

CHANGING IRELAND

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT - COLLECTIVE ACTION - EMPOWERMENT - SOCIAL INCLUSION - www.changingireland.ie

SIMPLE START: Pullough village's revival began the day a local got angry after running out of milk



ACTIVISTS REOPEN LOCAL SHOP TO SAVE VILLAGE



Social Inclusion & Community Activation

PULLOUGH, CO. OFFALY, NOW HAS YOUTH SPACE, MEN'S SHED, LIBRARY, POOL & MORE.



Volunteer of the Year
Mary Fitzgerald



Volunteer Ireland award winners



Fair EU support?
Soon we'll be fishing The Gambia's waters



This publication is produced by Changing Ireland Community Media CLG, an independent, not-for-profit NGO funded through the Department of Rural and Community Development.



Into The Gambia

Journalism from a country you know more about than you think



The Gambia's slow rise – two years on from dictatorship

As communities take ownership in Africa's most daring democracy, the deposed coup leader's artwork has been consigned to the National Museum (where I once worked) in Banjul.

This is a long read article - an extended and updated version of the piece published in our previous edition.

Looking to the future, it draws on interviews with community workers, public servants, members of the public, a community journalism teacher and a member of the government.



Kankurang for Kids

There are two sides to the machete-wielding Kankurang displays common in Mandinka culture, particularly in The Gambia and Senegal.

They can terrify or entertain.

The post includes a video of children visited by a Kankurang on a typical Saturday afternoon in a family compound. Who needs Playstation!

Siaka Fadera of the National Centre for Arts and Culture explains how integral these masquerade dances are to the country's culture and heritage. The EU now part-funds a festival and a museum promoting the Kankurang. Their aim is to create employment opportunities for Gambians who fled to Europe during Jammeh's dictatorship and have since returned.

Tip: If you encounter a full-size Kankurang in a rural village after dark, run!



A day in the life of pirogue fishermen

This film documents (it seems for the first time) what it is like to be a traditional fisherman in a small pirogue (boat) working the seas off the coast of West Africa, in this case off the coast of The Gambia.

It is a way of life that could be wiped out by overfishing and illegal fishing by EU and Chinese supertrawlers. Recently, the EU came to a new formal agreement to fish The Gambia's waters. While officially restricted to set areas and species, nobody is watching. The Gambia's navy is under-resourced.

If fishing villages lose their sustainability - some coastal villages in Senegal and Mauritania have already lost out - more people are likely to take the 'Back Way' to Europe for work. Ireland's first supertrawler, 'Atlantic Dawn', fished regularly off the coast of Mauritania some years ago. Whole communities depend on fish remaining plentiful and fish is an integral part of the Gambian diet.

The crew's 10 hours at sea are documented in one-, three- and 41-minute videos.



The Gambia is smiling again

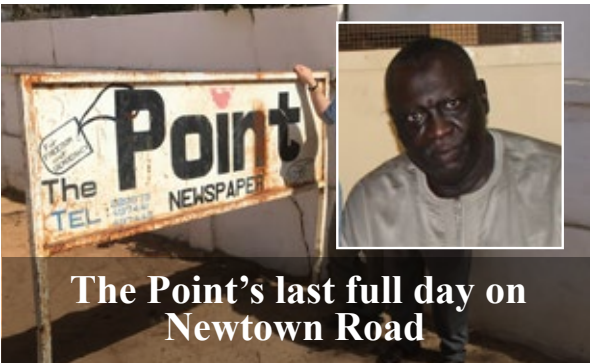
The Gambia, the smallest country on the African continent, is known as 'The Smiling Coast' because of its friendliness, laid-back nature and its string of sandy beaches.

Two of the many people who feature in the short video: Nyima Sanyang and Mariama Suso, in Busumbala, Western Division.

Allen Meagher visited The Gambia with support from the Simon Cumbers Media Fund.



SIMON CUMBERS MEDIA FUND



The Point's last full day on Newtown Road

Pap Seine (pictured, inset) is a World Press Freedom Hero and the co-founder of 'The Point', a news, sports and development-focused daily newspaper. It is a popular, independent and inclusive publication.

Its reports are translated into local languages and broadcast on radio, reaching a national audience in a country where not everyone has the cash or literacy to read news.

The Gambia is now free, but in 2004, Mr Seine's friend, colleague and fellow co-founder, the late Deyda Hydara, was assassinated by the dictatorship for speaking the truth.

To strengthen and promote democracy and development, today's journalists need more training, and media houses need more equipment, says Mr Seine. He appeals for support from Ireland. (Cian Ó Síocháin from Co. Clare served as news editor there in the past).

Last year, the newspaper moved to a new premises after 27 years in one location.

ALL ONLINE

• This and more at: meaghersbar.wordpress.com

INDEPENDENT

'Changing Ireland' is an independent not-for-profit publication.

ABOUT US

'Changing Ireland' engages in original journalism to highlight the impact of local and community development and social inclusion work across Ireland. We report on action on the ground and provide a space for reflection on what serves people and communities best.

The magazine was established in 2001, is based in Moyross, Limerick, and is core-funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development.

We produce journalism to reflect social inclusion work funded or supported by Government departments and agencies. We provide a platform for those on the ground in communities.

We are dedicated to promoting social justice, equality and fair play and to giving people who are rarely heard a voice.

While covering serious issues, we hope our style of journalism provides encouragement to workers, activists and volunteers nationwide, including civil and public servants and all involved in social inclusion in Ireland today.

See page 6 for information about the team behind 'Changing Ireland'.

SUPPORT

'Changing Ireland' generates a small amount of social enterprise revenue. It is core-funded by Government.



An Roinn Forbartha
Tuaithe agus Pobail
Department of Rural and
Community Development

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FRONT COVER PHOTOS

Main photo & bottom right - by A. Meagher.
Bottom centre and left - courtesy of Volunteer Ireland.



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ON THE GROUND

IN OUR NEXT EDITION - early April

In our next edition, we will look at:

- Social Farming, this time reporting from an open day on a farm in Co. Monaghan.
- We'll have top tips from people who have learned from experience how best to

engage men using community development approaches.

