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## ***GAA MEDIA RELEASE*** ***NUAHT RÁITEAS CLG***

**30ú Eanáir, 2026**

### ***Gradaim an Uachtaráin*** ***2026 recipients announced***

The GAA has announced the recipients for Gradaim an Uachtaráin 2026. These prestigious annual awards, organised with the support of AIB and broadcast by TG4, are made by GAA President Jarlath Burns to acknowledge individuals who have made an extraordinary contribution to the promotion of Gaelic games at club and county level.

Running for more than 20 years, the awards are a cross-section of people who have stood out through their ability to consistently go above and beyond in the service of their club and county and GAA community.

There are provincial, educational, and Irish language awards, as well as awards recognising contributions made to Ladies football, Camogie, World GAA, and Handball. The Dermot Earley Family Award recipients are The Ward family from Galway.

Uachtarán CLG Jarlath Burns said: “The people being celebrated tonight are the faces of the GAA, the people we see every week, every month and every year - all giving selflessly to make our clubs, counties and communities the thriving Gaelic games hubs that they are.

“The GAA cannot function without the incredible work of the volunteer army that makes us the extraordinary movement that we have been since 1884. The people being honoured are in their own way ambassadors for the many thousands like them who make the GAA what it is. I congratulate all of our worthy recipients and wish to acknowledge the support of TG4 and AIB for this scheme.”

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**The GAA President's Awards (Gradaim an Uachtaráin) will be broadcast tonight LIVE on TG4.ie, the TG4 Player, and YouTube Spórt TG4 at 19:30 approx. It will be then played out on TG4 at 00:40 tonight.**

**YouTube - <https://www.youtube.com/live/244gGfn-vJs?si=xoXKXcemA5p5xc4g>**

## **2026 GAA PRESIDENT'S AWARDS CITATIONS**

### **GERARD BRADLEY, ULSTER**

A man for all seasons and an exceptional volunteer, Gerard Bradley is the epitome of the sort of GAA volunteer who is always willing to step up when there is a need.

From Gortin in Co Tyrone, this now retired, much loved Chemistry and Physics teacher, played for this local St Patrick's club in the 70s and 80s before making an immeasurable impact upon his move into administration. Initially involved in the county executive as a Youth Officer in 1987, he was elected county treasurer in 1991 – a position he would hold for 10 years.

As the county's financial controller for a decade Gerard worked diligently, putting in place sound and effective structures that had become necessary to monitor and control the ever-increasing financial exchanges. He became the County IT Officer in 2001 and quickly moved Tyrone into one of the country's leaders in this field.

Several GAA Presidents have recognised his work and his ability in both fields - IT and Finance - and have invited Gerard to serve on the National subcommittees where his contributions and knowledge of both subjects are greatly respected.

Since 1991 Gerard has been a continuous and ever-present member of the Tyrone Finance Committee, in addition to his membership of the County Committee in a varied range of roles; but, the one role that he is most familiar in with the fans and general public is that of a 'gate-man' or 'gate steward'. He will be in attendance, managing the safe entry of the fans and supporters at every fixture in Tyrone, and at almost all Provincial championship games in Ulster.

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There is just one proviso - he must be back home in Gortin on a Saturday evening to call the bingo numbers in his local Clubhouse!!

**MICHAEL KEANE, MUNSTER**

Born in 1936 and a proud Cork man, Michael has dedicated a lifetime of commitment and service to Cloughduv Hurling Club and the GAA. That involvement began at just six years of age, when a neighbour, who crafted hurleys for Cork players in the 1940s, brought him to his first match. From that day on, Michael became part of the club's everyday life, helping with pitch lining and maintenance long before he ever took to the field. At the time, U14 was the earliest playing grade, and Michael lined out for Cloughduv from then right up to the age of 35, winning a Junior A county medal in 1970.

