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Entrepreneurs narrow gender gap in Irish business

FIVE female entrepreneurs have been recruited by the organisers of National Women's Enterprise Day on 19 November, to help boost the number of women setting up their own businesses in Ireland.

The stories of the home-grown entrepreneurs, who all run their own established businesses in different parts of the country, will be showcased in front of 300 delegates at a major conference in Limerick that day, to inspire confidence in other women and help bridge the gender divide.

Although the County and City Enterprise Boards, including the North Cork Enterprise Board, have supported nearly 13,500 female entrepreneurs in 2009, 1,000 more than in 2008, men are still almost three times more likely than women to set up their own business in Ireland.

To help address this imbalance, Donna Daly Blyth from Donna's Dance Studio in Cork, Alison Boardman from Unique Voice Language Institute in Kerry, Ann Marie Durkin from Shasta in Longford, Alison Ritchie from Polar Ice in Offaly and Jennifer Ryan from Pónaire Roastery in Limerick have been invited by the County and City Enterprise Boards to share their experiences, challenges and advice with other women on 19 November.

"Research from the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor shows that women who know an entrepreneur are five times more likely to become an entrepreneur themselves," said Michael Hanley, Manager of the North Cork Enterprise Board. "Through profiling the success stories of female entrepreneurs in Ireland on National Women's Enterprise Day, we hope to encourage more women to seek out new business opportunities by setting up their own business."

Launching National Women's Enterprise Day.

Co-funded by the European Social Fund with support from the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs through the Equality for Women Measure, the aim of National Women's Enterprise Day is to give national recognition to the role of female entrepreneurship.

The Minister of State for Equality, Integration and Human Rights, Ms Mary White, T.D. has been invited to officially open the conference, which takes place at the Strand Hotel in Limerick.

Tickets cost €100 each and are available to buy through www.nwed.ie. The conference also includes an exhibition of enterprise support agencies, one-to-one mentoring clinics and networking sessions.