

# CHANGING IRELAND

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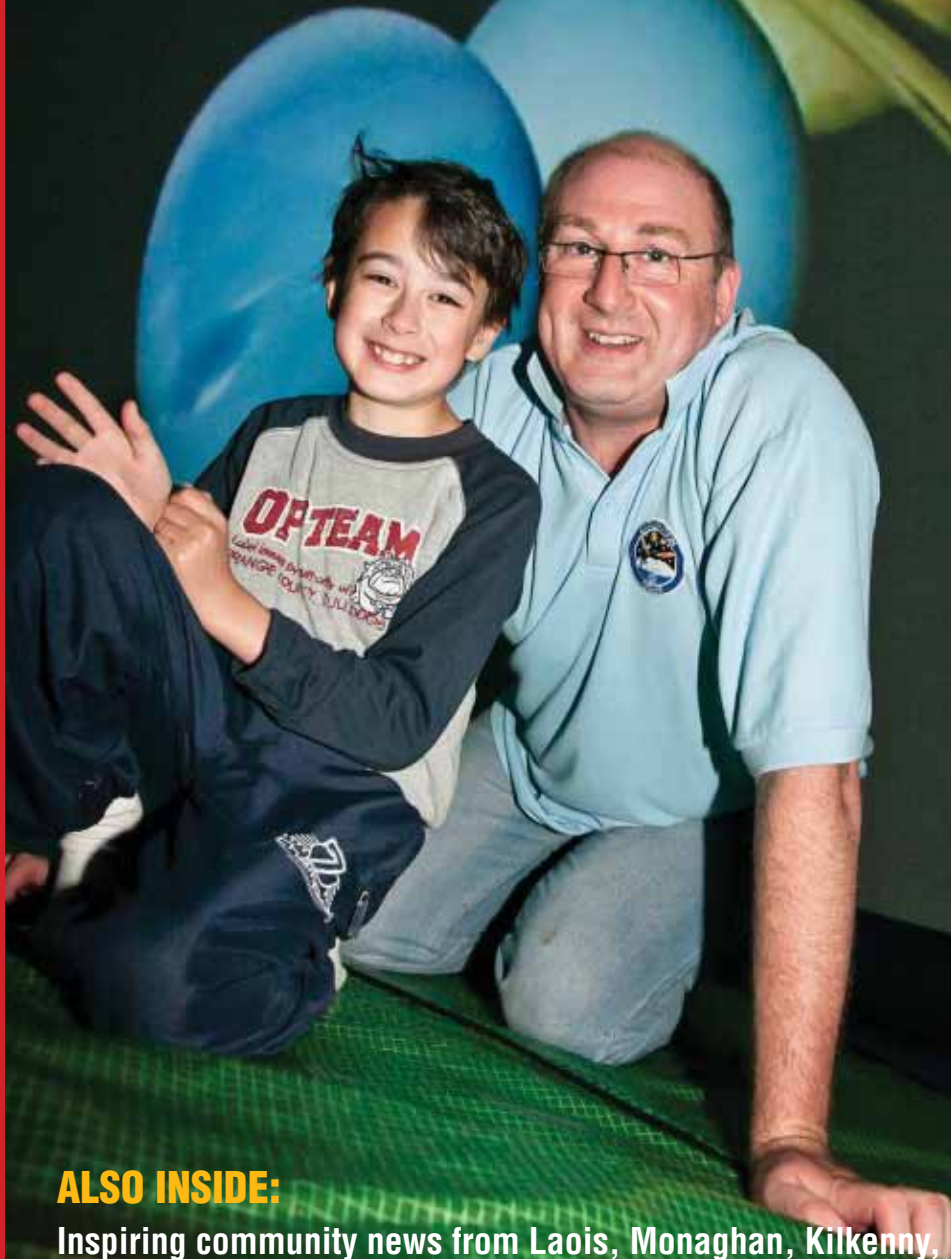
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# Politicians promise the sun, moon & stars - but Martin delivers!

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## ALSO INSIDE:

Inspiring community news from Laois, Monaghan, Kilkenny, Dublin, Ballyhoura, West Cork, Donegal and Canada.

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## Politicians promise the sun, moon & stars – but Martin delivers!



There was a time when if you got a cut, you bled a little and then it healed. Or, better still “a cut” meant you got a share of something.

The other day, the first document that caught my eye on the desk of a community project I dropped into was a ‘Guide to Redundancy’.

State-funded community work is in decline. We’ve documented the shrinkage in previous issues.

The irony is that, there hasn’t been so much community work going on in decades, if we take into account the many acts of volunteering, good neighbourliness, activism and collective action. Most of this work is undocumented.

These people might not know much about LCDP supports for volunteering and supports for setting up residents’ groups, community projects and so on. They’ve probably never heard of the Community Workers’ Co-op or

the academic courses nationwide in youthwork, community development and so on.

These people are simply taking action. ‘Changing Ireland’ would love to connect with these disparate organisations and we’ll strive to.

In the meantime (not withstanding harsh cuts) we may be thankful for what State support continues to exist for community and local development groups, youth clubs, after-school clubs and the like.

If it wasn’t for support provided by two community companies featured in this magazine, Martin Conroy from Clare would never have set up ‘Planetarium Dome’.

He’s delivering such a fantastic educational service to schools around the country that many children think he’s an astronaut.

Martin’s just a regular guy who tried a business venture before, and failed, and got up and tried again and succeeded.

This issue is full of stories of people

striving to succeed in everything from baking to car mechanics, and in combating anti-social behaviour, domestic violence, early school leaving and bitterness on the border.

It’s government policy that the Local and Community Development Programme (LCDP) will close at the end of 2013 and local authorities will take over responsibility for the work.

Our focus in ‘Changing Ireland’ has always been on the work conducted on the ground to change Ireland for the better - first under the Community Development Programme and in recent years under the broader LCDP.

Community workers stress that it’s critical to disadvantaged communities - geographical and otherwise - that best practice in community development and local development (there are differences) continues to be supported and appreciated.

We will continue to shine a light on the impact of this work throughout 2013 and help spread that message.

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**Cover Photo:** Brendan Conroy with his Dad, Martin, who many children mistake for an astronaut. See page 5 for the full story. The photo was taken by Paul Tearle of the Kerryman Newspaper.

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## Disclaimer

The views expressed in this magazine are those of the author concerned. They do not, by any means, necessarily reflect the views of the editor, the editorial team, the voluntary management board of Changing Ireland Community Media Ltd, or the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government.

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## AND NOW FOR SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT!

See back page for more!

## FILE A REPORT FOR US!

If you enjoy writing, why not file your own report for us. 300-400 words is plenty (and a photo if possible). Well over a hundred community workers and volunteers have done so over the years. The chief criteria - you must be involved as a volunteer, worker or board member with a LCDP-funded project (check our website). Alternatively, tell us something novel about your community that others could learn from. Details for contacting Allen Meagher, editor, are on page 2.



## ABOUT THE PROGRAMME

The Local and Community Development Programme (LCDP) is the main community development programme operated by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government in support of the voluntary and community sector.

The aim of the LCDP is to tackle poverty and social exclusion through partnership and constructive engagement between Government and its agencies and people in disadvantaged communities. The overall funding allocation for the Programme and Community Development Programme in 2012 is just under €55 million.





## ***The Man with the Universe in the back of his van*** ***- Mobile planetarium touring the country***

BY ROBERT MCNAMARA

The kids flop out of the blue inflatable dome one-by-one. Their faces are lit up with awe and excitement of what they've just witnessed. "That was amazing," says one. "Is that guy an astronaut?", asks another.

They've just been treated to a 40-minute show in a mobile planetarium at their national school, where they've learned about everything from the constellations, to why Pluto is no longer a planet.

Eager to talk about the experience, they clog up the entrance and have to be moved on by a teacher so everyone can go back to class. The chatter continues en-route. "I think he was an astronaut," says a young boy – totally satisfied his assertion is true.

The astronaut? That's Martin Conroy from Killaloe, Co. Clare, who owns and operates Exploration Dome and is traveling the country with the universe in the back of his van. He's not a real spaceman, of course, but he does have a vast knowledge of astronomy and it's clear from his enthusiasm, when talking to *'Changing Ireland'*, that he loves his job.

"I'm buzzing after three shows," says Martin as we are afforded the privilege of an exclusive tour around the dome following his morning's work.

"I've always had space on my mind. I love looking at the stars," he adds.

Martin and his wife Deborah returned to Ireland from Holland in 2005. Initially they had a broadband installation business before the recession hit.

A lifelong interest in space led Martin to the idea of touring schools with an educational dome. In 2009, he contacted the Science Dome in England. They supply projector and dome equipment, but Martin didn't have the money.

He approached the PAUL Partnership in Limerick for help and they found him some business courses before he was referred to Clare Local Development Company (CLDC), who helped with the business plan.

"We wanted to start a business and we wanted to find out exactly how to do it. Ann Marie Gleeson at PAUL has been absolutely fantastic and she put us onto CLDC where we were dealing with Michelle Lynch and Bernie Healy. I've nothing but praise for those people."

CLDC provided one-to-one advice and 50% of the start-up costs. Martin is also benefiting from the back to work allowance, a two-year support to help you get into business.

"The CLDC looked at the business plan and the uniqueness of what we were doing. They wanted something different and they loved it."

"Even today we are in contact with them," says Martin.

"We are here today because of CLDC and Anne Marie."

Martin also received peer support from Derg Business Alliance in Killaloe whose early morning meetings he regularly attended.

The planetarium shows can be tailored to the age-range of children and can be adapted for other educational purposes too – such as nature and history. The dome itself is inflated by air and is extremely safe, it can be lifted up in seconds in the event of an accident.

"The reaction from children is one of pure wonderment," says Martin.

He tells the story of one lad who was particularly impressed.

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*"He caught my hand and he said, 'Now I know what I want to do, I want to be an astronaut'."*

---

I had a tear in my eye and even today, a little girl came up and gave me a hug and said, 'that was great', these are the little things that fill you up, I love it."