- At a time when refugees are portrayed as a burden and a menace - rather than a responsibility and an opportunity - we will

look at how community groups work together to welcome refugees in Ireland.

- The latest on social enterprise in Ireland.
- Horace McDermott swears he's returning!
- And much more.



103 people attended a Social Farming Open Day held on Corrigan's Farm in Co. Monaghan in January. Pictured: Corina, Patrick and Christopher Corrigan and Martin Hannigan, social farming participant.



Catherine Mooney from South Dublin County Partnership and Cllr Stephen Cunningham, Deputy Mayor, Cork, at the national conference on 'Engaging Men Using Community Development Approaches'.

"There is no acceptable reason why Ireland shouldn't be standards of all." - Social Justice Ireland.

COUNTRY HAS 7 COMMUNITY SHOPS - THERE SHOULD BE 700



We know many villages and small towns are under pressure, looking like they've been robbed of their youth. Robbed of the very teeth they used to smile with.

Super-size, out-of-town supermarkets have drained much community as well as commercial life from our precious streets. In recent years, we've seen Post Office closures, bank branch closures (while credit unions open new branches - a plus) and Garda station closures.

I think of big towns like New Ross where I grew up as a teenager and small, rural towns like Eyrecourt in Co. Galway, once a centre of some wealth.

I reported from Eyrecourt when it twinned with Gouesnach in Brittany. The streets were thronged and every shop was open. It was a street party atmosphere.

Now, Eyrecourt is a shadow of its former self with shut shops dominating the streetscape.

So, what hope had a tiny village in even boggiery country on the other side of the Shannon when their only shop closed? Pullough, with a bit of luck on their side, was able to take a stand.

The villagers didn't have the capacity - in development jargon - or the time, or know-how, to tap into new government funding initiatives designed to restore some life into rural towns. (Perhaps, in time).

But, they had a generous former shopkeeper who recognised he had good neighbours willing to put in the volunteer hours to re-open his premises.

Pullough's activists also had the sense to call on Offaly Local Development Company who despatched staff to provide support.

Soon after Pullough Community Shop opened, members of Offaly's Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) came to see and offer their support.

Taking advice from community development workers, Pullough's volunteers applied for and won a little funding here and a little more there.

That crucial support was provided through the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP funds the development company, under guidance from the LCDC). It made a real difference.

Pullough entered a national competition and won. There's now fresh milk to be bought in the village and pride has been restored. The community shop has given birth to a youth space, pool room, swap library, men's shed and the local estate committee has been resurrected. Meanwhile, one of the volunteers enrolled in NUI Galway to study community development. The community is becoming empowered.

However, as the State giveth, so too does it taketh away. Around the time Pullough Community Shop celebrated its first anniversary, An Post announced it was closing Pullough Post Office.

Pullough's volunteers are activists really - fighting for their village's very survival. They deserve every support they get, which is what SICAP is there for.

But what of other villages? There are only seven or eight community shops countrywide. Why aren't there hundreds of them?

Allen Meagher

FILE A REPORT FOR US!

If you believe in Community Development and enjoy writing, why not file a report for us about your community project and what makes it unique. 300-400 words is plenty (and a photo if possible). Certain criteria apply. Your first point of contact should be the editor.



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Thanks To . . .

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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 CLG, or the Department of Rural & Community Development.

READERS: Dublin & Cork

DOING WELL, BUT ARE WE ENVIRONMENTALLY FAIR?

READERS' VIEWS

Two readers wrote to us in January - one to pay compliments and the other to gently complain. That's balance!



'LONG OVERDUE THANKS'

View from Dublin

'Changing Ireland' goes out far and wide. All elected public representatives get a copy. On January 14th, a researcher based in Leinster House, Dublin, wrote to us:



Dear Editor,

I just picked up our copy of 'Changing Ireland' from the pigeon hole and it reminded me to send a long overdue thanks for sending in a copy to Oireachtas members every quarter.

As you can imagine we are inundated daily with publications from State and voluntary agencies containing a lot of useful information particularly for researchers like myself.

Of them all 'Changing Ireland' is the one that lifts my spirits the most. It's real, it's on the ball, and being a person who believes that participatory democracy is the only way to effect real change, I find it profoundly hopeful and encouraging.

This issue's coverage of "Social Farming" was wonderful as are the Pride of Place Awards, the feedback from the consultation with the Community Development workers, etc.

This is real Ireland and thank you for reminding us all.

Wishing you and your team another great year.

Many thanks,

(Name and address with editor)

RESPONSE

In response to this letter, the editor passed the message on to everyone on the 'Changing Ireland' team.

It brought a smile to everyone's face, especially the volunteers who back the project obviously without any financial reward.

Thankfully, before we got carried away with ourselves, another reader wrote to bring us back to earth, literally. (See right).

'ONE REQUEST - BE ECOLOGICALLY SOUND'

View from Cork

Dr. Margaret O'Keeffe from the Department of Applied Social Studies in Cork Institute of Technology wrote to us the following day, January 15th, to gently complain.



Dr. O'Keeffe's suggestion is spot on:

Dear Editor,

Thank you for the most recent copy of 'Changing Ireland'. It is most appreciated.

Could I just suggest that we try to 'bin' the plastic wrapper in favour of a more ecologically sound alternative?

Consider for example, the wrapper chosen by the National Trust as per the following website: <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/features/our-fully-biodegradable-magazine-wrapper>

Many thanks,

Margaret

RESPONSE TO MARGARET

Is saving humanity from destroying itself through harming the planet really so important? Yes.

Thankfully, we were able to draw Margaret's attention to the fact that, for over a decade, we have been using 80% to 100% recycled paper (except the cover) and we print with environmentally friendly ink.

For a long time, before the idea became commonplace, we were the greenest magazine in the country. However, we never thought about the plastic wrappers.

We welcome Margaret's suggestion and will discuss it with the social enterprise company Speedpak who pack the magazine for us.

Now, what to do with the 6,000 less desirable plastic wrappers we have in stock here in Limerick!



TELL US WHAT YOU THINK! WE LISTEN TO FEEDBACK!

