



# THE LIFESAVING FOUNDATION



## John Connolly

### Recipient of the 2012 Ireland Medal

John Connolly is a retired Primary School Head Teacher and Honorary Chief Executive Officer of the Lifesaving Foundation.



#### LOCAL

He joined the Royal Life Saving Society in 1973 having previously been a member of Irish Water Safety and was appointed Waterford Area Organiser in 1975 in an area where the RLSS had been dormant. He founded Waterford Lifeguard Club to provide RLSS lifesaving and lifeguard training. The club ceased operating in 2005 by which time over 10,000 adults and children had been taught to swim and over 1000 senior lifesaving awards received.

Using his position as the local teachers' union representative he established Waterford Schools Swimming Association (WSSA) in 1977 to organise and promote swimming instruction in schools. He served as chairperson for 15 years during which time the number of schools providing swimming as part of their curriculum rose from 1 to 31. The association was terminated in 1991 when swimming became part of the revised primary school curriculum in Ireland.

He established a voluntary week-end beach lifeguard service at Dunmore East, Co. Waterford in 1979. Waterford County Council provided a full-time lifeguard service in 1988 to obtain a Blue Flag at which time the voluntary service ended. He founded Bonmahon Lifeguard Club in 1984 to provide a voluntary week-end lifeguard service on a surf beach in Co. Waterford. The service became full-time in 1990 when an in-shore lifeboat service was added. Over 200 persons have been rescued from drowning by club lifeguards. He retired from the club in 1992.

#### NATIONAL

He was elected to the RLSS IRELAND Branch Management Committee in 1976 serving in a number of roles including Branch President (2 terms) and Branch Secretary (5 terms), retiring from the committee in 2005 on his appointment as his schools head teacher.

In 1980 he established the Irish Lifeguard School (RLSS) to provide RLSS lifeguard training for lifesavers, serving as Director for 15 years, and qualifying over 400 lifeguards. The school ended in 1998 when changes in the RLSS lifeguard qualification programme made the project unviable.

Having previously been a member of the National Training Team

of Scouting Ireland in the 1970's he was asked to return as National Water Safety Advisor in 1984 following a tragic drowning incident involving a number of scouts. In this role he introduced a number of safety protocols retiring in 1995 on becoming RLSS IRELAND Branch Secretary.

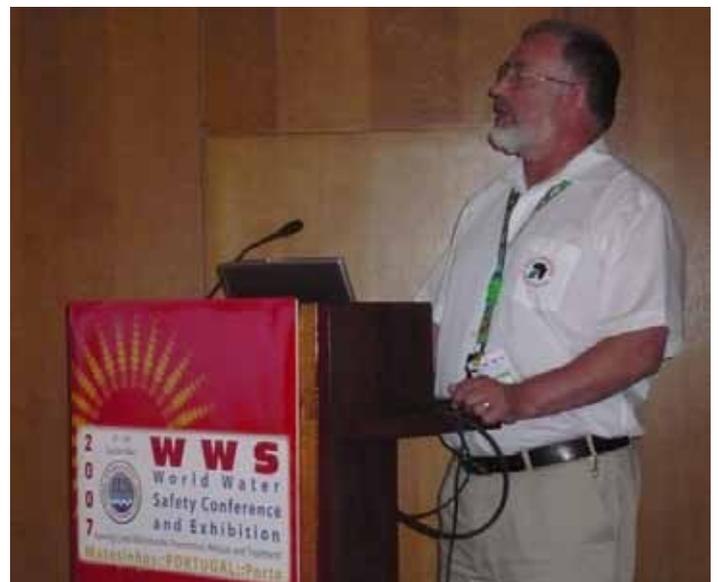


*Dr. Stathis Avramidis (Greece) and Dr. Robert Stallman (Norway) with John at a Lifesaving Foundation conference*

#### INTERNATIONAL

In 1999 he established the RLSS IRELAND Overseas Aid Sub-committee as a millennium project to provide financial and technical aid to lifesavers in developing countries. Irish lifesavers travelled to Kenya and Lesotho training lifesavers. He travelled to Lesotho twice during which successfully helped to set up a national lifesaving organisation, The Royal Lesotho Lifesaving Association. The Overseas Aid Sub-committee was converted into the Irish Lifesaving Foundation and incorporated as a charity in 2003. Through his role as Honorary Chief Executive of the Lifesaving Foundation he plays a direct role in promoting and supporting lifesaving organisations in a number of developing countries.

He attended his first international lifesaving conference in 1990 and has regularly contributed to conferences since then presenting papers at various World Drowning Prevention Conferences. In 2009 he organised the first Lifesaving Foundation Drowning Prevention Conference which has continued to grow since then. He has authored a number of drowning prevention documents on behalf of the Foundation.



*John Connolly addressing the 2007 World Water Safety Conference*