When his playing career ended, Michael turned to refereeing, embarking on a distinguished 24-year journey, including crossing over the county bounds to referee Kerry senior hurling matches. Among his refereeing highlights include the County Senior Hurling Finals of 1985 and 1986, and the All-Ireland Colleges Senior A Football Final in 1987. After retiring from refereeing, he continued to contribute by being appointed as Referees Administrator by Cork GAA, where he has mentored many emerging referees and officials, offering guidance and constructive feedback to help them progress.

Michael was also involved as a selector on numerous Cloughduv teams down through the years and also served as a selector on the Muskerry divisional hurling team. He also had the distinction of serving as chairman of Cloughduv Hurling Club.

To Michael, Cloughduv Hurling Club is the heart of the parish and a cornerstone of community life. Even today, he remains a constant presence encouraging, supporting, and advising players from the youngest underage teams to the adult squads. His steady influence has shaped the club's achievements and spirit over many decades.

From the simple pitch of his childhood to the modern facilities of today, including three playing fields, an astro-turf training area, a walking track, an indoor astro, a gym, and more, Michael has witnessed remarkable growth in the club, being immensely proud of the current facilities developed by the club in the last 20 years. His lifelong dedication has played a meaningful role in the club's journey and its enduring success.

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**JOE MOORE, CONNACHT**

From the St. Aidans GAA Club in Roscommon, it's no understatement to say that the sporting lives of the people of Dysart, Ballyforan and Four Roads parish wouldn't be the same without the influence of Joe Moore.

It wasn't until the 1960s that St. Aidan's GAA club was properly established. Though founded in 1956, it took time for the various corners of the parish to gel together. At 15 years of age, Joe played adult championship for St. Aidan's in 1959, but the club didn't field a team again until 1963, his first year out of minor. By then, he was club secretary and involved in running the team as well.

Joe was renowned for travelling to the various national schools around the parish and dropping postcards for each family in order to run parish leagues in Dysart, then in turn ensuring those same young players continued to play football with St. Aidan's. The sight of Joe bringing young players to matches on his bike, or later on, in his car, was commonplace.

The bones of Joe's 1962 minor team stuck together, aided by a handful of older players, and a junior championship win in 1966, with Moore lining out at right wing forward, proved to be a vital steppingstone in cementing the whole operation.

Every positive step that the club has taken has either been driven by Joe or benefited from his involvement. He was central to the fundraising drive and the work involved in putting in a new pitch at the club grounds in Ballyforan while he was playing, and since then, the club has added floodlighting, a walking track, a gym, community meeting room, four dressing rooms and a second training pitch, and is currently aiming to put in an astroturf training area around the ball wall.

Perhaps most importantly of all, in a parish that has a strong tradition of hurling (through Four Roads HC) and handball (through Mount Talbot club), Joe has always encouraged young players to be involved in all sports and supported them in doing so, to the point that he was also involved in basketball coaching, among other activities. This is a central part of the sporting identity of the people of this parish, and it has been fostered in no small part by the work that he put in to make this community what it is today.

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**KEVIN JORDAN, LEINSTER**

For more than four decades, Kevin Jordan has been one of the defining figures of Southern Gaels GAA in Westmeath. As a player, he contributed to some of the club's most significant achievements, including a landmark 1986 title and a string of Junior B and league successes. His passion for hurling continued well beyond his playing years, earning a Level 1 Hurling Qualification and supporting teams across every age group from underage and schools right through to Intermediate.

Kevin's contribution also extends far beyond the pitch. He has held every position on the Club Executive, many of them on multiple occasions. His influence also spans communications, where he fulfilled the role of Communications Officer, managing match reports, media engagement and club PR with diligence and care.

A driving force behind key initiatives, Kevin helped establish and continues to run the Club Monthly Draw, now the club's primary fundraising mechanism. His commitment to development has ensured Southern Gaels remains well-resourced and sustainable into the future. His service has also been recognised beyond the club, having served as Runaí Coiste na nÓg Westmeath and as a qualified referee within the county.

Few individuals contribute as broadly or as consistently to Southern Gaels and indeed hurling in that part of the County. Kevin's dedication to players, volunteers and the wider community has shaped the club across generations. His leadership, service and love for the game exemplify the very spirit of the GAA and mark him as a worthy recipient of this award.