What does 'Changing Ireland' do for you? What do you like? What's missing? 'Changing Ireland' welcomes feedback - compliments, criticism and suggestions.

Email us anytime!
E: editor@changingireland.ie

NEW COMMUNITY SHOP: In Pullough,

THE VILLAGE THAT'S COMING

- After running out of milk, Martin Buckley and 8 volunteers set about re-opening the local shop and turning it into a community hub

When 'Changing Ireland' took to the country roads in West Offaly, seeking a community project that stood out, we rounded the corner in Pullough village and struck gold.

It was as if we'd been fated to be there.

The inaugural meeting of Pullough Men's Shed was taking place that evening and, better still, it was taking place in 'Pullough Community Shop and Cafe'.

There are only seven or eight community shops in Ireland and it was the sign above the shop that caused me to stand on the brakes.

The village is located in a picturesque setting, but the needs are obvious. Rural isolation surrounds you in every direction in this boggy part of the country near the River Shannon. In the winter, cut off by snow or storms, this is a place where neighbours rely on each other.

The Men's Shed is now running successfully and men produced a range of craft goods at Christmas time for sale locally. Funds raised were invested back into the community.

However, since our visit, the desolation, you could say, has grown worse. The Post Office has closed and mass layoffs from the local peat-burning electricity station that is being decommissioned will hit hard.

Only for the villagers having some good fortune and being ready to put in long hours volunteering, the place would be on its knees.

The people are undeterred by supposed setbacks.

When the HSE ruled out the possibility of running a full-on cafe - due to the number of regulations that would need to be adhered to - the volunteers took it on the chin.

"Some of the regulations - in hindsight - were good for us, because the shop is now becoming more of a youth space," said Martin Buckley, chairperson.

If he hadn't run out of milk one evening, there might have been



Martin Buckley outside the shop he and fellow volunteers, with the co-operation of the owner, re-opened to service the community.

no such facility.

He got the idea when he drove home one day "on a dirty winter's night" when he forgot to buy milk passing through the last big town, Tullamore.

"I was going to sit down and watch a match on tv and we all wanted a cuppa. By the time I got into the car, drove up the road to Ferbane and returned with the milk, the match was over."

He cursed remembering the incident.

"The shop here was closed for two years. It wasn't commercially

viable - you can't compete with Tescos - but the village needed somewhere for people to buy bread and milk.

"We're cut off from the mainstream, isolated. It's a 25 minute drive to Tullamore, presuming you've a car."

"Now, the kids are our best customers. They have a community hall, but they have no after-schools club, no foroige, no scouts. They had all that, but it's all gone. So, this is more than a shop now.

"We put in a pool table for

them and we're developing the space.

"Offaly Development Company have been brilliant. They were with us from day one.

"CEO Brendan O'Loughlin has been out to lend support. Their social enterprise manager, Sarah Kennedy, came to meetings and encouraged us to start a committee.

"Within a few weeks of setting it up, all the councillors on the Local Community Development Committee came out to see what we were doing," said Martin.

Their hard work is paying off and winning the tiny village much respect.

In December, Pullough Community Shop won the top award for 'Outstanding Group' at the Volunteer Ireland Awards.

In early January, TG4 visited to showcase the community shop.

When the group applied to the Applegreen Blossom Fund, they were one of the successful 63 out of 300 applicants. This funded development of the shop's youth space.

So, how did they get the shop so easily?

"We have an agreement with the owner who's after letting it out to us," said Martin.

The owner, Joe Bracken, who I also met, believes that if the village benefits, everyone wins.

He is enjoying the village's resurgence and is a member of Pullough Men's Shed.

The opening of the Community Shop has had a marvellous ripple effect.

Martin said, "We set up our action group and volunteers have kept this going, doing a shift or two a week. We've helped ourselves. Paddy O'Reilly, our treasurer, put in four shifts a week during our first winter to keep it going.

"From that, he has become involved now in Pullough's residents association. The group had collapsed, but they have resurrected it and now they meet once a month."



Paddy O'Reilly (front) takes notes before the start of the first Men's Shed meeting while Declan Costello, community worker from Offaly Local Development stands ready to begin.

BRINGING BACK TO LIFE

BY ALLEN MEAGHER



“And I’ve gone back to college,” he added.

Martin recently completed a Level 6 course in Advanced Community Development with NUI Galway. He is also learning on the ground by becoming involved in the local Public Participation Network and West & South Offaly Homefix.

“I was self-employed - I lost my job in '09 with the recession. My missus is working full-time and I minded the kids. When they started going to school, I had a bit of extra time and said I'd put the time into the community. It's taking up more time than I thought it would, but it's very enjoyable. In October, I went back to studying.”

The judges in Volunteer Ireland saw great merit in what Joe, Paddy, Martin and their fellow activists were doing. They said:

“In spite of the fact that they had no money to bring about their dream of re-opening a shop which had fallen into disrepair since its closure a few years ago, this group set about fundraising to set up a community, voluntary run shop.

“Within a few months they had secured permission from the owner to lease the premises, raised enough money to cover the cost of insurance, repair, restore

and stock the shop.

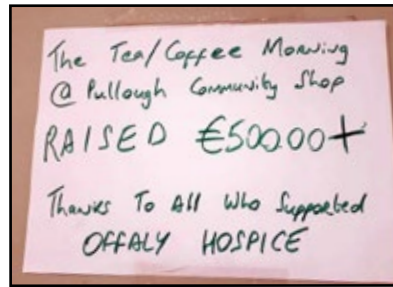
“Overcoming all obstacles they forged ahead and opened Offaly’s only community shop in June 2017. Since then they have remained dedicated to their roles as volunteers. The shop is open seven days a week, even remaining open during the severe storms and snow of the past year.

“The re-opening of the shop has brought new life to the village. It not only provides local people with the opportunity to buy food locally but has become a “Social Hub” and is greatly contributing to inter-generational interaction through the hosting of community events. The creation of a ‘Youth Space’ in an area of the shop is a wonderful addition.

“This venture has re-ignited the passion people have for the betterment of the village,” the judges concluded.

