



# Speedpak

*With help from The Ireland Funds, Speedpak is bringing valuable training and support to unemployed people.*

**Life can feel bleak** for some people living with unemployment. “I never finished school because I had a baby when I was 16,” says Marlena. “When I learned he was very sick at birth, I stayed home. By the time I came to Speedpak, I hadn’t worked for a very long time.”

**Speedpak** is a social enterprise in Coolock, Co. Dublin that has been recognized for their innovative approach to a community that has struggled with unemployment and all of the social challenges associated with it. Speedpak has two commercial businesses. It offers contract packing services to industry and is Ireland’s leading manufacturer of rosettes, sashes, and badges for events ranging from sporting competitions to horse shows. However, many of their corporate clients don’t even realize the truly transformative work that Speedpak is doing behind the scenes with their workforce.

**While** Speedpak hires people to work in the company's product packing and finishing warehouse, they are simultaneously offering training and education to that same workforce—made up primarily of long-term unemployed people—so they can eventually leave the company for employment elsewhere.

"Most employers hire only the best people, and then work to keep them. We are the opposite," explained Edel Moloney, Change and Development Manager at Speedpak. "We intentionally hire the people that need employment training the most. People who are single mothers, people who are long-term unemployed, ex-drug users, and ex-offenders. Then we work with them to be ready for bigger opportunities."

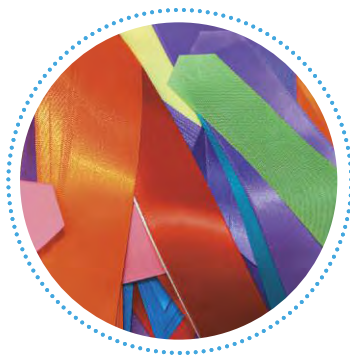
Speedpak was established in 1995 by a local development company, the Northside Partnership, with the involvement of the local business community and support of Government agencies. Since then, they have had over 500 people come through their workplace and training program.

achieving. A person's journey may be three steps or three hundred, but we're here to help them conquer their fears and change their mindset."

**Changing mindsets** and instilling a sense of possibility is a key component of Speedpak's ethos. Andrea left school at 16. "With six brothers and sisters there just wasn't much extra money in our house," she explained. "I took a summer job at a meat factory to earn money and I never went back to school. Later in life, I was raising my two children."

Andrea learned about Speedpak from her sister who worked there. "I came for an interview and they took me on. Now I'm getting my equivalent of a Leaving Certificate and my confidence is lifted. In my next job, I'm going to be a manager. Because of my training here, I know now that I can do more than just work at a till."

Speedpak's investments in the community and the positive results have been recognized. In 2010 they received a coveted Arthur Guinness



Clients work on a six-month contract and for no longer than three years and take accredited classes to convert workplace learning to earn the equivalent of a Leaving Certificate (high school diploma) while they are gainfully employed. More importantly, they leave with manufacturing work experience that is valuable to employers and a new sense of confidence in their ability.

Edel spoke of the challenges that the community faces and the methods Speedpak uses to address them. "There is a culture of early school leaving and unemployment in this area of Ireland and in some cases it goes on for generations. Once someone leaves school, it can be very scary to go back. We teach them the skills that they will need to survive in the workplace: even basic things like how to work with someone that you don't like, or how to communicate with your employer when things aren't going well at home. By teaching these communication skills in addition to teaching work skills, we see the improvements in people. We see the changes in their work habits and behavior. We see people

Fund Award for their Workplace Accreditation Model that translates the workplace learning experience into an accredited Irish educational qualification. In 2011, they also received a grant from The Ireland Funds Grant Round thanks to the *Promising Ireland* Campaign. "I sometimes think that the job that we do and the impact we're having on the community is not always seen in its fullness," said Edel. "When the economy is not good, it's difficult to give to programs like this. The grant from The Ireland Funds is a real vote of confidence. It will allow us to carry out valuable research to measure the progress that employees make during their time with Speedpak and identify which interventions are most effective."

The long term goal of Speedpak is to take their work experience and training model and expand it across Ireland to other areas affected by unemployment where there is a need for job skills training. The Ireland Funds recognize the quiet and positive work that Speedpak is doing and are proud to support this innovative program.



Andrea and Marlena—two success stories of Speedpak's community investment.

Photography by Aengus McMahon



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