

# Farmers supporting their local communities



Stephen Brosnan and Brendan O'Sullivan with Michelle Ferris Support Worker, Claire Vinten KP&F, Jackie Murray Asst. Director of Services KP&F with farmer George Kelly at Hazelfort Farm, Ballymalis, Beaufort.

Martin Sheehan with Gerry Smith St John of Gods, Eileen Sheehan Social Farming Working group and farmer George Kelly at Hazelfort Farm, Ballymalis, Beaufort.

## 'I'm always fascinated by the ability shown...

I WAS a board member of South Kerry Partnership and we had been looking at developing the project for a number of years. I decided to step forward and do it which has proven a worthwhile decision ever since.

I have five participants and it's the sense of independence they get. Often the participants are so used to being cared for, but when they start caring for plants, animals and the environment around them it's a huge plus to it. I have

a participant who gets the bus to my farm and it's that kind of independence.

The motto 'if you step forward to help others you help yourself' is true of Social Farming. From a personal point of view you build up a friendship with the participants and their families. Knowing there is a great network of support workers to help is also vital. I have found that the least able-bodied participants get the most out of the Kerry Social Farming experience because of this

network of support.

I'm always fascinated by the ability they have and not the disability. We have great banter too which is part of it. It's educational and they like to learn. We're role models and we must be conscious of this.

There is also great support from the network for farmers looking to become hosts. Currently, there is 19 host farmers and we hope to grow this number by six a year over the next five years.

There is a fantastic working group involved and there is a combination of services across the county that is inclusive. They lend huge support to social farming in Kerry; this helps to make it a weekly service.

**George Kelly, Beaufort**  
Host farmer and Chairperson of the Kerry Social Farming Working Group