Pullough’s development began as a local initiative and has now become an example to other villages of what can be done by volunteers with a little luck, small amounts of funding and support through the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme.

We want to hear more grassroots good news stories from rural Ireland. If you’ve one in mind, get in touch!



Hip-hip-hurrah! cry locals outside Pullough Community Shop. Inside, there is a dedicated youth space which the volunteers developed with support from Rachel Moloney from Offaly Local Development.



Proud Pullough: The Community Shop won the overall ‘Outstanding Group’ category at Volunteer Ireland’s 2018 awards. Senator David Norris was among the VIPs present to congratulate winners.



Martin Buckley celebrates the win by the volunteers behind Pullough Community Shop at Volunteer Ireland’s 2018 awards.

RURAL ISOLATION

COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT FUNDING

- 4 projects from
3,000 show its
value to groups

Nationally, over 3,000 projects have shared €12.5 million in funding through the Department of Rural and Community Development's Community Enhancement Programme (CEP).

The programme provides small grants administered by Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) in each Local Authority area.

In Co. Offaly, 115 groups received funding. Boil that down to community level, taking Pullough for example, and you'll find that the parish pulled in €2,000 in funding.

Community groups struggle to fundraise for everything and the projects that Pullough sought funds for show the type of needs the CEP is invaluable at resourcing.

Four groups from Pullough received €500 each:

- Pullough Community Action Group: Laptop & printer - €500.
- Pullough Resident's Development Association: IT equipment for community groups for training - €500.
- Pullough Resident's Development Association and Pullough Tidy Towns: Works to develop an attractive around the canal area of the village - €500.
- Dernagun Residents Association: Lawnmower & hedge cutter - €500.

The full list of projects supported nationally can be found on the Department's website, at: <https://dracd.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/CEP-Jan-2019-Project-approvals.pdf>



ON THE GROUND

Pullough Men's Shed - at the first meeting

Declan Costello addressed the first meeting of Pullough's Men's Shed, held in the local community shop pictured below.

"Us men are supposed to talk side-by-side, not face-to-face. So, we work together well that way," he said.

Declan is a community worker with Offaly Local Development and he was there to lend support and tell prospective members what other sheds do.

"Here's a flavour of what sheds are doing - in Tullamore, Clara, Kilcomrac and Edenderry. They're making wheelbarrows. They're making buddy-benches for school playgrounds. If a child is being left behind or bullied, the child can sit on the bench and older kids will come along to play with them.

"Another shed make kayaks. Another produced beehives. You can produce birdboxes, garden furniture, fairy gardens, whatever you like. Or act as stewards for the annual 'Darkness Into Light' walk. It's up to you.

"Some sheds get involved in Tidy Towns projects.

"And they are all going well in Offaly. However, some are unsure about their locations. You are lucky. Usually, when I meet lads like yourselves, they don't have a place. You have your shed already, which is very generous of Joe," he said.

Joe Bracken said the men were welcome to meet in a shed at the back of his former shop.

"We'll have a chat and a craic and get things going," he said.

"We just need to put in a few benches," said one.

They talked about plans to visit the men's shed in Tullamore - a shed so busy it is open five days a week.

Said one member, licking his lips: "They're in an old school that has a kitchen. One of the the men is a chef. He asks them what they want to eat, he goes off and does the shopping - €3 or €4 a day and he cooks for everyone.



See the cuppa! The most important tool in any Men's Shed is the kettle. (So says Barry Sheridan, CEO of the Irish Men's Sheds Association. See page 27 & next edition for more).

"Is there a chef here?"

People looked around.

"No! We've no chef."

However, what Pullough Men's Shed's members do have is lots of enthusiasm.

Their Shed has been a great success locally and will help contribute to the village's development.

The support provided by Declan Costello and his colleagues in **Offaly Local Development Company** is made possible through the **Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP)**.

Last year, it was announced that SICAP will provide €190 million over five years (2018-2022) to support the most disadvantaged individuals and communities.



RECOGNITION

VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR, 2018 - MARY FITZGERALD, HAVEN HORIZONS, CO. CLARE

Mary Fitzgerald from Inagh in County Clare was named Christine Buckley Volunteer of the Year 2018 at this year's Volunteer Ireland Awards.

This is why she was chosen, said the judges:

Since she was young, Mary wanted to make a difference to people's lives. In her teens, she was moved by TV images of street children in India and Romania. She volunteered with the Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity in Calcutta and in a Romanian orphanage.

She was touched by the plight of Clare families fleeing from domestic abuse who were forced to sleep in the Garda station. Mary took some of these women and children into her own home and then decided she needed to do something more.

She got a small group of people together and they co-founded Clare Haven Services in 1993. In collaboration with Respond Housing Association, 24hr emergency refuge accommodation was provided. Meanwhile, Clare Haven's frontline support services and educational programmes helped hundreds of women and children who have experienced domestic abuse.

After 20 years, Mary recognised the need to focus on long-term solutions to break the cycle of domestic abuse and to stop young people from going into unhealthy relationships.

So, 'Haven Horizons' was set-up to establish prevention programmes which address the lack of awareness and education around the underlying causes of domestic abuse. It also aimed to promote international models of good practice that change public



A domestic abuse volunteer won the top award: Mary Fitzgerald goes up to receive her Volunteer of the Year 2018 award at the ceremony held in Blanchardstown, Dublin, in December.

attitudes and professional responses.

Mary connected with a US-based group with a model for responding to domestic violence that has saved lives. The Minnesota-origin 'Blueprint for Safety' model prioritises the safety of women and children and seeks to hold perpetrators accountable.

Remarkably, in the same week that Mary

won the Volunteer Ireland award, she also won the overall Community Hero Award from The Wheel, the umbrella body for charities.

W: clarehaven.ie
W: havenhorizons.com

VOLUNTEER IRELAND AWARDS - RUNNERS-UP:

COMMUNITY

- Willie Walsh, Carrigaline Family Support Centre, Cork
- Mike Fisher, Wicklow Dementia Support, Wicklow

HEALTH & DISABILITY

- John Conroy, Irish Wheelchair Association, Lucan, Dublin.
- Joan Ryan, Parkrun, Kildare.