Before we leave, Martin has one last treat for us. We sit on the floor and the opening bars of Elton John's 'Rocket Man' blare out. All around us the sky (the roof of the dome really, but you wouldn't know it) is lit up with scenes of intergalactic exploration, planets orbiting and rockets taking off from the earth. At one stage the camera zooms down onto the surface of Mars and the darkness and atmosphere of the dome combine to make you feel you are actually there, staring right back at the earth below.

For this writer in his fourth decade, it's amazing – I can only imagine what it must be like for a child.

Martin might not be an astronaut, but he's certainly bringing space down to earth with his dome.



*Martin's Dome was popular at this year's Feile Brian Boru in his hometown of Killaloe, Co. Clare.*



### ***What next for Martin the Explorer?***

- Martin started on the road six months ago and business is going very well.
- Up to 60 children at a time can fit in the Exploration Dome.
- The business employs two people – Martin and his wife Deborah.
- The mobile planetarium is now often booked out unless you book a fortnight in advance. Martin is currently on the road every weekday and is booked every weekend until Christmas.
- Martin says the next step for the business is entering the 3D market.
- More info: [www.explorationdome.ie](http://www.explorationdome.ie)



## ***Bond fan reaching out to everyone in Bantry***

**Name:** Aleksandra Ananica.

**Name of project:** Bantry Youth Café

**What are you reading at the moment?**

College books about Business Management and Programming.

**What's the last film you saw?**

'Skyfall'. I just love all the Bond films.

**Person you most admire?**

I admire people who overcome or try to overcome tremendous adversity in their lives while still maintaining their dignity, values, personal strength and sense of humour. I really look up to people like that, like my mother.

**What are the top issues in Ireland today besides the Irish economy?**

Social Exclusion, Third Level Education, and the need for legislation relating to abortions. Other big issues include equality, health, drugs abuse, bullying and underage drinking.

Take Third Level Education - if fees rise as predicted many will be unable to attend higher level education. This will add to youth unemployment and emigration.

**What's the best thing about your project?**

The Youth Café is a support within a small rural community, particularly when many services are far away (in Cork city) or not accessible by bus.

**What could your project improve on doing?**

Bringing in new members and getting more involved in issues that relate to youths.

**What are the opportunities and ideas for improving the project?**

At present, the café is undergoing a major refurbishment and we're planning a re-launch. We'll have a new menu of healthy food options and new sports activities. We also hope to start up a debating team as well as establishing quiet area for one-to-one sessions with youths experiencing difficulties.

**We also hope to:**

- invite parents and schools to visit so they will use the service more;
- publish a small newsletter;
- start a text messaging service to remind people about important events; and,
- set up a Café website.

One member is also doing a project for youths to take ownership of the Café.



*Aleksandra Ananica*

The Café is in the process of implementing many of these plans at present and we have a suggestion box here so everyone can have a say.

**How long are you volunteering in your local community?**

Around a year or so.

**How and why did you get involved?**

I did work experience prior to volunteering and really enjoyed it. Also I was a member of the Youth Café and, when I turned 18, I decided to volunteer because I believed I could make a difference and give something back to the community.

**What difference has being involved made to you?**

It helped me to integrate into Bantry community. I gained life skills, such as teamwork, planning and decision-making, communication and a great sense of responsibility. It introduced me to lots of different kinds of people and I made new friends.

**How have things changed for your community since you became involved?**

We organise events like gigs, parties and discos for young people and when we do that, it helps young people look forward to public holidays such as Halloween, Valentine's Day, etc.

**What motivates you as a volunteer?**

The feeling I could make a difference. It has also allowed me make new friends and discover myself.

**How do you get new volunteers?**

We advertise locally and, each year, we have someone join the Café from the European Voluntary Service. All new volunteers are fully trained and undergo Garda Vetting and are trained in child protection.

## **1 million volunteers hours nationally worth €22m** **- New service launched for volunteering in Laois**

A matchmaking service for volunteers and local organisations has been set up by Laois Partnership and Volunteer Ireland.

The project Volunteer Laois was launched simultaneously with a website to link aspiring volunteers with community groups with vacancies by local Fine Gael TD, Charles Flanagan, on November 15.

"Any government must have as their priority social inclusion and in an ideal world, the state would be undertaking all this without the need for volunteers. But it isn't like that and it is never going to be," he said.

Vice-chairperson of Laois Partnership is Peter O'Neill, himself a long-time volunteer. "You get great self-contentment, no money can buy that," he said, adding: "There's a quote 'Noah's ark was built by volunteers, the Titanic was built by professionals'."

He pointed out that Laois is in good company in promoting volunteering around the country and provided figures:

In the last two years, Volunteer Ireland and local Volunteer Centres around the country have registered: 34,107 volunteers, 4,173 volunteer-involving organisations and 15,343 vacancies.

"These volunteers have contributed 1,037,069 hours of their time at a value to the economy of €22.7 million," said Peter. Ann Goodwin CEO of Laois Partnership says they worked within a very tight budget of €6,000 to launch the service, using 1% of their annual LCDP budget.

Ann expects cuts in the upcoming budget, but Volunteer Laois will carry on: "Money will be ringfenced for this, we will make it work."

As well as the website, they will deliver



information cards to every home in Laois seeking volunteers. They will interview candidates, and help with training and Garda clearance forms, essential for organisations dealing with vulnerable people and children.

Over €700,000 went towards supporting volunteering last year under the LCDP.

**For more, contact Laois Partnership.**

**T: 057-8662732.**

**E: [info@volunteerlaois.ie](mailto:info@volunteerlaois.ie)**

**W: [www.volunteerlaois.ie](http://www.volunteerlaois.ie)**

## **Rialto conference on Programme's "substantial outcomes"**

The recent conference on work conducted under Goal 2 of the Local and Community Development Programme, held in Rialto Community Centre, Dublin, was dominated by talk of "alignment".

Work under Goal 2 aims to increase access to formal and informal educational, recreational and cultural development activities and resources.

Jimmy Lynch of Pobal, speaking in the place of Programme Manager Jerry Murphy, emphasised the "real and substantial outcomes" of the Programme.

Jimmy also touched on impending cuts and said Pobal were "anticipating real budget reductions" within the LCDP programme, which was by his own admission "not a cheerful message, but a reality". He said that Pobal expected that LDCs would focus on the retention of proven, existing projects, in dealing with any forthcoming reductions.

Fiona Hartley, from Solas - a new body that will replace FAS - spoke in some

depth about the alignment of training and education bodies and touched on the challenges facing the Programme.

"Change is messy, chaotic and unpredictable. If it's not, your not affecting change," she said.

Marie Gould - Head of New Awards and Standards at Qualifications and Quality Assurance Ireland (QQI) - told assembled workers from around the country that FETAC awards were to be replaced by new - as of yet undecided - award standards.

This will happen alongside the amalgamation of 33 regional VECs into 16 education and training bodies.

Aileen Gilchrist of Pobal presented a comprehensive analysis of Goal 2 outputs and stated that 40,292 people were on the LCDP caseload in 2011, marking a 34% increase on the previous year.

A series of workshops on community development case studies was also presented on the day.

## **Wexford - tackling youth jobs crisis from the ground-up**

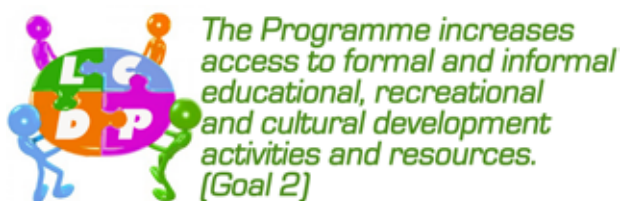


**Guest speaker John Lonergan at WLD's conference to tackle youth unemployment.**

Wexford Local Development, concerned over the "very high rate of youth unemployment in our county" held a conference on the issue on November 27th. WLD is also discussing the challenges with young people themselves and is carrying out a survey among service providers and employers.

The aim, explains WLD's Siobhán O'Brien, is to figure out clearly what to do next in order to "shape policy and practice from the ground up."

"We also intend to pilot new approaches under LCDP during 2013 based on the outcomes of the research," she added. Siobhán is the company's Monitoring, Evaluation and Policy Co-ordinator.





## ILDN concerned over reforms

The Irish Local Development Network (ILDN) announced its opposition on November 6th to key elements of Minister Phil Hogan's 'Putting People First' reforms which were recently adopted as Government policy.

The ILDN believes the reforms "will not deliver improved outcomes for local communities."

According to Ryan Howard, ILDN spokesperson, "It endangers the bottom-up economic, social and community development model currently delivered by 51 local development companies throughout Ireland."

"We need to be careful not to damage structures that have a long established connection with communities and that have been highly effective in drawing down and distributing EU and national funding.

"Today, ILDN are asking what justifies

removing a proven, effective and respected set of local structures and are calling on Minister Hogan and his Department to ensure that

twenty years good practice, experience and results are valued and protected rather than duplicated and displaced by unproven models of local development," said Ryan.

The full statement, which marks the first time the ILDN has been openly critical of Government policy, is published on the network's newly revamped website: [ildn.ie](http://ildn.ie)

**'Changing Ireland's summer edition featured an interview with Ryan about EU funding for local development which is available online via: [www.changingireland.ie](http://www.changingireland.ie)**



## Two national conferences on "alignment"

As we went to print, a conference was taking place in Maynooth titled 'Alignment, Autonomy and Accountability? What now for Community Development?'

It was held at a time of "crisis for communities" said the organisers, NUIM's Department of Applied Social Studies and the Community Workers Co-operative.

The gathering was held to help develop a national community development policy and the all-female keynote speakers included voices from Europe, Northern Ireland, the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government and the Co-op.

A month before, the Co-op held a national seminar in the F2 Centre in Rialto on the "alignment" of local government and local development structures. This coincided with the launch of a report written after consultations with community workers by the Co-op in ten places countrywide.

Speakers included Aidan O'Reilly from the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government; Ann Irwin from the CWC; Cork City Councillor Chris O'Leary, and Brendan Kenny, Dublin City Council.



