

By Viktor Posudnevsky

CLONES LOCAL election candidate Anna Rooney has urged voters to have a “stronger spirit”.

“When we overcome difficulties we become stronger,” says the Russian-born woman, who is running for a town council seat in Clones, Co Monaghan on the Fianna Fáil ticket. “Everyone is afraid now, but we need to summon our strength, maybe change something in our ways, and then just go.”

She adds that the Irish in particular have “forgotten how to survive” during the years of the economic boom.

Rooney is originally from Sochi in the south of Russia, but her family hails from Abkhazia, the breakaway region of Georgia that borders Russia and the Black Sea. The election candidate said many of her relatives were in Abkhazia during the bloody conflict there in 1991 and described the time as “an ordeal”.

“Many of the immigrants to Ireland have had to go through a lot, and maybe we can teach the Irish how to survive and be stronger,” she says.

Rooney has lived in the small Co Monaghan town since 2000, having followed her husband there. The pair met on the internet, and Rooney’s husband – who comes from a local family – had visited her in Russia twice before they got engaged and she moved to Ireland. The couple are now married and have two children.

Rooney has been active in a host of voluntary projects around Clones, and she also has her own business, Culture Link, which provides cultural and language training as well as business start-up courses.

The Russian chose to run with Fianna Fáil after being approached by the party three months ago.

“It’s true that everyone is blaming Fianna Fáil now, but their local representatives have helped me a lot in my voluntary work,” she says. “I know how they treat people and how they treat immigrants. I believe they’ve done a lot for the community.”

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