**ANN MARIE KILKENNY, LGFA**

Anne Marie Kilkenny has been the backbone of Kilmacud Crokes for many years, serving tirelessly as club secretary with exceptional dedication and professionalism. Her commitment goes far beyond the administrative duties of her role — she is the first point of contact for members, players, and volunteers, ensuring that every aspect of club operations runs smoothly.

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Anne Marie's organisational skills and attention to detail have been instrumental in coordinating fixtures, managing communications, and supporting the development of teams across all age groups. Her ability to balance these responsibilities while fostering a welcoming and inclusive environment reflects her deep passion for the LGFA and its values.

Beyond her official duties, Anne Marie embodies the spirit of volunteerism that lies at the heart of the Association. She consistently goes above and beyond, giving her time freely to mentor new volunteers, assist with fundraising initiatives, and represent the club at meetings. Her leadership and unwavering commitment have strengthened the sense of community within Kilmacud Crokes, making her an invaluable asset to the club and the wider Gaelic Games family.

In the mid-1980s there were only five Ladies football teams operating in Dublin. From those humble beginnings the LGFA in Dublin has risen to the very top with huge participation numbers and exceptional standards. Kilmacud Crokes are at the heart of this soaring success, both as club champions and in terms of producing players of national acclaim on successful Dublin teams. Behind them are volunteers like Ann Marie Kilkenny who through their tireless efforts have created an environment for the game to grow and thrive.

### **GERALDINE KINANE, TIPPERARY – CAMOGIE**

Currently PRO with the Tipperary County Camogie Board where she has played a huge part in raising the profile of Tipperary Camogie, Geraldine previously played a major role in her club Drom/Inch as chairperson, and secretary. She is regarded as the backbone of the club and the driving force behind the senior team's success, as they recorded the five in a row of county championships in 2023. She has also managed juvenile and adult teams and has served on senior and intermediate county management teams.

In every successful sporting organisation, there are individuals whose influence extends far beyond the scoreboard. They are the people who build standards, set direction, and quietly ensure that progress is sustained year after year. Geraldine Kinnane is one of those people. Through her professionalism, attention to detail and clear understanding of the modern media landscape, she has ensured that the achievements of Tipperary Camogie teams and players receive the recognition they merit, strengthening the game's visibility and engagement.

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Across every role she has undertaken, Geraldine has been recognised for elevating standards and driving excellence. She is known for her willingness to step forward whenever required, bring her strong leadership qualities and her meticulous approach to preparation and organisation.

Her contribution reflects the vital role played by volunteers who give generously of their time and expertise in the service of sport. In any sport, progress is driven by people who give far more than they ever seek in return. Through her leadership, commitment and an unwavering dedication to camogie, Geraldine has left a lasting imprint on her club and her county. Quite simply, Geraldine's contribution has helped shape the present and secure the future of camogie in Tipperary, leaving a legacy that will be felt for years to come.

**DONAL HAYES, HANDBALL**

Donal Hayes, from Cappagh Handball Club in Limerick, has been involved with Handball for more than 40 years. He has held a multitude of positions at Club, County, Provincial and National level in Handball, including Secretary of Cappagh Handball Club, Limerick County Secretary and Munster Administrator. At one stage, Donal held all three of these positions simultaneously. He is currently the Treasurer and Assistant Administrator of Munster GAA Handball and also prepares County and Provincial fixtures and results, having also been Limerick County Juvenile Officer in the past. Donal is one of only three Munster Provincial Administrators since the 1970's. He has held National roles Chairing CCCC and also served for many years on Ard Comhairle.

On the playing Courts, Donal Hayes has won County, Provincial and All-Ireland titles in 4Wall, Softball and Wallball Codes.

In 2004 Donal was the National Coach of the Year, and Munster Coach of the Year in 2010. He won Munster Achievement of the Year in 2011 with Ger Downes for the Regeneration Handball Programmes in Limerick City, and also helped his club, Cappagh H.C. win the National Club of the Year Award in 2005.