## UL's timely symposium

A symposium on Transforming Local Government and Local Democracy was held in the University of Limerick in October. It was timely as Minister Hogan had only days earlier announced his plans to "align" the work of Local Development Companies with local authorities. The symposium also addressed the role of civil society and the potential for strengthening local democracy amidst these changes.

Keynote speakers included Minister of State Jan O'Sullivan, Conn Murray,

manager of Limerick County and City Councils and academics from overseas.

LCDP contributors included Anne Kavanagh from the PAUL Partnership Dr Eileen Humphreys from ISKS said they looked forward to organising similar events next year.

The symposium was organised by UL's Institute for the Study of Knowledge in Society (ISKS), NUIG's Life Course Institute, Limerick regeneration and Limerick City of Learning.

## Networking among rural groups is essential - Says volunteer Martin McBride, Donegal

Martin McBride, a volunteer and a board member of North Donegal Development Company (DLDC) has written us to spread word of community work in his area.

Martin is proud of all they have achieved to date and his most recent report is of a typical information day, as delivered by Local Development Companies nationwide. In October, North Donegal Community

Network (NDCN) hosted an Information event for farming families in Ray Community Centre, Co. Donegal.

The event, funded by DLDC, heard Sinead Mc Laughlin explain the seven strands of support available through the Rural Development Programme.

Art Mc Grath from Teagasc spoke of the 'Green Cert' FETAC Programme for young

entrants to farming.

Dr. Brian McColgan, a local GP, provided advice on health and wellbeing for farm families, covering everything from chemical hazards to mental health and the support services available locally.

Kieran O'Dowd of Macra na Feirme pointed out there are more farmers in Ireland over the age of 80 than farmers under the age of 35.

Martin, who is also Secretary of NDCN, made the point that, "In an area of rural isolation, economic stagnation and inadequate infrastructure, a vibrant Community Network is needed to augment the work of state agencies and to promote regeneration in the area."

And long may it continue to be so.



*Rightly proud! North Donegal Community Network's voluntary management committee: James Trearty, Michelle Doherty, Bernadette Mc Conigley, Benny Trearty (Chairperson), Martin Mc Bride, Geraldine Boyce, Georgina Hunter, Patrick Sweeney.*

## ***Intergenerational community work pays off*** ***- East Wall wins prestigious Pride of Place award***

In north Dublin, four years of hard work has seen the 'East Wall for All' committee recognised when the community won a national Pride of Place Award recently. The committee was set up to counteract anti-social behaviour in the area and did so by organising intergenerational activities in the area.

The committee is an amalgamation of the area's community and voluntary groups and some statutory agencies such as the Gardaí and Dublin City Council.

Local resident, Marie O'Reilly, who is chairperson of East Wall for All said: "Our fresh approach to community problems has

transformed this area and our many intergenerational projects made an impression on the Pride of Place judges.

Joe Mooney, local resident and community activist, was chuffed: "When you see the range of community facilities and activities in East Wall, our award is only fair."

The East Wall for All Halloween Festival is probably the most developed community led Halloween festival in the country and involves over 1,000 people.

Gardaí confirmed that, over the four years the festival has been organised, there has been no serious trouble associated with Halloween in East Wall.

"Intergenerational work is part of the way community organisations work and think in East Wall," said Owen Binchy, co-ordinator of Nascadh CDP.

He was invited to speak on November 19th at Dublin Youth Services Board's 70th anniversary celebrations about "the role of family and extended family in social conditioning of young people."

"Today, the extended family does not

play as significant a role as before and intergenerational work can help fill that void. There is a joy that is intoxicating when younger and older people are having fun together. It is our contention that if every younger person spends enough contact time with older people it will have a profound impact on crime and anti-social behaviour long-term," he said.

Things have improved dramatically in East Wall over recent years. As youth worker Willie Dwyer puts it, "Older people and younger people are no longer crossing the street to avoid each other, but crossing it to say 'hello' to each other."

East Wall has now risen to become one of the leading communities in Ireland in terms of intergenerational work.

The community won the over 1,000 people category in the Pride of Place Awards. **For more info, contact: Owen Binchy, Co-ordinator, Nascadh CDP, Sean O'Casey Community Centre, East Wall, Dublin 3. T: 01-8893985.**

**E: [nascadhcp@eircom.net](mailto:nascadhcp@eircom.net)**



## ***Older people are speaking out***

Louth set the lead last year when it became officially designated "age-friendly" and other counties are now following in its footsteps, including Wicklow and now Limerick city.

Louth was the first Irish county and one of 33 places worldwide, to meet the criteria of the World Health Organisation's criteria for age-friendly cities and communities.

This involves recognising "that older people are critical contributors to our society and a resource, not a burden, to society." It also involves improving the physical environment for older people, among other things.

Recently Limerick city has stepped up to the plate. It has joined the nationwide 'Get Vocal' campaign for older people that seeks to represent the needs, issues and potential of those over-55.

At the launch on November 19th, Mary Blackmore, a community development worker with the PAUL Partnership, vowed not to let city people go without heating this winter.

"We are going to take action and we're going to tackle this issue," said Mary.

Housing, anti-social behaviour, health, transport and heating were found by PAUL workers to be among the most pressing concerns for older people in the city.

Guest speaker, Sean Kinsella, from Wexford's Age and Equality Network, pointed out that some older people were apathetic when it came to lobbying politicians. They became interested when it was too late, when something had happened to them and they found the services were lacking.

"We need older people with the vision to dream and the courage to realise their dreams," said Sean.

Guest speaker, Patricia Conboy, the national director of Older and Bolder, urged people to get behind the 'Make Home Work' campaign which seeks to halt and reverse cuts to home-care support: "A lot of

older people will tell you, 'If I can, I want to be taken out of my own home in a box' and the TDs are well aware of this."

The 'Get Vocal' work in Limerick is being conducted (under LCDP Goal 4) with support from Age and Opportunity. Most apt in this the European Year for Active Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity.

**REPORTING BY ROBERT McNAMARA & ALLEN MEAGHER.**



***Len Dineen, Mary Blackmore, Patricia Conboy, and Sean Kinsella with Limerick Mayor Cllr Gerry McLoughlin as he strikes a chord with the 150-strong turnout at the city's 'Get Vocal' launch.***



## ***Elderly neighbours with wounds to heal*** ***- for young people, it's just history***



*Participants on the 'Sliabh Beagh Tour' led by guides from the Older Persons Project. Photo courtesy of [www.emyvale.net](http://www.emyvale.net).*

### **ROBERT MCNAMARA REPORTS**

Many of us living in the deep South cannot comprehend the impact living on the border would have on our lives and the conflict has also resulted in a generational void, as the very young on the border live in a different political world to their elders.

Fractured community relations, having to carry two currencies and pay extra mobile phone charges for straying into your living room, never mind crossing the border, are among the daily challenges.

In response, Monaghan Integrated Development Ltd are taking action through the Older Persons Project on this, with funding from the International Fund for Ireland.

The project has five interlocked goals, each designed to tackle these issues.

"The project provides opportunities for older people to contribute to reconciliation and bridge building by taking part in activities with their peers, with groups across the border and with the younger generation," said Francis McCarron who heads up the project.

The first objective is peace-building and people have been trained to deliver tours to highlight the impact of the border on everyday life in Co. Monaghan.

### **CUTS CLOSE TO THE BONE**

As Francis pointed out, while it is not exceptionally discomfiting for people from border counties to embark on conflict-tours of Belfast or Derry, it cuts close to the bone doing so in their home-patch.

The second objective is to bring older

people together from both sides of the border through learning new skills, for instance IT classes for beginners that incorporates a peacebuilding element.

"As part of the training, we look at Google maps and zoom down to look at borders anywhere in the world, like the US/Mexican border for example," explained Francis.

The third objective involves linking communities from both sides of the border that were divided geographically by The Troubles.

"During the conflict many communities were separated by the border or by mutual suspicion. Social events help to reunite these communities and to rebuild lost friendships," said Francis.

### **INTER-GENERATIONAL WORK**

The fourth objective is possibly the most important in the long-term. It looks at fostering understanding and relationships between older and younger people in a series of inter-generational events that take place in Catholic and Protestant schools.

"We go to a school and give the kids a presentation on the border so they learn about it," said Francis. "Then we ask the kids to write a letter to the older people in the community, inviting them to come into the school and share their memories.

"This means the postman calls to the older person's house, and the older person comes into the school (and meets with other older people as well as the pupils). This social contact is a means of reducing isolation within the community and encourages

older people to continue to be involved in the project."

### **EVERY GENERATION MAKES ITS OWN MISTAKES**

Malcolm Totten, a member of Monaghan's Protestant community, spoke to children at a Catholic school.

"The troubles in Northern Ireland are as far in the memory of the children as the First World War was to us – it's just history," said Malcolm. "Every generation makes its own mistakes and all we can hope for is to build a bit of our own experiences into the youngsters," he added.

The fifth objective is to provide one-to-one support for older people in the county and, in this, the project has helped people in many different aspects of day-to-day life. As with community workers elsewhere, Francis helps people with everything from filling out forms, to getting locks installed in houses and generally acting as an advocate between older people and the services they require.

**For more info:** Contact the Older Persons Project Worker, Monaghan Integrated Development Castleblaney, Co. Monaghan. **T: 042-9749500.**

**E: [fmccarron@midl.ie](mailto:fmccarron@midl.ie) W: [midl.ie](http://midl.ie)**

Monaghan Integrated Development's Older Persons Project is funded by the International Fund for Ireland and this enables MID to reduce social exclusion and isolation among older people in the community as well as dealing with the legacy of the conflict.

# 16 Days of Action

## *So what did you do?*

BY ALLEN MEAGHER



Hundreds of actions took place nationwide during the 16 Days of Action. Here are ten innovative actions emanating from projects supported by the LCDP:

**Southside Women's Action Network's** Domestic Violence Support Worker visited social studies classes to raise awareness of our information service for women experiencing domestic violence.

