

Newcastle West's Michael O'Donoghue gave a lifetime of service to Gaelic Games in primary schools

Allianz Cumann na mBunscol lost one of its greatest servants when Michael O' Donoghue, former Principal of Courtenay BNS in Newcastle West, passed away last Friday at the age of 86.

Michael's record as an Cumann na mBunscol activist included the following:

Michael was centrally involved in establishing the West Limerick Primary Schools Board in 1974 with the help of Liam Lenihan (Glengurt NS), Larry Begley (Mountcollins NS) and the late Noel Liston (St Joseph's BNS, Rathkeale). Michael was a founder member of the Board and was elected Rúnaí two years later. West Limerick is a vast rural area stretching from the outskirts of Limerick city to the County Kerry border on one side and to the Cork border on the other. It also includes large centres of population in Newcastle West, Abbeyfeale and Adare.

Michael served as Secretary and Treasurer of Cumann na mBunscol West Limerick from 1976 -2007. Today, more than forty schools participate in the Cumann na mBunscol competitions in West Limerick. These include football for boys and girls, hurling, camogie, I.N.T.O. / G.A.A. mini games and handball.

Michael also organised handball in West Limerick in conjunction with Limerick Handball Board.

As well as his role in West Limerick, Michael served as Secretary of Cumann na mBunscol, Condae Luimnigh from 1989 to 2011, a period of twenty-two years' unbroken service

Michael was the first Secretary of Cumann na mBunscol na Mumhan. He served in this role for the first three years of the Coiste's existence from 1990 to 1993, with Donal Whooley (Cork) as Chairman and Brother Anselm Barrett (Waterford) as Treasurer.

It must be remembered that Michael was secretary to the above organisation and committees long before the days of notifying people by e-mail, text, Twitter, or other social media.

In 2022, Michael was honoured at a dinner in the Longcourt Hotel in Newcastle West when he received the **Pat Trainor Award for Lifetime contribution to Gaelic Games in primary schools**. Michael was presented with his award by Mairéad O'Callaghan, Uachtarán of Allianz Cumann na mBunscol, who travelled from Cork for this special occasion. Mairéad paid tribute to Michael for his work in several roles over many years. She noted that Michael's involvement in Allianz Cumann na mBunscol spanned almost four decades and that his contribution to the development of Allianz Cumann na mBunscol was immense.

Always keen to avoid the limelight, Michael said that he would dedicate the award to the memory of the late Noel Liston, who was the first Chairman of West Limerick Primary Schools Board in 1974 and continued in that role for over thirty years. Noel, who taught in St Joseph's BNS, Rathkeale, was 'Mr West Limerick' and Michael said that his love of Gaelic Games benefitted generations of children in Limerick.

Joe Lyons, Cathoirleach of the Coiste Naisiúnta of Allianz Cumann na mBunscol, spoke of Michael as an unsung hero who did a huge amount of work promoting Gaelic Games in primary schools.

“Allianz Cumann na mBunscol has lost a great friend in Mike. His vision and hard work were integral to the evolution of the thriving organisation we have today, where boys and girls in every school in Limerick enjoy the opportunity to play our native games with their school friends. Ar dheis Dé go raibh sé,” concluded Mr Lyons.