SAFETY & EMERGENCY SERVICES

- Colm O'Byrne, Limerick Suicide Watch, Limerick
- David Byrne, St John Ambulance, Kildare

SOCIAL WORK & SOCIAL INCLUSION

- Mary Fitzgerald, Haven Horizons, Clare.
- Jim Moore, Friends of the Elderly, Dublin.

SPORT AND RECREATION

- Constantino 'Tino' Fiuza Castineira, Suir Dragon Paddlers, Tipperary.
- Chris Toomey, Tipperary Boxing Club.

OUTSTANDING GROUP

- Children at Risk Ireland (CARI) Child Forensic Accompaniment Officers, Dublin and Galway.
- Waterford Marine Search and Rescue.

VOLUNTEER MANAGER 2018

- Majella Fennelly, SVT Activity and Wellness Hub, Laois.
- Ann Birney, Inner City Helping Homeless, Dublin.

ARTS, CULTURE & MEDIA

- Kim Mackenzie-Doyle, Institute of Designers Ireland, Carlow.
- Lolo Robinson, Drogheda Comhaltas, Louth.

CAMPAIGNING & AWARENESS RAISING

- Nadya Doyle, An Taisce Climate Ambassador Programme, Wexford.
- Marian Carroll, The Ronald McDonald House, Dublin.

CHILDREN & YOUTH

- Sharon Clarke, STEPS – Engineers Ireland and Seagate, Donegal.
- Pdraig Sheeran, Kilimanjaro Achievers, Dublin.

ANIMALS & ENVIRONMENT

- Jane and Tamsyn Harris (mother and daughter duo), ISPCA, Westmeath.
- Helen Nolan, ISPCA, Longford.

RECOGNITION

VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

- OVER 500 NOMINATED, 33 SHORTLISTED

The Volunteer Ireland Awards is the major annual initiative to celebrate volunteers in Ireland.

The awards - held in December - shine a light on the remarkable work of volunteers around the country by honouring them on a national stage.

There were 11 category winners and Pullough Community Shop, which won the category for 'Outstanding Group', features as our lead story in this edition. The ten other category winners are featured here.

This was the 11th awards ceremony organised by Volunteer Ireland, the national volunteer development agency. It operates as a support body for local volunteer centres around the country.



W: volunteer.ie

Attendees having fun posing for selfies at Volunteer Ireland's 2018 awards ceremony. All photos by:

CHILDREN & YOUTH

Winner - David O'Hara.



Dave is a mentor in Solas Project's After School's club for children aged 11 – 13.

Dave is the handyman, the class clown, the extra pair of hands, the homework genius and a great support to staff.

Where other volunteers like to take a few weeks or months breather, Dave keeps going. It is invaluable to the organisation to have at least one familiar face throughout the year for the children.

He recently completed a Masters in Community and Youth work and this ties in very well.

HEALTH & DISABILITY

Winner - Mary Arrigan-Langan.



Mary Arrigan-Langan set up Octopus Swimming Club in 1981 for people with physical disabilities.

She has been involved for 37 years providing weekly swim sessions hardly missing a session in all that time.

She also volunteers with other groups.

Mary is great at pushing the boundaries and getting people to be ambitious.

ARTS, CULTURE & MEDIA

Winner - Louise Borre.



Louise has been volunteering since she was seven.

Today, she is a Big Top Team Leader (one of four in a volunteer team of over 600) for the Galway International Arts Festival.

Louise works part time (paid) at Cosáin Community Wellness Centre and continues to volunteer many hours once her shift is done.

She also volunteers with a host of other groups including Clifden Arts Festival, Galway Theatre Festival, Galway Housing Action Group, Pieta House and Cope Galway.

SOCIAL WORK & SOCIAL INCLUSION

Winner - Sheila Busher.



Currently, Sheila organises two nights of Foodcloud deliveries to over 160 families who text in if they wish to receive a delivery 6 nights a week.

Whatever the hour, if someone is in trouble, homeless or vulnerable, Sheila is there for them. She also has the support of many volunteers and the local community to help her provide support.

'Listen' contains the same letters as the word 'silent'.
- observation by poet Alfred Brendel.

EAR AWARDS 2018

STED, 11 WINNERS CHOSEN

CAMPAIGNING & AWARENESS

Winner - Laura Brennan.



Laura has terminal cervical cancer and advocates in favour of the HPV vaccine. She uses the media, public speaking opportunities and social media to appeal to parents to protect their daughters from HPV and cervical cancer.

Laura took the initiative and contacted the HSE in September 2017. At the age of just 25, she was determined to tell her story to every parent in Ireland who was about to make the decision whether or not their daughter was to be vaccinated against HPV.

SPORT & RECREATION

Winner - Sinead Kelly (jubilant below)



Four years ago Raphoe Town FC had less than 10 girls playing football. Sinead took the initiative to set up and organise a Soccer Sisters Programme and kept going even when hospitalised.

Sinead has positioned the club in the heart of the community building strong and positive links with local schools and clubs and now there are over 30 girls playing.

VOLUNTEER MANAGER OF THE YEAR

Winner - Sara Murphy.



Victim Support at Court is a voluntary service that provides court accompaniment and support to victims of crime. Sara manages the Victim Support area in the Criminal Courts of Justice which deals mainly with murder and rape trials.

Sara's supportive, warmth and empathetic nature, as well as her knowledge of the court system, led to her being offered a part time role managing the volunteers in the Criminal Courts of Justice and helping with training of new volunteers.

SAFETY & EMERGENCY SERVICES

Winner - Nancy White.

Nancy single handedly brought together a group of volunteers and set up the Lorrha Community Responder Group.

She also gives an incredible amount of time to groups.

Under her leadership, five new defibrillators have been acquired for the area and the Group has already responded to over 30 emergency calls under the direction of the National Ambulance Service.



ANIMALS & ENVIRONMENT

Winner - Maeve O'Donoghue.



Maeve volunteers in the local dog pound and seeks wherever possible to reunite pets with owners or have them rehomed.