**Donegal Women's Network** turned their project office into a public gallery featuring photos created by photographer and artist Martina Cleary to highlight the 16 Days Campaign.

**Dochas for Women** in Co. Monaghan took part in a joint event involving a balloon launch on December 3rd.

**Blayney Blades Women's Group**, Castleblayney, Co. Monaghan, held a taster evening on November 19th to discuss domestic violence and to inform women who made need counselling that Blayney Blades has four part-time counsellors available on site.

A group of women came together in Limerick Women's Network to work with a feminist artist in the creation of a wall-hanging to mark the importance of solidarity amongst women.

**Women's Community Projects, Mullingar** distributed posters and lit candles daily to highlight the fact that one in five women will experience domestic violence during their lifetime.

**Waterford Women's Centre** ran a poster and radio advert campaign paid for through Cosc's Awareness Raising Grant and using materials supplied by Women's Aid. (Cosc is the the national office for the prevention of gender-based violence).

**South West Kerry Women's Association** held an ecumenical and wreath laying ceremony and launching a postcard campaign on November 28th in Caherciveen, Co Kerry

**Ronanstown Women's CDP's Light A Candle Campaign** involved handing out hundreds of packs that included candles and information on violence against women. People light their candle daily during the 16 Days of Action in solidarity with victims and to raise awareness. It is now an annual event.

**North Leitrim Women's Centre** placed an information/display stand on gender based violence, giving statistics, case studies and key local contact information in the busy reception area of The Bee Park Community Centre in Manorhamilton for the 16 days of action.

Women from **Wexford Area Network on Domestic Violence** produced an information leaflet titled 'Domestic Violence Support in Wexford'. Access 2000, which belongs to the network, also hosted a visit by women from Tanzanian and they attended the launch of the leaflet and and spoke of their experience of domestic violence and how they are dealing with this issue in their country.

As part of the Mid-West Local Area Networks (covering Limerick, Clare & North Tipp) **Clare Women's Network** targetted libraries and book clubs to promote literature with the theme of violence against women. Readers and book clubs in the region were invited to read 'Into The Darkest Corner' by Elizabeth Haynes. The Network members produced a themed bookmark, held a memorial service, a balloon launch and published a fact-a-day throughout the campaign.



*Tanzanian women reading about the 16 Days campaign in 'Changing Ireland' in 2009. A project in Wexford is hosting a visit by women from Tanzania who also work with victims of domestic violence.*



*St. Munchin's Women's Group, which is supported by Limerick City CDP, produced five dolls to highlight that one in five women experience domestic violence.*



# And what about the other 349 days of the year?

## - Wisdom from community workers on the frontline

*'Changing Ireland' asked community development workers in 11 projects nationwide a pertinent question: "What's the best thing community groups can do to reduce gender-based violence?"*

*Here's what the professionals had to say:*

We have to get people to realise that it could be your mother, sister, grandmother, aunt, friend or neighbour or it could be YOU. No matter what the circumstances, the perpetrator is always responsible for their actions and it is not your fault. - **Donegal Women's Network**

Any action to mark or raise awareness during the 16 Days campaign, no matter how small, is welcome. For example - coffee mornings, information leaflet distribution and use social media to promote events. - **Clare Women's Network**

Think about all women in your community because sometimes it is the ones you would least expect who are experiencing domestic violence. Information days are one way to inform women that there is help out there.

Sometimes people perceive it is only the disadvantaged areas that suffer from this, but there is no class distinction in this violent act. - **Blayney Blades Women's Group**

Create safe spaces where women can talk about and re-interpret their experiences. - **Limerick Women's Network**

Talk about it, keep bringing attention to it as an issue and continue to support campaigns against violence against women, to sign post the issues, support students and staff who need assistance and to raise awareness generally in our wider community. - **Women's Community Projects, Mullingar**

Raise awareness of the issue, provide support and build women's capacity. Highlight the gaps in services and bring the services together to ensure a seamless intervention for women experience abuse. - **Waterford Women's Centre**

Community workers should hold events throughout the year

and talk to women and women's group about domestic violence. - **South West Kerry Women's Association.**

Community Groups are uniquely placed to create spaces and opportunities to raise awareness about the issue and to get information on the supports that are available out there into the community. - **North Leitrim Women's Centre**

We must raise awareness and provide information and support. - **ACCESS 2000 (Wexford)**

Continue to raise awareness in communities about gender-based violence and use networking events and publications to promote services that are available for women. - **Southside Women's Action Network (SWAN)**

We must use the NCCWN to reach as many women's groups as possible in all communities to firmly keep the issue of gender-based violence on the agenda.

- **Dochas for Women (Monaghan)**

Each of the above projects (among 17 in total) are managed by NCCWN and funded through the LCDP.



*A photocall organised by Women's Aid outside the Dail in 2010.*



## Happy Birthday!

The **National Collective of Community based Women's Networks (NCCWN)**, ten years old this year, addresses issues impacting on the most disadvantaged women in Ireland. The Network consists of 17 projects around the country.

The NCCWN is, in this way, able to support women living in poverty and disadvantage, older women, lone parents, women from the Traveller community, minority ethnic and migrant women, disabled women, lesbian and bisexual women, women living in rural areas and women experiencing domestic violence. The Network is funded through the LCDP. [www.nccwn.org](http://www.nccwn.org)



# Finishing School in Duhallow

## How Duhallow prevents early school leaving

BY LOUISE BOURKE

Many children with difficulties such as dyslexia and dyspraxia experience low confidence and poor self esteem, they don't feel as adequate as their peers, and often drop out of formal education early.

IRD Duhallow's Youth and Education Working Group set about trying to combat this a decade ago and introduced an early school leaver prevention programme that provided literacy support to children with learning difficulties.\*\* Since its inception, the initiative has gone from strength to strength.

This year alone, 88 children with dyslexia and dyspraxia participated in special tuition across ten weekly classes organised with the support of workers from the Rural Social Scheme and Tus. We cover a rural area encompassing 1800 sq. km.

The programme has achieved resounding success with positive feedback from both parents and teachers alike. Here's how! Our programme adopts a four-pronged approach:

**Literacy Workshops for Children**, where the children receive tuition from a specialist tutor, specialising in helping children with dyslexia and dyspraxia.

**TTRS (Touch Type Read and Spell)** is a computer programme where children learn to touch-type using the Alpha and Omega spelling method. They inadvertently learn word formations and spelling and learn to touch type.

**Parent Education** – to guide parents as to how best to help their child at home especially with literacy. This is done through specialised tutors and guest lectures.

**Raising Childrens' Self Esteem** – We try to build up their self-esteem through rewards systems and our main event is our 'Show and Tell' night when every child performs onstage or tells us about something that they are proud of or enjoyed. Each child receives a trophy and a cert to acknowledge their literacy achievements.

Class tutor Eileen O'Regan notes that, "The majority of the children in my class have huge confidence issues. They don't feel they are as good as everyone else because they have difficulties with reading and they don't appreciate their many talents. The Awards night is an opportunity for them to develop that confidence."

The chairperson of the Youth and Education

Working Group is local councillor John Paul O'Shea who describes the programme's outcomes as "quite remarkable".

"Nine years on, many of our original intake from 2003 have progressed to college and are undergoing further education, instead of leaving school early. From the time they enter to the time they leave our programme, there is a notable difference in the literacy proficiency and the self-esteem of the children."

\* Louise Bourke is a development officer with IRD Duhallow.

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E: [duhallow@eircom.net](mailto:duhallow@eircom.net)

\*\* This was done with funding from the Local Development Social Inclusion Programme under its preventing early school leaving measure. The LDSIP was a predecessor programme to the LCDP.



*Touch Type Read and Spell (TTRS) is a specially devised computer programme helping children to learn to spell as well as touch type. Its delivered with the help of RSS and Tus workers. Photo by Patrick Casey.*



*Some of the graduates of the 2012 Literacy Support Programme. Photo by Patrick Casey.*

The future would be brighter only for the fact that we are anticipating further cuts in the LCDP programme in 2013, and of course with the proposal of alignment with local authorities, as suggested by Minister Phil Hogan, the future is extremely uncertain. As such, we don't know how long we will be in a position to deliver frontline service initiatives such as the literacy support programme.

### WHAT IS DYSPRAXIA?

Dyspraxia is a difficulty with thinking, planning and carrying out sensory / motor tasks. More info: [www.dyspraxia.ie](http://www.dyspraxia.ie)

### WHAT IS DYSLEXIA

Dyslexia is a learning difficulty which makes it harder for some people to learn, to read, write and spell.

More info: [www.dyslexia.ie](http://www.dyslexia.ie)

# Duhallow's Response to Anti-Social Behaviour

## *Packing a punch for social inclusion*

BY LOUISE BOURKE

In 2011, IRD Duhallow recognised that there was a need to tackle a rising problem of anti-social behaviour among young people in Duhallow.

So the community organisation got into

(O'Callaghan's) on Earl Street, Kanturk, and in the space of a mere 15 months, over 140 young people have registered.

It's open to both boys and girls and new teenagers are constantly joining.

This is remarkable when you consider

Many of the older youths also volunteer to help train the young children. We are seeing leadership skills coming to the fore among young people who would otherwise have never been actively involved in community life.

The weekly fee is set at €6 and this covers the three nights of training.

"We keep it deliberately low to ensure that everyone can take part in boxing," says **Duhallow Club chairperson Peadar Aspel**. "It's a place where every child is included and we aim to create a safe space for children in a welcoming environment."

When you come through the doors of the boxing club you leave your family life and troubles outside the door and get down to the business of boxing.

The club has just run its first in-house tournament, where every child who took part got a medal to build and develop their self-esteem. The club is now hoping to start sending members to compete against other neighbouring clubs.

Watch out Katie Taylor!

**\* Louise Bourke is a development officer with IRD Duhallow.**



*Hard at It ... Amy Cotter from the Duhallow boxing club practising her moves!  
Photo by Patrick Casey.*



*The Under 12 members of the club with voluntary coaches and trainers.  
Photo by Patrick Casey.*

boxing and the town of Kanturk has grown quieter at night.