Last year the World Wallball Championships were hosted at University of Limerick. Donal played a pivotal role in securing the successful bid to host those Championships and was a key member of the organising committee that ensured that this was one of the most successful World Handball Championships ever held and on budget.

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## **PÁDRAIC Ó CONGHAÍLE, GRADAIM GAEILIGE**

De bhunadh Naomh Anna Leitir Móir, chaith Pádraig Choilmín Ó Conghaile a óige ag imirt lena chlub. Ó tháinig deireadh lena chuid laethanta imeartha, tá sé sáite agus báite i riarachán an chlub agus tá sealanna éagsúla caite aige i rólanna éagsúla – mar Chisteoir, mar Leas-Chathaoirleach agus mar Chathaoirleach i measc rólanna eile.

Is í an Ghaeilge teanga chumarsáide an chlub agus déantar gach gnó de chuid an chlub, atá suite i gcroílár Ghaeltacht Chonamara, trí Ghaeilge. Leag Pádraig béim ar thábhacht na Gaeilge, ní hamháin sa chlub ach sa chontae freisin, i gcónaí agus é mar bhall agus mar oifigeach de chuid an chlub.

Scríobh Pádraig an leabhar iontach Leabhar Stair Naomh Anna 1964 - 2014 a dhéanann taifead ar stair an chlub ó na blianta tosaigh go dtí an lá atá inniu ann. Tá an iliomad alt agus grianghraf sa leabhar a leagann béim ar oidhreacht fhíorspeisialta an chlub Ghaeltachta seo.

D'éagraigh Naomh Anna Leitir Móir Comórtas Peile na Gaeltachta faoi stiúir chathaoirleacht Phádraig sa bhliain 2022 agus bronnadh bonn óir de chuid Fhondúireacht Sheosaimh Mhic Dhonncha ar an gclub an bhliain chéanna mar aitheantas ar a dtiomantas don Ghaeilge.

Dar ndóigh, tá na blianta caite ag Pádraig mar ionadaí Chomórtas Peile na Gaeltachta de chuid na Gaillimhe agus cinntíonn sé féin agus lucht an choiste go n-eagraítear an Comórtas go héifeachtach agus go héifeachtúil i nGaillimh gach bliain.

Hailing from the Naomh Anna Leitir Móir Conamara club, Pádraig Choilmín Ó Conghaile spent his youth playing with the club. Since his playing days came to an end he has been heavily involved in the administration and has filled different administrative roles including terms as Treasurer, Vice-Chair and Chair among other roles.

Irish is the Language of the club, and all business of the club is conducted through Irish. Pádraig has always emphasised the importance of the Irish language not only in his club but in his county too as member and official of the club.

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Pádraig was the author of *Leabhar Stair Naomh Anna 1964 – 2014* which details the history of the club and contains many articles and photos that highlight the unique nature of Naomh Anna Leitir Móir.

Padraig has spent many years as a Galway representative of Comórtas Peile na Gaeltachta and along with other committee members ensures that the Comórtas is run effectively and efficiently in Galway every year.

### **JIMMY SMYTH, EDUCATION**

Jimmy Smyth is widely regarded as one of Armagh's greatest Gaelic footballers, and in later years he became a respected teacher, coach, and broadcaster. Across Armagh and far beyond, he is celebrated above all for his extraordinary achievements on the field. A lifelong member of the Clan na Gael club in Lurgan, Jimmy has devoted decades of unwavering service to the club he proudly calls home. Although he has lost count of the many roles he has undertaken within Clan na Gael, it was as a player that he first came to prominence, forging a reputation built on exceptional skill, natural leadership, and unshakeable commitment.

After his playing career, Jimmy devoted countless hours to coaching and to the administration of Gaelic games. He served for many years as a leading figure on both the Armagh Vocational Schools Committee and the Ulster Vocational Schools Committee. In 2012, he guided the Ulster committee's contribution to the GAA Oral History Project, during which members traced the origins and growth of the Vocational Schools GAA sector and reflected on the profound impact it had on generations of young players.