By law, dogs who are in the pound only have to be kept for a certain number of days and then they can be rehomed or put to sleep.

She works closely with the dog warden and does her utmost to get every dog out of the pound alive. She visits most days, takes photos of strays and posts the pictures to the Facebook page 'Mullingar Dog Shelter'.

COMMUNITY Winner - Cormac Sertutsa.



Cormac is one of the Irish Red Cross's busiest volunteers. As the Irish Red Cross Health & Social Care Officer responsible for developing services in Co. Kerry, he spends every day focused on his role.

Cormac has also volunteered with other organisations including Southwest Motorsport Rescue Unit, Cycle Against Suicide, Killorglin Community First Responders, Castlemaine Youth Club and Killorglin KDYS Neighbourhood Project.

COMMUNITY FOCUS: STRAIDE, CO. MA

3 in 1: Minister Museum, Bus

BY ALLEN MEAGHER

THE MUSEUM THAT

After 46 years in existence, the Michael Davitt Museum is at last getting welcome financial support from the government through once-off funding from the Department of Rural and Community Development.

The €40,000 will help the museum become a "centre of excellence" under the guidance of a newly hired cultural development officer.

Yvonne Corcoran-Loftus is the new curator. She has worked in the museum since 2013, having started out as a Community Employment Scheme supervisor.

Uniquely, the museum she now manages is housed in a restored pre-Penal Era church, next to a 13th century abbey. Davitt was baptised there and is buried in the adjoining graveyard.

The voluntary group she leads has already proved its worth, impressing the Chinese embassy and bringing interns from China to work there, while all the time improving the visitor experience. On Tripadvisor, it currently has a 93% "excellent" rating.

Davitt was an important international supporter of Chinese strides for independence, although even in China this had been forgotten. Now they've been reminded, the Chinese are taking "huge interest", according to Justin Sammon, CEO of Mayo North East.

Even in Ireland, Michael Davitt is not well enough recognised considering all he accomplished. It is this that drives the voluntary group pushing to develop the museum.

"He is a symbol to us of someone who fought injustices," said Mr Sammon, an avid historian.

Davitt is widely known for setting up the Land League, but he did much more, embracing a variety of international causes.

"He caused a lot of armless revolution and was the founder of social revolution, probably, from Ghandi to the Boers," he said.

He has encyclopedic knowledge of Davitt's "full blessing to the Chinese revolution" in his era.

"The Chinese were unaware of this and now they all want to know more. The Chinese ambassador has asked his cultural attache to work with Mayo North East. To date, we've had three interns from China working here for six months and we've had numerous visitors from China. We hope to have an international conference on Davitt soon," he said.

THE BUS THAT BRING

Members of Foxford and District Alzheimer's Trust were handed the keys to a new wheelchair accessible bus by Minister Michael Ring on Friday, January 11th, in Straide, Co. Mayo.

It will transport people living with dementia to and from daycare services and other community activities.

Launching the new bus, Minister Michael Ring said, "It's very hard to see families under pressure. It's hard when you're sick and you don't have transport to bring you home. It's a big cost to be sick and get treatment. This (bus) helps make their lives a bit easier."

He congratulated everyone involved in providing support to people with Alzheimers and Dementia and said "we are so lucky with what we have in Ballindine - Mayo people supporting one another."

He pointed to supports targetted "not at well-oiled organisations", but at smaller community groups that may lack the capacity to fill out extensive paperwork seeking grants.

"The local LCDCs now target the funding to be spent in the areas



Minister Michael Ring speaking in the Michael Davitt Museum.



Elected representatives, Michael Davitt Museum committee members and Minister Michael Ring.

PHOTOS BY A. MEAGHER.



Museum curator, Yvonne Loftus-Corcoran, Minister Michael Ring and museum worker (on placement) David Niland from Claremorris.



Justin Sammon, CEO of Mayo North East inside the Davitt Museum. He believes most of us don't know nearly as much as we should about Michael Davitt. Mr Sammon and museum curator Yvonne Loftus-Corcoran kindly presented 'Changing Ireland' with an edition of Laurence Marley's biography of the "freelance radical".

"Violence against women is both a cause and a consequence of gender inequalities," says the European Institute for Gender Equality.

Ring Launches & Hall Projects

AGHER

WOKE THE DRAGON

He welcomed the funding: "This is the first time in 46 years that a government department has recognised the significance of this as a tool for development."

The museum committee believe Davitt should be recognised first of all in his own country and have worked on a cultural programme to make it happen.

They believe their programme can help foster leadership in communities and make places more attractive for people from outside to move in.

"In community development parlance, our model is cultural animation and we want to pursue that more across rural Ireland," he said.

Jim Moloney, also speaking for the Museum, said:

"Down through the years, we knocked on many doors looking for funding and none were answered, until now.

"Michael Davitt is the most important figure in our past and it would be a shame if we didn't honour and remember the legacy he left Ireland.

"I am very proud of the museum staff and volunteers - they've worked so hard over the past years."

He said, "Michael Davitt would have been proud of the SICAP programme."

In his speech, Minister Michael Ring congratulated the "many people who kept this museum open and alive" and said, "I'm pleased that my Department is going to provide some funding for the next two years."

He congratulated the Local Development Company for taking over responsibility for supporting the museum - "It's a good move and I'd like to see it happening in more projects."

He thanked the volunteers for the work that government, local authorities and agencies cannot do.

"People are out there keeping communities going, keeping festivals going and keeping their businesses going," said the Minister.

W: <http://www.michaeldavittmuseum.ie>

INGS JOY & RELIEF

it's needed," he said.

Funding for the bus came through the CLÁR programme.

The CLAR programme is a targeted investment programme which provides funding for small-scale infrastructural projects in rural areas that have suffered the greatest levels of population decline.

Minister Ring said, "This CLÁR scheme has worked well. I see the joy it brings."

He said it was a relief for voluntary groups "not to have to be out there the whole time fundraising."

Since 2016, more than 1,200 projects have benefited from funding of €25 million under the programme.

The programme forms part of the Government's Action Plan for Rural Development.

