

Youth Entrepreneur of the Year Award 2015

A business producing treats using seaweed run by four teenagers from Donegal has won the Youth Entrepreneur of the Year Award 2015, which is organised by Foróige.

Mary Kate Carr, Aimée Byrne, Rebecca McShane and Ronan O'Hare from around Glencolmcille in Donegal were crowned the winners for their business 'Milseog na Mara' (Deserts of the Sea).

It offers healthy alternatives to jellies and chocolate mousse using a type of locally sourced seaweed – Carrageen Moss – as the main ingredient.

“Our idea came to us when I got sick and my family made me a cold remedy using Carrageen Moss. Not only did I get over the cold quickly but I realised this jelly like substance could be used in alternative ways to make chilled deserts and jellies,” said Carr.

Market Research carried out by the group found that the only other Carrageen Moss product available was dried seaweed and as such there was a gap in the market for their products.

“We realised that our target market could be segmented into people who have a keen interest in health food and unique, quirky artisan products,” said Carr.

The group used Facebook and Twitter to promote their business and also met with celebrity chef Clodagh McKenna who gave her seal of approval to their products.

The jars of jellies and chocolate mousse cost €3 and are available at select country markets. Since Milseog na Mara was established last October, the business has generated an income of €438.

The group is now hoping to expand. “Our product has a huge potential for development as it's so versatile. We are currently looking at healthy ice lollies for children further down the line,” said Carr.

They will now go on to represent Ireland at the European Youth Entrepreneur of the Year Awards taking place in Budapest in November.