

50 YEARS OF LIFESAVING SERVICE

The Lifesaving Foundation has presented its chairperson Brendan Donohoe with the 15th Ireland Medal in recognition of his 50 years of continuous active lifesaving service as a volunteer lifeguard, a lifesaving teacher, a lifeguard trainer and assessor, a drowning prevention researcher, and a national and international administrator.

In addition to his role as chairperson of the Lifesaving Foundation, Brendan is also President of the Royal Life Saving Society (RLSS) Ireland Branch. He retired as senior administrative official with Dun Laoghaire Rathdown (DLR) County Council in August, having completed 40 years as a public servant.

To mark the occasion, it was fitting then that the medal ceremony took place in the Council Chamber. On presenting the medal, DLR Cathaoirleach Cllr Tom Murphy drew attention to the recent swimming fatalities and the sad incidents where individuals took their own lives through drowning.

He believed that the majority of drowning deaths, as high as 90%, were avoidable or preventable, through informed decisions and actions of individuals and preventable by the actions of councils and governments.

Brendan Donohoe noted that as Chairperson of the Lifesaving Foundation he had the privilege of personally knowing all individual recipients of the Ireland Medal. "This is a humbling experience... receiving it and knowing that I am standing on the shoulders of lifesaving giants."

He recalled growing up as an asthmatic youth in Marino in Dublin City. "In an attempt to help me my mother asked her friend and neighbour if her own son would help develop my swimming as a way of improving my health."

'POOL NIGHT' ON THURSDAYS

"Liam Hogan came into my life and with him St Joseph's Swimming and Lifeguard Club to my school. For 50 years Thursday night has been my 'pool night', first with St Joseph's and then with my local Monkstown club.

"Liam took me through the full range of lifesaving and lifeguard awards and then in his role as RLSS Ireland Branch Secretary he brought me onto the Irish Branch Executive. Many years later I was to follow Liam onto the RLSS UK Management Board."

Donohoe has many memories of events as a volunteer and then as a professional lifeguard, and the big one for him was the afternoon spent lifeguarding on Dollymount Beach. "A commercial passenger aircraft with flaming engines lined itself up to crash land on the beach. Thankfully the pilot changed his mind and managed to land safely on the airport runway."



Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown Cathaoirleach Cllr Tom Murphy presents Brendan Donohoe with the 15th Ireland Medal.

NORTH-SOUTH PARTNERSHIP

He acknowledged the important role played by deceased Garda Commissioner Eamonn Doherty in his role as chairperson of the RLSS Ireland Region, which consisted of representatives from the Republic and Northern Ireland Branches. "Eamonn always made time to attend meetings and he skilfully guided the committee through sometimes difficult decisions.

"Chairing the RLSS Ireland Regional Committee, he stated this convinced him that it was possible to get both traditions on this island to work together peacefully if there was a genuine will to do so on both sides."

The MC was the Lifesaving Foundation's International Director John Long, who was also an Ireland Medal recipient and RLSS Commonwealth Secretary for 17 years.

During his brief secretarial overview of the charity's activities John Connolly outlined the development of a survival floating promotion over the past number of years. In 2007 a flyer was produced with the message 'FLOAT – DON'T SWIM'. In 2013, this message was reworded to become 'FLOAT FIRST – SWIM LATER'.

He also highlighted the new 'RNLI Float to Live' promotion which has taken the float first survival message to a totally new level, and he urged all those present to view the promotion online.