After a recruitment drive by IRD Duhallow, a voluntary committee was formed and with the help of LCDP funding for equipment, the club opened its doors in September last year, just in time for the start of the boxing season.

The club operates out of a former garage

that registration involves: getting a medical check-up, filling out two forms, providing two signed passport photos, getting €25 from your guardians and digging out your original birth certificate.

Three nights a week, volunteers and trainers give their time voluntarily to supervise and train boxers aged 8 years and upwards.

### Why boxing?

"In rural areas, it's difficult to engage young male teenagers and to channel their energies in a positive manner," explained **Maura Walsh, CEO of IRD Duhallow**.

"We needed something which was going to involve them in a worthwhile activity and promote the spirit of volunteerism as well as healthy exercise. With the dedication and diligence required for boxing it seemed like the perfect platform to promote active citizenship amongst young males."

**Community Garda John Fuller** says there has already been a marked improvement in the behaviour of young males.

"There are less youngsters hanging around on weeknights and overall the boxing club has had an extremely positive impact on the town and the young people of Kanturk."



## Imagine if only 36% of your funding was from Govt.



BY  
EVELYN  
O'ROURKE \*

Revenue for non-profit organisations in Canada can be broken down as follows: 36% from government, 43% earned

income, 17% gifts and donations, and 4% from other sources (2004 figures).

By comparison, in Ireland, 60% of non-profits receive the greater part of their funding from government. Of late, Dáil members have emphasised the importance of fundraising and corporate sponsorship: In June last year, Minister Phil Hogan re-established the Forum on Philanthropy and in October 2011, the Dáil held a debate on the Community Sector. At the debate, TDs such as Willie Penrose and John Perry stressed the underdeveloped philanthropic and fund-raising capacity in Ireland.

### WHAT'S TO LEARN FROM CANADA?

So, what can we learn from the Canadian model?

I work in Saskatchewan, in central Canada, as the volunteer co-ordinator at the Saskatoon Food Bank and Learning Centre. We provide emergency food to families and individuals and which runs various learning programmes. The company has an operating budget of CAN\$1,000,000 and does not receive any core government funding.

The Food Bank and Learning Centre's revenue statistics for 2011 are as follows; 82% of the organisation's revenue was raised mostly through donations, but also through fundraisers and earned income. This model presents a notable contrast to Ireland's current method of raising revenue.

In the last 18 months, we received over \$800,000 in donations from one company. The company benefits from being seen as a sponsor.

### NUMBER ONE MISTAKE

Deb Hamp, Director of Operations and Engagement, says, "The number one mistake non-profits make is assuming that an 'Oliver Twist' approach will be successful. There are many organisations that do great work, and hundreds of worthy causes. What donors want to see are energised, passionate people who are confident that the community will benefit from an investment."

For many companies, positive media coverage is vital and they like being associated with a well-placed non-profit.

Asked about the downsides of receiving that type of income, Deb said she "could not think of many disadvantages."



Her experience is that corporate sponsorship allows organisations the freedom to spend the money where it is needed, unlike grant aid which is normally tied to specific actions.

Deb says it also lets you "influence the culture of a corporation."

### MANAGE DONOR EXPECTATIONS

Nonetheless, it takes work to manage the expectations that sponsors have and you must give a lot of time, thought and care to successfully maintain the relationships. It's important to give sponsors appropriate recognition in a way that is fitting to the gift and in consideration of gifts bestowed by other contributing companies.

One of our Food Bank's strengths is that we are one of Saskatoon's leading CBOs and our visibility encourages successful corporate engagement. This is not the case for many smaller CBOs and it can often be very difficult to engage corporations.

Deb encourages community organisations to "think beyond current boundaries" and look at practical services they can provide.

### IRISH CONNECTION TO SASKATCHEWAN

"It's important that any non-profit organisation does a thoughtful review of its assets. These assets can include physical space, the talents of its employees and possibly niche markets."

Finally, it's worth noting that Canada non-profit and voluntary sector is the second largest in the world and the country is currently enjoying a boom.

Irish people are familiar with Saskatchewan because earlier this year government officials from there visited Ireland seeking to recruit skilled labour to help fill thousands of vacancies.

### More info:

[www.saskatoonfoodbank.org/index.php](http://www.saskatoonfoodbank.org/index.php)

T: (306) 664-6565 ext. 228.

E: [evelyn@saskatoonfoodbank.org](mailto:evelyn@saskatoonfoodbank.org)

\* Evelyn O'Rourke has worked in the LCDP and is currently on leave. This is her second article for 'Changing Ireland'.





## 5 online tips for community groups



Local community groups across Ireland are taking to the internet in many ways, partly to try and offset the impact of cuts on their services,

**WRITES PAT KENNEDY of eConcepts.** Volunteers are as likely to know as much if not more than paid staff about what's worth using. Here's five top online tools, all free:

### # 1: Google Sites:

Allows you to create a quick and simple website to give a group a presence online. You can choose from a variety of 'plugins' to increase the website's functionality.

### #2: Wordpress:

Forget learning html! This is a type of website that users can easily edit and manage without technical know-how. The Abbeyleix community website [www.Abbeyleix.ie](http://www.Abbeyleix.ie) is a good example of a wordpress website used by a community group.

### #4: Dropbox:

Dropbox is an easy-to-use online storage tool that allows people to share and safely store documents, databases, etc. Documents can be edited online and can only be accessed by the people you wish.



The organisers of the Abbeyleix community festival have been using dropbox for four years: it allows them to manage schedules, grant and financial information as well as planning documents.

'Changing Ireland's voluntary board of directors, some based over a hundred miles away from each other, use Dropbox.

### #4: Google Docs:

Like Dropbox, you can safely store and share documents. It also allows you to easily create and run online questionnaires, to create booking forms, competition entries and feedback forms.

For examples, check out these feedback forms on "<http://www.facebook.com/ourtown.bestofportarlinton>" <http://www.facebook.com/ourtown.bestofportarlinton> which are used to get feedback from the community and businesses.

### #5: Facebook:

Allow groups to quickly communicate their message and gain feedback from the community members. Just don't buy shares in Facebook! Eg: 'Changing Ireland's Facebook page.

### FREE SOFTWARE

It's worth remembering that when your organisation needs new software, there's plenty reliable, open-source (ie free) software available online.

### APPS THAT ENABLE

Interesting what smartphones can do for people with disabilities. For instance, in August, five Irish students scooped the Junior Achievement European Company of the Year Award with a smartphone app that helps teach sign language. Called 'Sign4Life' it's available on android phones and an i-phone version is in development.



### 3 MISTAKES IRISH NGOs MAKE WITH VIDEO

The Wheel have identified the top three mistakes Irish NGOs tend to make when shooting video.

Mistake No. 1: The video is all about the organisation rather than about the people it serves.

Mistake No. 2: You forget to include a 'call to action' in your film.

Mistake No. 3: Using pop music as a soundtrack without permission.

Log onto [www.wheel.ie](http://www.wheel.ie) to learn more!

### PROJECT PLANNING ONLINE

Online project management tools such as "Zoho Projects" or "Basecamp" allow groups to co-ordinate their various projects online. These systems allow groups to set milestones for a project and manage tasks among group members. This ensures the project team follow a common direction and achieve their targets.

### ADDITIONAL ONLINE SERVICES

Online events systems are important to publicise events in the community, and also to attract tourists into an area. Online directories, community forums, booking engines, online advertising, and video promotion are tools which can be used by any town or community group.

Also consider using social media sites LinkedIn and Twitter to broaden your reach.

## Portarlinton's e-town initiative

A major "eTown" project is being backed by the Local and Community Development Programme in Portarlinton, Co. Laois, at present.

The local development group, Port2020, are working with an e-commerce company called eConcepts to develop the initiative. The project is supported by Laois Partnership and the Laois County Council and involves working with business owners, community groups and a broad section of the community including unemployed people and young people.

The group plans to launch [www.Portarlinton.ie](http://www.Portarlinton.ie) as well as a range of social media applications.

Pat Kennedy of eConcepts said: "We hope to develop an all inclusive e-Town project. We are starting by dividing the community into three sections: businesses, community groups and community members and looked at the service we could provide to each."

Portarlinton is just one example of communities realising the benefits of the web.

**If your organisation would like further information on the eTown initiative email [info@econceptsi.ie](mailto:info@econceptsi.ie) for details of this and similar projects taking place around Ireland.**



## Ballyhoura's top five

### - The keys to unlock social enterprise



Carmel Fox, CEO of Ballyhoura Development Ltd, has identified five elements for us to unlocking social enterprise in communities:

#### PEOPLE:

"Community is the driver of social enterprise. Whats our core wealth? People and their capacities."

Carmel believes the strongest resource we have is people coming together in a community and Local Development Companies can support communities to tap into that valuable social capital.

#### PARTNERSHIP:

Partnership between the community sector, commercial sector and the public sector is crucial, she says: "In any of the social enterprises that we support, partnership and doing things with others has been crucial to them."

#### COMMUNITY NEEDS:

"Social businesses arise out of need, frequently market failure, and the best places that we find to deal with, listen to and hear that need is when communities come together and plan for themselves," says Carmel.

Once the needs are identified, the responses to those needs are very often the sparks for social enterprise development.

#### SUPPORT:

The support must be at a range of levels.

"We're not looking at this from the point of view of we have a fund, we have a programme; we are looking at it from the point of view that this is a group, that has an idea and we ask 'How can the development of that idea be best supported?'"