Jim Moloney, on behalf of the Trust said he was "delighted Minister Ring has provided the support".

"You can't underestimate the difference this bus will make.

Families have a very difficult role and anything we can do to make their lives a bit easier is so important," he said. "There is no way we could have bought this bus without this funding. What you've done with this scheme is a credit to you."

One definition: Community development is a process come together to take collective action and generate

COMMUNITY FUTURES

Mayo Community Futures (see next page) is a bottom up, community-led process that allows all members of the community opportunities to feed into an action plan for their community.

The new approach was introduced in 2006 and 30 communities have participated in it to date. The process takes about six months.

It is administered by Mayo County Council and aims to:

- Assist communities prepare Community Action Plans.
- Encourage more people to become active in their communities.
- Strengthen and develop local community organisations.
- Enable communities to identify and progress priority projects.
- Enable communities to effectively represent their interests at local, county and national level.

The main tools for encouraging participation are a household survey, stakeholder interviews, compiling a community profile and organising a Community Day event. **More info:** <http://bit.ly/MayoFutures>



Minister Ring hands over the keys to the new bus.



NOW, THAT'S INCLUSION! Minister Michael Ring gives a lift to Dara Calleary, TD, Fianna Fail spokesperson on Rural, Community & Gaeltacht Affairs, and Frank Reid from the Michael Davitt Museum Committee.



NOPE, WE'LL NEVER ALL FIT! Volunteers, staff and residents with Minister Michael Ring, TD, Dara Calleary, TD, County Council chairperson Cllr Blackie Gavin and Cllrs. Neil Cruise, Gerry Murray, Joe McHale & Henry Kenny.

COMMUNITY FOCUS: STRAIDE

PLANNING, LEADER & DIASPORA SUPPORT KEY TO OUR DEVELOPMENT, SAY VOLUNTEERS

Straide Community Development Group gives full credit to a process called 'Community Futures' that has helped communities across Mayo.

While funding support makes all the difference, it was Mayo County Council's community development approach that helped the community see what were priorities for them.

By the summertime, Straide will have the equivalent of a new multi-purpose hall. The Michael Davitt Community Hall - closed for some time - is to be resurrected.

It has been years in the planning and soaked up many hours of volunteer involvement and cost €167,000.

But they stuck with it, with help from LEADER and community fundraising support from the diaspora.

On Friday, January 11th, Michael Ring, Minister for Rural and Community Development, met members of the development group.

When finished, the refurbished hall will have new windows, a new heating system, kitchen, office space and toilets.

Vice-chair Carol Reading said, "We're looking forward. We're going to be able to use it for indoor football, badminton and birthday parties. We also aim to make it available for community events like months minds."

"We have had families from the UK, America - and obviously Straide - contribute to the fundraising," she said.

Chairperson Derek Murphy welcomed the LEADER funding: "There was no money spent on the hall since the 1980s and it needed an upgrade."

Derek got involved as a volunteer "by putting my hand up at a meeting and I was told I'd be chair for three months and that was six years ago."

Kate O'Hara, secretary, said, "We got every group in Straide involved in the Mayo Communities Futures process. It's a great system, it gets all stakeholders involved."

"Out of that we created our development group and came up with an action plan. Mayo County Council run Community Futures and it got us to do a household survey, we found out what the priorities were and came up with an action plan."

"There are sixty children in the local primary school and they have no 'halla', no facilities, so the hall refurbishment was vital. We have a church, a pub and the museum in Straide and we got to the point where the community needed space," she said.

They began their work in the midst of recession and have now been proven right in sticking to their action plan. (For more, see next page).

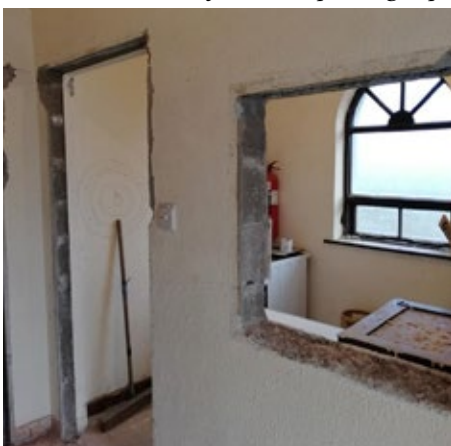
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Chairperson Derek Murphy, vice-chairperson Carol Reading and Kate O'Hara - members of Straide Community Development Group.



Minister Ring with Cllr. Blackie Gavin, chairperson of Mayo County Council, Cllr. Neil Cruise, Foxford and Derek Murphy and Carol Reading, chairperson and vice-chairperson and other members of the development group.



Even during the recession, the community in Straide, Co. Mayo, saw windows of opportunity.

WHAT'S IT LIKE?

'I am Traveller: Our Histories and Heritage'

- Feb 23 event organised by Country Life Museum, Castlebar

A strong panel has been assembled to discuss Traveller culture and traditions at the National Museum of Ireland's Country Life Museum outside Castlebar, Co. Mayo, on Saturday afternoon, Feb. 23rd.

The public are invited to the talk titled 'I am Traveller: Our Histories and Heritage'.

Representatives from Traveller groups across the country - including Cork, Donegal, Meath, Mayo and Dublin - plan to attend.

"The panel discussion will examine culture and heritage and good social inclusion practices. We hope it will be of particular interest to Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP) teams who work with and support the Traveller community," said curator, Rosa Meehan.

The panel will include Brigid Carmody, Hugh Friel, Michael McDonagh, Mary Collins and Oein DeBhairduin, who will share their insights on traditional and contemporary Traveller culture and community initiatives.

Senator Collette Kelleher will chair the three-hour event (2-5pm).

The event is open to the public, places are limited and booking is required by phone or by email. The organisers ask you to include your name, address and contact telephone number.

The discussion is but one of a number of events taking part in the museum as part of a 'Travellers' Journey Exhibition' that continues there until May.

The exhibition shows the rich culture, traditions and crafts of the Traveller community in the west of Ireland. It has been curated in partnership with the Western Regional Traveller Health Network.

