper nourishment, as well as pleasing their pallets. Irish food was chemical-free, locally grown and fresh then. She played a huge role in keeping it that way. Opening the restaurant at Ballymaloe in the early Sixties, Myrtle created a demand for local produce, which kick-started a new wave of home production, and sowed the seeds for our vibrant modern farmers' markets. Fighting EU food laws where they threatened local production through the chefs' organisation Eurotorque seemed an inevitable next step in the Eighties, and she's still involved and passionate about good food production. She would argue she merely tapped into the zeitgeist. In reality, she was its driving force.



JILL BELL

Health-food advocate who fights for consumer choice

JILL, who runs her health store in East Cork with serious commercial nous, has a passionate commitment to consumer choice. It is that commitment which sees her through the time-consuming and hugely demanding involvement in the Alliance for Natural Health. She and her colleagues are fighting a veritable David-versus-Goliath battle against inappropriate EU legislation and restrictive bureaucracy. At stake is the availability of herbal medicines and food supplements that form part of the rich cornucopia of remedies we can currently buy over the counter. The Food Supplement Directive and Herbal Directive — the latter seeking to exclude Ayurvedic and Chinese herbs from Europe — also threaten to constrict consumer choice when it comes to practitioners of complementary medicine, by potentially narrowing the range of remedies they can offer. The alliance is committed to good science, good law, quality and our right to take responsibility for our own health.



MARY FLANAGAN

Nursing home manager who exemplifies quest for quality

COMMITMENT to quality is a moral force, exercised in the daily task of doing things right. And the measure of a nation's standing in the civility stakes is the care we take of the elderly, on whose shoulders we stand. Mary runs her State nursing home complex, Clarendon Services in Dublin, with good humour, charm, kindness, dedication, energy and the steely reserve of the truly good. In the process, she has created a community of residents, staff, and by extension whole families, which is truly inspiring. Her influence spreads far wider than the walls of her wards. The dignity of the individual is paramount, their personal histories cherished, their uniqueness celebrated. Choice, a sense of responsibility, and innovation are cultivated. Money is tight, the buildings far from custom-built, and staff levels restricted. Rising to the challenge with a relentless pursuit of excellence, Mary and her staff combine professionalism with love, and touch the soul.

SAM MCGUINNESS

Chief of the Dublin Simon Community, who gives hope



SAM, like the Simon Community, has style. He makes no poor-mouth noises. There's no blame culture, and no victims. Somewhere along the line, someone became homeless. It happens. In a civil society, it's also simply not good enough. Sam, his staff, and volunteers aim to help people through that homelessness by creating the surround-sound of a whole community, from detox programmes, mobile medical units and accommodation to the provision of food and holding each individual's hand, but always with the expectation of personal accountability. There are no barriers to entry, and the homeless are a broad church — businessmen, women alcoholics on Skid Row and broken minds. Although it sounds like a paradox, Sam is upbeat, funny and engaging about the job he loves. In the business of giving hope, how could he be otherwise? With compassion, energy and drive, Sam shares the traditional Simon Community commitment to excellence. He helps them fearlessly.