

# Leitrim Guardian Person of the Year 2016

## Joe and Rosie Dolan, Carrick-on-Shannon

THE LEITRIM GUARDIAN Committee is delighted to present the award of *Leitrim Guardian People of the Year* to Joe and Rosie Dolan for 2016. The honour is well due to this very popular couple who are at the heart and soul of every aspect of life that is of benefit to their community and county, and are particularly well known for their input into the commercial and tourist vitality of the county town, Carrick-on-Shannon.

As proprietors of the long established and historic Bush Hotel, the Dolans have not only preserved the character and facade of their premises as it has been over the years, but have expanded and upgraded to make it an ultra-modern facility, right in the heart of the town's Main Street.

"The Bush", as it is popularly known, has hosted countless weddings and wedding fayres, conferences, public meetings, civic events, dinner dances, family parties, banquets, concerts, charity fund-raisers, a plethora of local committee meetings, book launches and visits by national and international dignitaries and celebrities. Irrespective of the occasion, Joe, Rosie, the Dolan family and staff have ensured a personal touch and the highest standards of hospitality and service.

Historical figures who have been guests in the hotel include Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa, Charles Stewart Parnell and Michael Collins, the room where the latter stayed is dedicated to his name,



and contains significant artefacts and memorabilia.

Generosity is one of the hallmarks of Joe and Rosie Dolan and numerous organisations have benefitted from their goodness. The Bush Hotel was also a finalist in Chambers Ireland Corporate Social Responsibility Awards in 2013.

The Bush Hotel has been the main sponsor of Leitrim GAA since 2009 and is the very proud sponsor of the Leitrim Senior Team and have committed once again to continue this support for 2016. At home and in far-flung places around the world, the Leitrim jersey, with the Bush Hotel logo, is a familiar

sight in GAA and sporting circles.

### Rosie Dolan

Rosie is one of eight children born to Arthur and Maeve Laird of Killukin Carrick-on-Shannon, whose family originated from Scotland, and came to Carrick on Shannon in the 17th century. The Laird family was responsible for building the first bridge in the town, connecting Leitrim and Roscommon.

Rosie was educated at the Grammar School in Sligo and then trained as a nurse in Dublin during the 1980's, returning to Carrick following her marriage to Joe. She initially worked with the North West Ambulance Service for a number of years before joining her



■ **Joe and Rosie with their son Gavin**

husband in the family's hotel business. Rosie is secretary of Kiltoghert Church of Ireland Group of Parishes and an active member of the Carrick Heritage Group. She is very enthusiastic about walking and has returned this week from Peru in South America where she has just completed the Inca Trail, raising significant funds for a special needs home in Lima.

Rosie played a lead role in establishing the Carrick Basic Life Support Group whose aims are to provide six Automated External Defibrillators (AED's) for Carrick and to train 100 volunteers. This project was initiated following the miraculous recovery of a man who had suffered a cardiac arrest in Carrick.

■ **Andrew Dolan 1991 – 2012**  
**Student, musician, sportsman,**  
**friend, brother and beautiful son**  
**Rest in Peace. Three years gone**  
**and missed more than ever...**



Through the timely and skilled intervention by Rosie, assisted by an inspirational 17 year old Carrick student, Orland McNabola, this man's life was undoubtedly saved.

### **Joe Dolan**

Joe Dolan was the second of five children born to Jack Dolan (originally from Drumkeerin and Rachel Dolan (nee Campbell) from Carrick.

He attended the Presentation Brothers in Carrick and later graduated from NUIG (then known as UCG) with an Honours Science Degree. Joe was conferred with a PhD at QUB and undertook a brief Post-Doctoral Fellowship at TCD. He worked in the Middle East and Africa for two years before returning to the family business in the County Hotel in the late 1980's. Joe later took time out to complete a Tourism Management and Strategy Diploma at Cornell State University in the US. He has chaired Leitrim Tourism for the past 11 years, is a former Director of Bord Failte and Failte Ireland and sits on various national hospitality forums, employment and training initiatives, and Government led tourism Task Forces.

Joe is currently national Vice President of the Irish Hotels Federation and it has just been announced that he is to be the next National President, taking office in Feb 2016 for a term of 2 years. He is only the second person from the west of Ireland to be elected to this prestigious position.

Joe attracted national and indeed international media attention when he interrupted and forced the cancellation of a public auction, being held in The Bush Hotel, of a family farm near Carrick, another indication of his community awareness and concern.

He is involved in a number of business



■ Joe and Rosie on holidays

enterprises: project management, building development and consultancy. In particular, he is Managing Director of the Bush Hotel which he owns and manages with Rosie and his brother David, which they acquired in 1993. The Dolans have developed and grown this business and now employ sixty staff, the majority of whom are Leitrim people.

Joe is passionate about all things Leitrim, and supports many Leitrim community and disadvantaged groups.

■ Joe and son Gavin with Sam Maguire Cup



■ Joe and Rosie with their son Jack

Joe Dolan is the instigator of the innovative *Leitrim Ambassador Programme*, targeting Leitrim diaspora across the world to spread the story of the great place Leitrim is to live in, visit and in which to invest. He cleverly partnered this programme with the *Leitrim Equation* at the Camden and Milwaukee Irish Music Festivals and with Leitrim GAA at their away games in London and New York. At Leitrim's last game in New York he launched the Ambassador programme in Rosie O'Grady's Bar and Restaurant. Joe also addressed the Irish Business community at the Irish Consulate in New York in the same forum as Hewlett Packard and the Kerry Group. His expertise in outlining the investment opportunities and the attractiveness of Leitrim as a place to work, rest and play was featured in the Wall Street Journal.

Rosie and Joe were childhood sweethearts and on through their student and early working years. They returned to

Leitrim in the late 80's to marry, but with the intention to emigrate from Ireland. The days passed into weeks and then months and they are still here in Carrick on Shannon. No doubt the arrival of their three fine sons Jack, Andrew and Gavin was an influencing factor in their decision to remain in Leitrim.

- Jack, 26, is a finance manager in London
- Gavin, 20, is a Maths student at TC
- Andrew, a biomedical student, died tragically on New Year's Day 2012 aged 20

Andrew's passing had a profound effect on the entire community of Leitrim and Roscommon and far beyond and bore testimony to the generosity of spirit of Andrew himself and the whole Dolan Family in relation to Organ Donation.

*We salute the Leitrim People of the Year for 2016, Joe and Rosie Dolan.*