#### NETWORK:

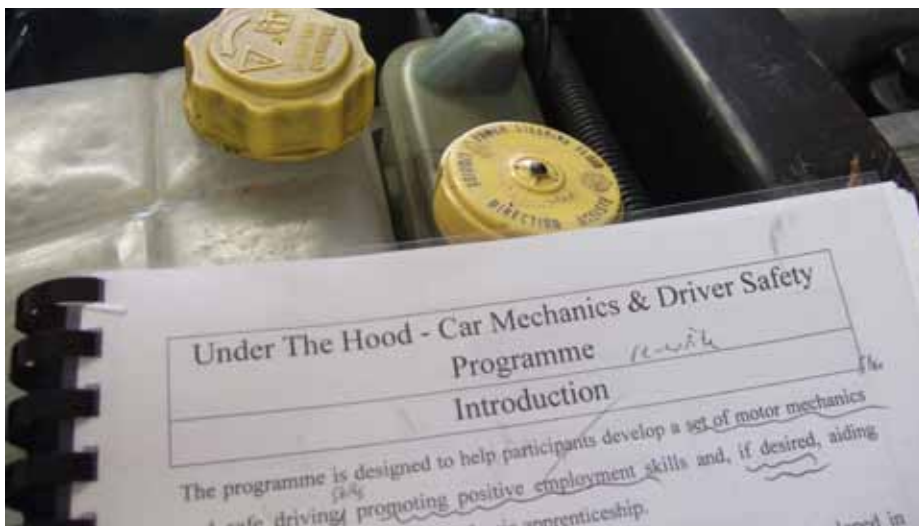
Ballyhoura Development has brought social enterprises together as a network so that the people who are working in the sector can learn and identify the kinds of governance and business development needs that they have and learn from each other.

"From that, we put together training programmes and/or provide mentors to support them in developing effective businesses. Across the country, LDCs are providing this to social enterprises," says Carmel.



*Carmel Fox, Ballyhoura*

## Newport youths find their way under the hood



*The front cover of the first draft of the 'Under the Hood' programme guide.*

A car maintenance youth training project in Newport, Co. Tipperary, has also reached young men and early-school leavers, **REPORTS ALLEN MEAGHER.**

The project is supported locally by North Tipperary Leader Partnership (NTLP) under Goal 2 of the Local and Community Development Programme which seeks to "increase access to formal

and informal educational, recreational and cultural activities and resources."

The project's work led to the development of an unique training resource originally called 'Under The Hood: Car Mechanics and Driver Safety Programme'. It's since been renamed 'First Step'.

For some time, it was the only course of its kind 'Changing Ireland' was aware of in



*Newport mechanic and youth trainer Michael O'Gorman*

Europe. The project operates from a small portocabin housing a car cut in two.

Now, Ireland has two projects of this kind and there may be more.

Check out our video interview with tutor and mechanic Michael O'Gorman on 'Changing Ireland's Youtube channel or call NTLP on 067-56676 for more details.

# A microcosm with macro results

**- LDCs are performing admirably if Kilkenny is anything to go by**



WRITES ROBERT McNAMARA

Tailing a 1988 Zetor tractor driven by a former Yale student along country roads is not how I envisaged starting my day. It ended with me sampling tasty savoury treats prepared by secondary school students.

In between I met four guys who had rebuilt a vintage rally car and was shown round an ornate and cavernous church that was being used by artists while the basement was being utilised as a Family Resource Centre.

It's hard to conceptualise the work that community organisations support and carry out around the country unless you go and see it for yourself. I experienced a kind of microcosm of community work in action on a day trip to Kilkenny.

Escorted around various projects for the day by the very accommodating Alison Allan of Kilkenny Leader Partnership (KLP), I

breathlessly took in the sheer volume and variety of what community groups do.

I met Patrick Lydon on Westcourt farm in Callan. A former Yale student, he helped found Ballytobin Camphill Community, a place for children with intellectual difficulties in the town. He is now the brains behind a social inclusion summer school in Callan next year, something he's working on with KLP (more of which in our next edition). A passionate and storied man, his phone constantly ringing, I got the impression there just were not enough hours in the day for him to achieve every idea he conceived.

In the town centre, I met Marian Kerlick from Slovakia, fresh from work at the local garage. He secured his work through a project funded by KLP and organised by Droichead FRC. He gave me a tour of the FRC centre, a reclaimed former Augustinian church. With pride, he spoke about the range of classes and events he is involved in and the people he works with there. His wife and children are also involved in the centre;

it's a social and support hub for them.

Back at the garage, I met some of the most enthusiastic and positive young men I have ever come across. Exhilarated by having a hand in a car restoration project and learning a great deal about mechanics, all of them were now pursuing definite career paths.

In Kilkenny City Vocation School, I was greeted by articulate and talented secondary school students who spoke animatedly about a cooking and entrepreneur programme they had been on. Many of them are thinking of pursuing careers in the food industry. Better still, they fed me before the long road home to Limerick.

KLP had a hand in all these projects along with many other community groups that are working resolutely together. Times are tough but there is still great work being done out there on the ground and lives are being changed. The day started frantically and I felt energised on the way home. A microcosm indeed, but with macro results.

## A town called Inclusion

**- Callan flies the flag for minority groups nationwide**

People in Callan, Co. Kilkenny are asking a question, "Can we become a social inclusion town?"

It is hoped that a seminar held last summer, that was supported by Kilkenny Leader Partnership, will be the first step in making Callan a model town for social inclusion.

The seminar was part of the Abhainn Rí Festival and sought to open a dialogue about what it is like to be an immigrant, gay, elderly, disabled or part of any minority group in Callan.

Speakers at the event included Seamus O'Leary of the Integration Centre, Kathleen Gittens of Seasamh and Samuel Morgan - a Sudanese man living in Kilkenny.

Immigrants from other parts of the country were also invited to talk.

"We had three women from the Integration Forum in Carlow, a woman from the Cape Verde islands, an Indian women and a Belarussian women and they were firing on all cylinders," says organiser Patrick Lydon.

A tie in with the City University of New York (Hunter College) is planned as the first big event around 'Inclusion Town' in 2013. Named after Callan schoolteacher Thomas Hunter, the college has become known for its impartiality regarding race, religion,

gender, ethnicity, financial or political favoritism.

"It's a leader in creating access to educational opportunity," says Patrick.

"The Summer School will aim to engage local people in a forum for learning about the nature and potential of inclusion. It will also attract national and international figures who are advancing the understanding and implementation of inclusive policies, practices and experiences", he adds.

It is hoped that luminaries from the world of sport and politics will speak at the event.

"The idea would be to get Dónal Óg Cusack to come to Callan and talk about solidarity in the field of sport. We'd also be hoping to get the President. This is Michael D's agenda from the bottom up. We are doing in our own little way what he is preaching up there," says Patrick.

Inclusion town will seek to tackle issues of inclusion around all minority groups in Irish society and the Summer School will form part of the Abhainn Rí festival next year as well as linking in with 'The Gathering'.





# Callan men rebuild car and bag jobs

BY ROBERT MCNAMARA

The vibrant atmosphere is so tangible when I arrive that you can almost smell it, or maybe it's just the fumes from the mix of oil and petrol at this busy garage. Whatever it is, I've never met people more enthusiastic and proud of what they have achieved. The banter is flying every which way and the feeling of optimism is at odds with just about every newspaper you read or news report you hear.

Glistening in the rare November sun, the product of their work is parked, ready for action. A 1972 Ford Escort (MK2), three door, 1.6 petrol, brought back to life and given a new sense of purpose. The hub for this activity is Callan Auto Services in Co. Kilkenny, whose owner David O'Brien and three of his staff, gave up their time every Friday from April for ten weeks to show 11 young men how to strip a car, put it back together and lovingly restore it for rally racing.

The effect it's had on them is clear to see as I arrive at the garage and meet four of the lads.

Tony Cullen, formerly unemployed after his business closed down, is tapping away on the computer showing me pictures of the car when it was a mere wreck, while Marian Kerlick from Slovakia is busily carrying out a valet service on a customer's car. They look like they've been here for years, like they are part of the furniture at the garage - but they only started working here part-time after the course finished.

Bustling away in the background are Christopher Delahunty and Ken Chapman, who completed their Leaving Cert this year - both are still involved with cars after completing the course.

Said David: "We started off with 11 chaps and they came in every Friday afternoon from 2pm until five but we never finished on time. I had to hunt some of them out in the evening! The young lads were involved from start to finish."

"The car started out at nothing, it was a bog standard car, the whole interior came out of it, the engine, the gearbox, the axles, it was brought back to the steel," he continues.

"I was expecting it would take two days to gut the interior but within two hours it was all out there in a heap on the ground and they were all standing there asking 'what



*The apprenticeship served by the men who rebuilt this car has changed their lives. As a direct result, two are now in paid jobs.*

will we do next?"

From there, the lads on the course put on new front wings, rear quarter panels, welded a cage into it, repaired the doors, installed a front spitter and a new petrol tank, a firewall for safety and then spray painted it a fetching shade of lime green.

"It's been an absolutely fantastic course," said Tony who used to run his own valeting business during the boom. "I'm working here now and everyday you get up, you're coming into work."

Marian takes a break from his work to tell us what he gained. "On the course, you learn all kinds of things like changing the brakes, servicing, changing the sparks and how every car is different."

Tony is soon to start a FAS mechanics apprenticeship at the garage. Marian works part-time in both the garage and the FRC and is in the midst of two separate courses in home maintenance and stone masonry. He will soon be embarking on two more in

computers and gardening.

Ken is in the process of stripping his Honda Civic at home with a view to rebuilding it, while Christopher is considering a career in the motor industry.

David is thinking about approaching the RSA to do a pilot road safety and car maintenance course designed for young men. [Perhaps he should give NTLP a ring - Editor].

The Ford will now be used for historic rallies around the country.

The programme was co-organised by Kilkenny Leader Partnership - who provided over €2500 in funding for items such as safety boots and overalls - and Droichead Family Resource centre, just up the road from the garage in Callan town.



**Kilkenny LEADER Partnership**  
"Connected Strategies for Sustainable Communities"

# Kilkenny Students set out their stall

**- Kids cook up tasty treats, turn a profit and explore career paths**

## ROBERT MCNAMARA REPORTS

Kilkenny students put their cooking and entrepreneurial skills to the test at the Savour Kilkenny Festival in October, in a joint venture between the School Completion Programme (SCP) and Kilkenny Leader Partnership (KLP).