Jimmy remains an active and highly valued presence within Ulster Schools GAA in his role as Chairman, approaching every task, large or small, with characteristic dedication. He is a familiar figure at match gates, leads the Ulster Schools Committee, and oversees several subcommittees. At various times, he has also contributed his expertise to the All-Ireland Post-Primary Schools Committee, where his contribution is greatly valued.

Today, Jimmy serves as President of Armagh GAA, continuing to support and guide developmental work throughout the county.

### **DANIEL BURKE, VIET CETLS GAA CLUB, HANOI - INTERNATIONAL AWARD**

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Daniel arrived in Hanoi in 2017 from his hometown of Drimnagh and, within a couple of days he was already at Gaelic training with the Viet Celts and within a few months, he was stepping in to run training sessions when coaches were unavailable and began helping with training for Blue Dragon Children's Foundation, a local charity supporting at-risk youth. Here the passion for inspiring and guiding young people to reach their goals and overcome barriers they might face along the way has continued to grow.

After completing his degree in Health and Social Care, Daniel went on to gain his qualification in primary school teaching and travel to Asia to pursue his teaching career and see the world. He ended up finding the perfect medium to continue his work in community and youth development, with the Viet Celts GAA club. Dan has done it all as a player and administrator. To Dan, the Viet Celts was more than just a sports club, it was a community, a lifeline for those newly arrived in Vietnam and a way to bring people of all backgrounds and ages together in a unique way.

Dan has been the key and driving force within the youth set up in the Viet Celts (and Asia). From the very first Saturday session had six children, two coaches, and torrential rain, to keeping the program alive during Covid, to organizing countless fundraisers through the club such as food drives and blood drives. He set up a scholarship fund for young players from disadvantaged backgrounds to ensure they can stay in school and further education. He runs Gaelic football seven days a week for children in Hanoi as well as assisting the adults' ladies' team and working as the Asian County Boards Children's officer. His hard work culminated in 2025 with the Viet Celts hosting the first official Cul Camp in Asia and also hosting one of the largest ever Asian Youth Championships, which saw 250 children from across Asia competing.

Daniel's contribution to youth Gaelic football in Asia, and particularly in Vietnam, has been sustained, hands-on, and driven by genuine belief in the power of sport and community. His impact can be seen not just in numbers or events, but in the young people who now have access to opportunity, belonging, and a game that might otherwise never have reached them. His dedication to young people and passion for the power of sports is truly incredible.

**THE DERMOT EARLEY FAMILY AWARD**

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**THE WARD FAMILY, KILKERRIN CLONBERN, GALWAY**

A family steeped in Gaelic games. That description is particularly apt when referring to the Wards from Kilkerrin-Clonberne.

Dad Willie played with the club and wore the colours of Galway at junior level in 1990. He has coached numerous club teams and has been to the fore as manager with the Kilkerrin-Clonberne Ladies teams who have won the last five AIB All-Ireland senior club titles.

Starring on those teams were twin sisters Nicola, a TG4 Senior Players' Player of the Year award winner in 2024, and a current and three-time TG4 All-Star, and Louise, a 2019 All-Star and captain of the team that won the AIB All-Ireland senior club title last December.

Nicola and Louise's brother Adrian is also an accomplished player who continues to line out for the club's intermediate team. A winner of county titles at various grades, he is a fervent supporter of the exploits of his sisters. Mum Chrissie has also been hugely involved with the club, while also helping out on county underage management teams, and she has been club registrar for 10 years.

Not a week goes by when this family are not in some way making a contribution to their local club and in turn, helping their local community. This is a family who are defined by their involvement in their local club and in playing Gaelic games – achieving excellence as players but also working tirelessly to ensure that the club remains the focal point of their home place. They are representative of many other families who do just that, build their lives and raise their children around the ebb and flow of the GAA season and the club that is at the heart of their community life.

**ENDS**