



UACHTARÁN NA hÉIREANN  
PRESIDENT OF IRELAND

**Message from President Michael D Higgins**

**Netwatch Carer of the Year Awards**

**28<sup>th</sup> November 2020**

I am delighted to send my best wishes to you all. May I commence by thanking Matthew Gilsean and Deirdre Shannon for the beautiful entertainment, and Mary Kennedy and Marty Whelan for hosting this important event.

The most recent census showed that 4.1% of our population are unpaid carers, a statistic that adds up to many thousands of people who are, every day in homes across the country, providing generous care for parents, children, partners, or other family members or friends. This evening we celebrate those remarkable people within our society who so selflessly commit their lives to the emotional and physical needs of a loved one; centering their days around that person and ensuring they have all they need to live their lives as fully and enjoyably as possible.

I am aware that, for so many of you, this year has come with particular challenges as we face, together, the challenge of the coronavirus pandemic. Indeed, recent months have brought into sharp focus the vital contribution that our carers make to our society.

The task that you undertake is not an easy one. It is, however, an enormously valuable task and a task whose significance must not be overlooked in a society for whom family carers are such an important pillar of support for those who are elderly, ill, disabled or vulnerable. The fact that it is a task usually undertaken out of love and a genuine spirit of care in no way diminishes the remarkable, indeed invaluable, contribution that carers make to our society. Let us never forget that it is due to the thousands of people around Ireland who step up and care, day in day out, for a loved one that so many in need of care can remain for as long as possible in their own home.

Caring for our fellow citizens, and for our family members in particular, has always been a fundamental part of ethical living. It should go without saying, therefore, that supporting those in caring roles is an essential component of a truly ethical and democratic State. As individuals within families and communities it is important that we not only offer solidarity to carers, but articulate that spirit of solidarity by seeking the creation of a society and a state that acknowledges its own duty of care towards all its citizens; a society that invests in the public services and policies necessary to ensure the well-being of those who need care and those who offer care.

It is my great hope that, as we emerge from this unprecedented chapter of our nation's history, we will interrogate the values by which we must live together, rediscovering in post - pandemic Ireland the instincts of empathy and concern for collective welfare that may have become neglected in recent years.

It is those instincts that lie at the heart of the vital and selfless work carried out by those who care for others, seeking no reward or praise as they work quietly and with emotional integrity to craft a better world for those in their care.

I am delighted therefore, to have the opportunity to express my gratitude and admiration directly to each and every one of you. Your commitment, empathy and generosity provides a shining light in the lives of so many and you are inspiring examples of selfless commitment, generous concern and the great humanitarian instinct which lies at the heart of all ethical societies.

It has been a great pleasure to have this opportunity to speak to you all. I thank you for the work you do and for being such inspiring role models in a world now navigating its way towards what I sincerely hope will be a better future for us all.

Go raibh mile maith agaibh go léir.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Michael D. Higgins". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'M' and 'D'.

**Michael D. Higgins**

**Uachtarán na hÉireann**

**President of Ireland**