Chefs, Anne Neary and Edward Hayden, were deployed to five schools in the Kilkenny area to tutor students on core skills such as sourcing produce, communications, health and safety, food production, storage, preparation and presentation.

The students then set up two market stalls at Savour Kilkenny where they sold their wares and excelled in customer service – turning a handsome profit into the bargain.

‘Changing Ireland’ went along to one of these schools - the City Vocational School (CVS) in Kilkenny City – to meet the students at their certificate awards ceremony and sample some of the cooking they had prepared during the course.

“It has been one of the most successful events that has been initiated in the school”, said Cathy McSorley, Principal of CVS, at the awards ceremony.

“It has given our students great confidence, not only in cooking but in entrepreneurship”, she said.

Student, Kelsey O’Grady (16) has designs on a career in the food industry.

“I knew how to cook before, but not in so much detail. I learned about ingredients that mixed well together, how to present food and how to barter. I’ve always wanted to be a chef and this has just brightened up the horizon for me”.

The cooking skills came naturally to Keith Bourke (18) and he found the entrepreneurial element most exciting: “I learned a lot of selling skills”.

Nicole McGlore (15) enjoyed the teamwork element. “I learned a lot about mixing with people. The other schools were

really competitive, but we made the most money and our presentation skills were at a really high standard.”

All the students agreed that the most important things they learned were how to cook good food and work as a team. They enjoyed the course so much they may even continue on their holidays.

“We’re thinking of setting up our own stall around Christmas time”, said Nicole.

“We might also do the food for the sixth years graduation”, Keith added.



*Kilkenny's youngest chefs (l-to-r): Keith Bourke (18), Kelsey O'Grady (16), Aimee Maher, Nicole McGlore (15).*

## Pupils “buzzing” afterwards

Cáit Ná Mhurchú, co-ordinator at the School Completion Project said it aimed to give kids an idea of what they could do with their lives after they’d received an education.

“Some of them might have an interest in cooking and we wanted to show them how to make a living out of it.”

Chef Anne Neary who has run Ryeland House Cookery for the last 23 years was extremely proud of her students’ achievements. “They made €360 from nine hours’ work and they were absolutely brilliant with each other. There was a 90 percent completion rate in all the schools. They got a huge buzz from selling.”

Kilkenny Leader Partnership provided funding to the tune of €15,800 and this included 18 contact hours in each school, ingredients and 60 hairnets, sweatshirts and aprons for the students.

It is hoped the initiative will continue next year.



## The School Completion Programme

The School Completion Programme is centred on the young person and is based on a bottom-up approach and partnership between schools, parents and relevant agencies.

Young people at risk of early school leaving are supported from an early age to understand that home, school, environmental, social and economic factors influence the patterns of early school leaving.

Among the aims of the national School Completion Programme are:

To retain young people in the formal education system to completion of the Senior Cycle, or equivalent.

To improve the quality of participation and education attainment of children in the education process.

The programme works with schools, parents, youths and community, voluntary and statutory bodies to tackle early school leaving.

The programme is funded under DEIS (Delivering Equality Of Opportunity in Schools), a Department of Education and Skills initiative.



# Proven Solutions to Anti-Social Behaviour

## About the author

Ms A lives in a privately-owned apartment complex in Dublin and she contacted 'Changing Ireland' in desperation in June.

Now she's written the story up for readers to share her experience and tell how her neighbours banded together and effected change.

Back in June, they were faced with very violent neighbours, they didn't know where to turn.

We directed her to a trusted local community workers in her area.

Bernie, the LCDP-funded community worker, said at the time: "The issues they face are coming up all the time – absentee

landlords, anti-social behaviour and problems with privately-owned apartment complexes.

"Through our Community Safety Forum, we organised a small delegation, through our local TD, to meet during the summer with housing minister Jan O'Sullivan.

"We need new national policies and legislation because the same problems for private owners and tenants are coming up all the time," she said.

Ms A was particularly grateful to Bernie for facilitating a meeting with local Gardaí as they had first refused to take any notice. The worst thing that's happened in recent

weeks is that bins were set alight which is minor compared to what went on before, now thankfully a thing of the past for Ms A and her neighbours.



*There is strength in numbers, but it's not always possible to take action without being recognised.*

## How we got the criminals out of our lives - A Dublin resident writes

At around 12.30am one night in April, my neighbours and I saw a man dragging two women out an apartment door. He kicked one woman repeatedly in the head while another man joined in. Then, about 20 people spilled out from the same apartment into the car park and began screaming and fighting. They had been drinking and partying for three days solid.

This was just one in a long line of anti-social and criminal behaviour incidents since two men, both over-30 years of age, had moved into a rented apartment in our complex five months earlier. Both men were known to the Gardaí and one had just been released from prison for violent crimes.

### COULDN'T COMPLAIN ANONYMOUSLY

Only two weeks before the car-park brawl, neighbours witnessed a violent assault in the apartment complex when a man was struck in the face with a wrench.

Men would leave the apartment with sticks and batons at night. They frequently urinated in apartment stairwells. They broke into and set cars on fire, once trapping occupants into a block. Drugs were sold openly and associates often walked past ground floor apartments making gun motions in the windows. One apartment-owner was forced out after violent threats were made against him and his family. He never returned.

Two neighbours made contact with the local Garda station but for safety reasons were advised not to make a complaint. We couldn't contact the Private Residential Tenancies Board (PRTB) because it

wouldn't accept complaints anonymously. We were in daily contact with our property agents but the landlord proved difficult to contact and un-responsive when contact was made.

### WISE COMMUNITY WORKER

After the violent late-night incident, we reached out to a community project (funded through the Local and Community Development Programme) in our area and a very wise community development worker arranged a private meeting in a secure location with a Garda community liaison officer and a sergeant.

Meeting the Gardaí in a safe environment allowed us to express ourselves openly as a group. They offered to step up regular patrols, act as our liaison with the PRTB and asked people to report criminal behaviour. But at this point people were too afraid. Already the Gardaí had raided the apartment and found nothing.

In the end, our property agent forced the issue by offering to vet and place new tenants free of charge in the apartment if the landlord evicted his tenants. If not, the owners' management company (OMC) would sue for breach of house-rules under the terms of our leases.

The men were evicted after that.

### REFLECTION

We were the lucky ones as we were able to force an

eviction. Private home-owners and owners' management companies faced with the same issue cannot affect the same result.

There are too many cases like this up and down the country. The Landlord and Tenants Acts 1967 – 1994 and the Residential Tenancies Act 2004 provide guidelines on anti-social behaviour and county councils are empowered to remove or evict serious cases.

However, property-owners in private developments are dependent on the co-operation of the landlord and they are often unwilling to engage.

Mechanisms and legislation are needed to hold landlords to proper account. The PRTB is not an effective body to handle serious cases. In our case, the Gardaí discovered our landlord wasn't even registered.

We all deserve to live in a safe environment.



*A burnt-out car in Cork city. Photo by 'Changing Ireland'.*



## Fun flows for teenage revellers

**- Educating students on the effects of drink shows real results in Monaghan**

BY ROBERT MCNAMARA

Thanks to an LCDP-led project, youngsters in Monaghan have learned to party without drinking.

Gardai in Monaghan had a very quiet night this year as teenagers celebrated their Junior Cert results.

Public order incidents on the night fell by 85 percent – down from 14 in 2011 to two.

The third annual 'Safe Socialising' campaign successfully addressed underage drinking among students as they traditionally party after the results come out.

It was a collaborative effort between Monaghan Integrated Development, Youth Work Ireland Monaghan, Gardai, Monaghan Joint Policing Committee, Monaghan County Council and Comhairle Na nOg.

In 2009 the amount of incidents peaked at 40. After the launch of the first campaign in 2010 this fell by 90% to four. The numbers went up slightly in 2011 but 2012 has been another successful year.

The campaign entitled 'Don't Pour Your Dreams Away' featured workshops and presentations on the effects and consequences of consuming alcohol. These were delivered in 11 secondary schools in the area.

Garda Margaret Oliphant, who along with her colleague Garda Frances Merrick delivered the presentations on behalf of An Garda Siochanna, said: "The workshops

were well planned and the students were receptive. From a professional point of view, the programme is very worthwhile. On Junior Cert night, in Monaghan Town, Gardai had to deal with two incidents, one of which resulted in a public order arrest."

Garda Frances Merrick said the workshops might help children think twice about their alcohol consumption into college and beyond.

Gerard Callan, education co-ordinator with Monaghan Integrated Development highlighted the inter-agency approach,

"The success centred on our ability to bring together agencies in County Monaghan each of whom brought their own expertise to the table for the good of the students in the county."

Carol Lambe, Monaghan County Council said the programme gave young people a "360 degree view of the issue, including repercussions for future health and the legal implications for those who may wish to emigrate (to the USA)."

For more info, contact Gerard Callan. E: gcallan@midl.ie T: 042-974-9500.



*Members of Comhairle na nOg, Monaghan Joint Policing Committees, An Garda Siochanna, Monaghan Integrated Development, Youthwork Ireland and Monaghan County Council at the launch of this year's campaign for fun, alcohol-free, post-exam celebrations. Photo courtesy of Rory Geary.*

### Project snapshot:

It is hoped to continue this as an annual event due to the success in combating risk-taking among young people and anti-social behavior.

One of the observations made by organisers is that most young people have experimented with alcohol by Junior Cert age which means the interventions must be at an earlier age.

The Programme was offered to all secondary schools in the County with 11 of the 12 schools participating.

Feedback was extremely positive from the young people.

The LCDP provided €1000 towards the initiative. Monaghan Joint Policing Committee also funded 2GB memory sticks bearing the slogan 'Don't Pour Your Dreams Away'.

The organisers are unaware of any similar projects running elsewhere in the country.

## CHANGING IRELAND

### WRITE FOR US!

If you enjoy writing, why not file your own report for us. 300-400 words is plenty (and a photo if possible). Well over a hundred community workers and volunteers have done so over the years. The chief criteria - you must be involved as a volunteer, worker or board member with a LCDP-funded project (check our website). Alternatively, tell us something novel about your community that others could learn from. Details for contacting Allen Meagher, editor, are on page 2.



