

A for Tony pic Games

art of unique 30-year partnership

the government accounts section. "It's going to be a fantastic event. There are six volunteers going out from Eircom. Also our managing director of Eircom wholesale is going out," said Phil.

"I got involved in the Great Limerick Run about two years ago and then I met with Matt English, who is the CEO for Special Olympics Ireland. Matt is a very inspirational guy. Because this is Eircom's 30th year sponsoring the Special Olympics - this is a big celebration internally in Eircom and there has been a huge amount of activity in the last 12 months. It is the longest corporate sponsorship in the country," Phil explained.

When they decided that they were going to send a number of representatives over the LA to represent Eircom, a call was sent out for staff to put pen to paper to explain why they would be a suitable candidate to represent the company.

"Some of my core points was that I am a very proud Limerickman and we have seen the Games come to Limerick twice in the last 10 years," Phil explained.

"We have been involved in a number of fundraising events including The Great Limerick Run, a race night, a cake baking competition judged by John 'The Bull' Hayes and A Stars in their Eyes night. Overall, for this particular event, Eircom raised over €130,000 and that was given to Special Olympics Ireland this year as part of the 30-year anniversary," said Phil.

Like Tony, Phil has never been to LA.

"It's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity really to go over there," he said.

Along with the 88 athletes competing from Ireland, there will be 160 volunteers travelling - a number of which are from Limerick including former Mayor of Limerick, Maria Byrne.

With 6,500 athletes and 2,000 coaches representing 165 countries, along with 30,000 volunteers and an anticipated 500,000 spectators, the 2015 Special Olympics World Games - being staged in Los Angeles from July 25 to August 2 - will be the largest sports and humanitarian event anywhere in the world in 2015, and the single biggest event in Los Angeles since the 1984 Olympic Games. It will feature 25 Olympic-style sports in venues throughout the LA region.



in slums of Kenya

raised will be solely used for the people in Kenya.

"We hope to bring over as many items as possible," Thomas explained.

"Our travel expenses will be funded by ourselves. We are confident our mission will be a success," he added.

The group also includes Dr Risteard O'Lionaid from Killarney - Thomas and Risteard studied and trained together in UCC - and nurses Ann Murphy who lives in Tahir, County Tipperary and Una Hayes, who lives in Killenale, County Tipperary.

Thomas Power is a locum senior house officer (SHO) working currently in Bantry General Hospital, County Cork. He trained in UCC and was a student of the class of 2013. He completed his Leaving Certificate at Tutorial College Limerick, speaks French and Irish and is currently learning German.

The group have already started fundraising for their trip abroad - Ann and Una organised a cake sale in the South Tipperary General Hospital in Clonmel and raised approximately €1,650. Risteard, meanwhile, organised a six-a-side soccer tournament in Clonmel on Friday night and raised just under €1,000. The group have also raised around €500 online.

Thomas is now preparing to host an open coffee day at his home in Ballinvreena on Sunday, July 26 from 2pm.

"There will be refreshments and a raffle," explained his mother Marie.

"They will be continuing to arrange a number of other fundraising initiatives throughout the year."

For further details on the fundraising initiatives, log onto <https://care4kenya.wordpress.com/>



Paul Austin, the founder of Get West, based at Sarsfield Bridge, which is nominated for a Limerick Chamber Award

Get West making big strides in adventure tourism

■ With the Limerick Chamber Regional Business Awards taking place later in the year, we profile some of the nominees

Why did you establish your business?

Living in Limerick since 2001, I always felt that the river was an amazing resource that was under utilised. When I began kayaking myself I instantly fell in love with the sport and wanted to make it accessible to everyone. I started by running summer camps for kids and teens, but the more I spoke to people the more I realised that individuals from all walks of life really wanted to give kayaking a go but, for whatever reason, never got the opportunity.

Indeed, the demand was undeniable when a dad asked could he do a summer camp with his kids. From there, I started running adult courses and could not get over the uptake from people of all ages and abilities who, despite a few initial nerves, thoroughly enjoyed their experience. In fact, many of these customers are now "regulars".

Why does your business deserve to win a Regional Business Award?

Get West has shown that by simply listening to what people want and being prepared to act on opportunities as they arise, a business with very humble beginnings can thrive at a rapid rate. I also believe that Get West is changing people's perceptions and attitudes towards the river and that as a result more people are now starting to view the

Where would you like to see Get West in five years' time?

I'd see Get West as being the main provider of adventure tourism in the Mid-West region.

If you were in government, what would you do to help businesses?

I would try to streamline a lot of the paperwork and time consuming activities that are required, especially of small businesses.

While there is a lot of help and advice available, for the small start up company, one person is often doing all of the work. This is not only time-consuming but is a very difficult area to navigate and it eats into the time you have to actually be out engaging and working with customers, which ultimately is what it's all about.

Organisations like Limerick Chamber of Commerce, Paul Partnership and the Limerick Local Enterprise Office have been an invaluable resource for information and advice and they need the full backing of the government in order to provide their services. Being self-employed can be a lonely place and sometimes it is great just to be part of a network of like-minded people who you know have gone through the same struggles - and you can pick up the phone and meet up for a chat.

FACT FILE

■ **Company:** Get West

■ **Based:** Sarsfield Bridge in Limerick city centre, plus the University Boat House at UL

■ **Product/Service:** An array of kayaking activities - guided kayak city tours, team-building and corporate

events, learn-to-kayak courses, try-a-kayak sessions, summer camps and parties.

■ **Founded:** 2014

■ **Employees:** Five

■ **Nominated:** Best Sport, Art and Hospitality and Best Emerging Company

OK deadline Sat 18th July