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EBS Building Society is providing €20,000 in research grants to support adult learning and family literacy

Irish author Claudia Carroll calls for applications to 2008 EBS and NALA ACE awards.

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€20,000 is being made available by EBS Limited to advance research in the area of adult learning; it was announced today at the launch of the 2008 Adult Continuing Education (ACE) Awards. The awards, in their fourth year, are organized by the National Adult Literacy Agency and supported by EBS Limited.

At the launch of the awards, best selling Irish author and actress Claudia Carroll encouraged people to take part in this year's awards and to submit nominations that focus on effective tuition programmes that would benefit from further research and development. The awards aim to identify and support research into innovative and high quality learning opportunities for adults.

Speaking today at the announcement Claudia Carroll, best selling author of *I Never Fancied Him Anyway* and actress said: "I am delighted to be involved with this initiative which helps to support and promote the work of all those involved in adult literacy in Ireland. As a writer and an actress the joy of reading and writing was one that I could not have done without. I commend all adults who have made the brave decision to improve their literacy skills and I encourage all of you out there who are working on adult learning projects to enter them into this fantastic competition."

The ACE awards, now in their fourth year, have once again been given a generous donation of €20,000 in research grants by the EBS Limited. In November a shortlist of five nominees will be awarded €2,000 each to carry out research on the project that they submit. Following further evaluation of the research projects one overall winner will be announced in March 2009. The winner will receive a grant for €10,000 to develop and publish their research. Nominations are welcome from all those involved in adult basic education, who work to develop competence in adult skills, such as literacy, numeracy, ICT and communications.

Speaking at the launch, Inez Bailey, Director, NALA said: "Although there has been increased government resourcing of adult literacy work over recent years, there is never any funding available to do research. Nor are there sufficient resources to celebrate the work of thousands of literacy and numeracy practitioners nationwide who have been highly innovative in the development of new approaches and methods. Their work is aimed at enhancing the quality of tuition delivered to adults wishing to improve their skills. This is why the Awards and their focus on research grants are so invaluable to the sector and why NALA is very grateful to the EBS for their continued support".

Commenting at the launch of the awards Aidan Power, Head of Marketing at EBS, said: "This is the fourth year of the ACE Awards and once again we are delighted to be working with NALA on what is a very worthy initiative. Last year was the first year we introduced research grants and we feel that this has ensured that the awards have a wider impact on adult education. The awards are just one day in the calendar but the work that goes into the applications and the projects once the grants are received is enormous. Last year's winners in Kildare have proved how far the grant can take a project. The grants have encouraged people to share best practice and learning's ensuring that more people can benefit from the innovative approach to learning that has proved to be effective for others."

The overall winner of the 2007 ACE Award was the Youth Training and Development Centre (YTDC) in Newbridge, Co. Kildare, for their proposal to research the topic of integrating literacy and numeracy into vocational training and other activities. During the course of the project, areas for further development were identified which would enhance the work of the centre in the integration of literacy into training and other areas of activity. The main focus was on identifying tools and materials that would help staff to capture systematically the extent of learners' progress in literacy; and also, to gather evidence of that progress.

The closing date for nominations is 24th October 2008 and nomination forms are now available on both the NALA (www.nala.ie) and EBS (www.ebs.ie) websites. The ACE Awards ceremony will take place in Dublin in March 2009.