## Things to do about anti-social behaviour

BY ALLEN MEAGHER

Anti-Social Behaviour doesn't always do justice to what you may be experiencing. Sometimes, particularly where those responsible are over-18, we are really referring to criminal behaviour.

Action that can be taken over anti-social behaviour includes the following:

Every county and city now has a Joint Policing Forum. Make your concerns known to them. At least, talk to a local community Garda.

Public housing estates often have estate management workers employed to work with residents. 'Changing Ireland', Issue 17 (pages 8-9) reported on how a model estate management group operates, taking Tralee as an example.

There may be a residents' group in your area.

Throughout urban Ireland, Neighbourhood Watch schemes are coming back into vogue. If your area does not have one, consider starting one up. Contact your local garda station for advice or check out the relevant page on: [www.gardai.ie](http://www.gardai.ie).

In rural areas, Community Alert Schemes are becoming stronger. Contact your local garda station or call Muintir na Tíre's Community Alert Development Officer (T: 062-51163). You can download

a 'Community Alert Handbook' from: [www.gardai.ie](http://www.gardai.ie)

Start up a local community safety forum – a group in West Clondalkin produced a guidebook in 2006 on how to do just that (See Issue 17, page 11).

If the anti-social behaviour is confined to youths, your Local Development Company may be able to help you arrange worthwhile activities for young people locally. This often helps alleviate anti-social behaviour. See page 8 of this edition and our two-page feature in 'Changing Ireland' Issue 36 to learn how Nascadh CDP turned around a situation where there was frequent anti-social behaviour and tension between the generations in East Wall, Dublin.

Sadly, a scheme that provided personal alarms to older people has suffered from cutbacks. If you can, install an alarm

yourself.

If you live in private or rented accommodation, read Ms A's story for advice on how she and her neighbours faced up to a situation involving drug-dealing, horse-riding in the carpark, damage to cars, assaults and rape threats.

Nobody has all the solutions, but check out our 8-page report about communities that came up with ideas to tackle anti-social behaviour in the Spring 2006 edition of 'Changing Ireland' (Issue 17, pages 11-18). All our back-issues are available on: [www.issuu.com](http://www.issuu.com) (sic).

Contact people in your local community centre, or Local Development Company, for more advice and direction.

Finally, if it's criminal behaviour, report it to the Gardai. Use their confidential line if need be. T: 1800-666111.



*Halloween is now something people in East Wall look forward to. See page 8 for more.*

## Thousands march for communities, including Santa

Up to 20,000 people marched in an anti-austerity protest on Saturday, November 24th, in Dublin, with many dressed in red symbolising national Community Sector resistance.

It was organised by Dublin Council of Trade Unions, the Spectacle of Defiance & Hope and SIPTU's Communities Against Cuts Campaign in advance of looming "savage" budget cuts.

Protesters dressed in red, said a Spectacle spokesperson, "to signify the heart and life blood of local communities, which is being torn apart by austerity policies."

Local Development Company staff and volunteer management members took part, as their jobs and the services they provide in communities are under threat from 10-40% budget cuts.

Trade unions leaders were at odds with other over whether or not to call for a national strike and many marchers gave the leaders a hostile reception.

Of note, a week earlier, two women used Facebook to bring 30,000 people onto the streets of Waterford over health cuts, thereby eclipsing in size the national march in the capital.

Nonetheless, these two marches and another in Mayo and smaller ones taking place around the country more and more frequently indicate the public mood may be turning to street protests once again.

And, for the record, the Dublin march was led by a member of the Spectacle of Defiance and Hope which made for an apocalyptic sight as he/she was dressed in black and on horseback.



*Even Santa joined in.*

*Photo courtesy of Shay Murphy Photography.*



## ***Latest murders scream of need for a response***

**Our coverage on pages 10 and 11 highlights some of the events that were held around the country by LCDP-supported projects taking part in the 16 Days of Action Opposing Violence Against Women.**

Domestic violence is the least reported crime of all, has one of the lowest conviction rates and is characterized by a higher rate of repeat victimisation than any other type of crime, says Women's Aid. It impacts mostly on women, but also on men.

It's deadly nature – as evidenced by recent high-profile murders of Irishwomen in Ireland and Wales – means it's an issue never goes away.

However, a lot of women are not aware there may be "very accessible services", as one project put it, in their area and the 16 Days of Action aims to increase awareness.

It ran from November 25th to December 10th and involved 17 specialised women's projects funded through the LCDP.

In a 'Changing Ireland' survey, we found over 800 people were involved in ten local actions led by LCDP projects. Most projects organise at least three actions.

Over the full 16 days, LCDP events involving approximately 3,500 people will take place around the country. That's not counting a further 60,000 people targetted by radio adverts in Waterford this year.

The 17 projects are managed by the National Collective Community-based Women's Network and most are staffed by part-time workers working with hundreds of volunteers.

Most of the projects' actions over the 16 Days were undertaken under Goal 1 of the LCDP which seeks to promote awareness, knowledge and uptake of a wide range of statutory, voluntary and community services.

Online links: [waterfordwomenscentre.com](http://waterfordwomenscentre.com);  
[www.blayneblades.com](http://www.blayneblades.com);  
[www.womensaid.ie/16daysblog](http://www.womensaid.ie/16daysblog).



## ***Aleksandra's trip to Cyprus for an EU youth conference***

One day you're volunteering in a youth café in West Cork; next day you're in Cyprus putting shape to youth policies across Europe. It happened Aleksandra Ananica.

An EU Youth Conference took place in Cyprus in September and Aleksandra found herself in Nicosia for the event after she and her Bantry colleagues attended a National Council of Ireland event which selected three delegates.

Aleksandra reports:

The conference theme was 'Youth Participation and Social Inclusion' and there was a particular emphasis on youths with migrant background.

We were all assigned to workshops and our goal was to select and phrase recommendations from the working document (which came from consultation with members in all EU states). We made 14 recommendations in total and these were due to be presented to the European Council in November (as 'Changing Ireland' went to print).

Adoption by the Council would be the highest possible political outcome from the conference. I hope it happens and makes a difference to all youths around Europe.

Personally, I'm grateful I had the opportunity to participate and make sure that the voices of youths living in Ireland are heard in the formation of the youth policies in the EU.

Taking part in the conference was a great experience, especially being able to communicate and exchange ideas with others. I also learned a lot about the history and culture of Cyprus.

**The 14 recommendations are available via this link:**  
[bit.ly/PFOR0T](http://bit.ly/PFOR0T)

**A video report from the conference can be found at:**  
[bit.ly/SpoMrX](http://bit.ly/SpoMrX)

See page 5 for full interview with Aleksandra Ananica



## And now for something completely different!



Minister of State Jan O'Sullivan has a lot of reports on her desk (see left) so it's nice to know what catches her eye most of all. In fairness, Jan caught us by surprise when she tweeted this photo to us from her Dail office.



The Dail is what most of us would consider an unusual place. Most peculiar you might even say and the occupants would be inclined to agree.

Now, prompted by Jan's initiative, we're appealing to you dear reader to send in (by email, tweet, etc) a photo of yourself reading 'Changing Ireland' in the most unusual of places. In a bog, on the bog, up a hill, in Cork, Ballyfermot, Paris, Spain...

you get the picture!

Our thanks of course to the Minister for getting the ball rolling. If you're on Twitter by the way, you can follow @changingireland and if you really need to Allen Meagher has his own personal Twitter account @allenmeagher.

There shall of course be a prize. We'll publish the most unusual photos and might just drop by to cover stories in your area!

- Ed.

PS. As Housing Minister, Jan, we've a job for you - (and we know you're reading this!) - a community worker is calling on you to legislate for thousands of private apartment-dwellers let down by absentee landlords unwilling to evict anti-social and criminal tenants (page 20). Happy Xmas!!

## How RTE followed our story to East Wall



**Proving the gutter press wrong - East Wall residents and community workers this year received a Pride of Place Award on behalf of their community.**

We're rarely told when our coverage here in 'Changing Ireland' is picked up by the mainstream media, but it happens regularly. Last year, RTE picked up on our coverage of Nascadh CDP's intergenerational activities in East Wall and followed up

with a 'Morning Ireland' broadcast that showed East Wall off in a very positive light. Community voices were to the fore on the national airwaves.

This came around the time the 'Herald' newspaper was publishing stories at the community's expense, running headlines such as 'Feral Children Forced To Grow Up Fast'.

We found out about the RTE broadcast a fortnight ago!

It also came to our attention that Clare FM has twice broadcast interviews, prompted by journalism first published by 'Changing Ireland'. One of the stories concerned Travellers in business.

We understand why we're rarely told -

the best community workers are very busy people.

But kindly do let us know if a report here had a ripple effect for your community in the mainstream media.

You'll make our day!

PS: For the record, our Nascadh CDP news feature was titled 'Slow Road to Spectacular Community Changes' and was published in Issue 36, Autumn 2011, available online. The latest news from East Wall is that the area has won the over-1,000 people category in the national Pride of Place Awards. Our congratulations! See inside for more.



## Thank you all!

We've had a great response to the editor's letter published in the recent Autumn edition (Ref: '20,000 people, €5 Billion and You').

'Changing Ireland' has received some really positive and useful feedback, calls and indeed site-visits from you.

We've started working on the suggestions and in 2013, we'll improve the magazine by bringing you more wide-ranging coverage, more in-depth stories and better promotion of your work.

Thank you, your views are always welcome. Contact us anytime on 061-458011 or [editor@changingireland.ie](mailto:editor@changingireland.ie)



## Today's teenage fantasy

"How tall am I? What do I weigh? Will I wear make-up? Mum, I need two passport-size photos and €25. No, I don't want to go clubbing. I want to join a boxing club."

- The full story from Kanturk, Co. Cork, is on page 13.

Last year over 90% of people supported to set up a business availed of the Back To Work Enterprise Allowance.

**"Changing Ireland", c/o Community Enterprise Centre, Moyross, Limerick**  
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