If you can't make the exhibition, check out the website: <https://www.museum.ie/Country-Life/Exhibitions/Current-Exhibitions/Travellers-Journey>

To book a place at the talk, email educationtph@museum.ie, or phone 094 9031751.

Venue: Turlough Park - Country Life Museum, Castlebar, Co. Mayo

Audience: Adults & Children 14+



Pictured: Kevin Maughan.

Photo by Derek Speirs.

Guest speaker - Oein DeBhairduin

Oein DeBhairduin (pictured) is one of the speakers due to give a talk in Mayo.

He is an ardent folklorist, Gammon speaker, herb worker and an avid keeper of traditions, lore and retellings.

He is currently vice-chair of the Irish Traveller Movement and a member of the national LGBT+ Traveller Support Group, as well as being the manager of an adult education centre in South Dublin.

Oein works in the Oireachtas with Senator Colette Kelleher with a distinct focus on Traveller policy, notably in the development of Traveller Culture in the school curriculum.

Follow him on Twitter: @oeiny





BY KIRSTY TOBIN

When we first began looking at tech and communities, it was with a focus on women. We were planning our 2018 Women's Issue and knew it was an important topic to cover.

We knew that the tech sector was a growing force to reckon with, that there was a talent gap crying out to be filled by skilled graduates, and that – through a combination of outdated stereotypes, unconscious bias and lack of support – many young women were not being given the opportunity to take advantage of it.

As we began to peel back the layers, it became obvious that the topic of tech in the community was too broad to confine it to just gender balance, and so it became much more than that. It became something that deserved more space. But to discuss it without acknowledging the gender gap would be doing us all a disservice.

Giustina Mizzoni, executive director of global programming club CoderDojo, states that, "Across 35 European countries, less than one in five computer science graduates is a woman".

The challenge is obvious.

DIVERSE HIRING LEADS TO DIVERSE INVENTION

The need for women to start massing towards the tech industry goes beyond the simple facts of equality and fairness. There is a deeper wisdom behind encouraging people from all walks of life to pursue innovative careers: diverse teams breed diversity of thought and make the world a better place.

Need proof? When car manufacturers first started installing seat belts, women continued to die in collisions at far higher rates than men. The reason: Designers hadn't taken the female anatomy into account and the resulting engineering was lethal. When, more recently, an artificial intelligence company started developing facial recognition software, it worked really well – until it had to identify faces with darker skin tones.

The fact that these stories are true makes one thing abundantly clear: to continue to keep women, perceived minorities and those from disadvantaged backgrounds out of the room is to do a disservice to humankind.

Aoibheann Mangan, the Mayo-based 12-year-old Joint EU Digital Girl of the Year 2017-2018, puts it in a way that's undeniable: "Everyone says boys and girls – and men and women – do things differently. To limit a job, a workforce or a project to one type of mindset or skillset over another is to limit its outcome."

Sadly, there is a consistent problem with tech being seen as

TECH NEEDS - It can be really

the exclusive domain of white, middle-class men. Companies are starting to make bigger efforts to hire inclusively, but it's a slow process, and one that needs to start far earlier than the hiring room.

WHY DO WE NEED TO FOCUS ON WOMEN AND YOUNG GIRLS?

There is an anecdote that always leaps to my mind when thinking about diversity, inclusion and the future of science, technology, engineering and maths (aka STEM). A young woman in my Twitter circle was in Fifth Year, preparing for the following year's exams and the college decisions that would accompany them. She walked into a meeting with her school's (female) guidance counsellor, full of confidence and certainty about her choice. "I want to work in science," she said. The response? "Don't be silly. That's not for girls."

And therein lies the major stumbling block to getting girls into STEM: many are consistently told it is something they simply cannot do. Yet, that is far from the truth. An analysis of 2018's Leaving Cert results in STEM subjects shows that in some higher level subjects – physics, physics and chemistry, agricultural science, and biology – girls actually outperformed boys and, in technology, the gap between them was negligible.

An argument can surely be made here that it is not a case of nature, but of nurture. Girls are, of course, as capable as boys are in all subjects (and vice-versa) but, perhaps, ideas of so-called boys' subjects and girls' subjects change the way subjects are taught to different groups.

Sheree Atcheson – the founder of Women Who Code UK, and Technology Respect and Inclusion manager at Deloitte UK – is an advocate for getting women into tech.

"All people are deserving of a path into STEM because they are crucial in ensuring all viewpoints are heard in the creation of our future technologies," says the Tyrone woman. "Women are half of the population and we cannot, and should not, continue to make tech without them – we are selling the industry short and, ultimately, not making the best solutions we can."

Similarly, Mizzoni sees the future of the STEM sector as reliant on creating an inclusive workforce: "Diversity in all areas has been proven to have a positive impact on innovation. Young girls who are engaged with STEM grow up to be young women who see a career in STEM as a viable and exciting opportunity.

"By creating a more diverse STEM sector, we will see more

A WOMAN'S TOUCH good for communities

innovations and more inventions, and create an empowered society who believe that they can shape their future.”

WHAT WE CAN ACHIEVE

Supporting and empowering young women to pursue knowledge of STEM subjects is already having a very visible impact, and events like CoderDojo's Coolest Projects are encouraging them to develop tools that can impact their communities.

According to Mizzoni, a Turkish CoderDojo member called Selin built a robotic guide dog using skills she'd learned at her Dojo.

Mangan, a mentor at a Dojo in Mayo, developed a talking doll, 'Hospital Holly+Henry', to help children understand some of the scarier parts of hospital visits and is now working with Bumbleance.

“We believe it is of paramount importance that we make a conscious, consistent and collaborative effort to increase the number of girls choosing to learn how to create with technology,” says Mizzoni.

That's the reasoning behind CoderDojo's Girls Initiative, which

aims to increase the number of girls attending a Dojo from 29% to at least 40% over the next three years.

But bridging tech's gender divide can't solely rely on groups like CoderDojo – there has to be a community effort too. Girls have to see, wherever they look, that they are welcome in this sphere.

According to Mizzoni, “we need to help every young girl, their parents and their teachers understand the importance and relevance of technology. ... I genuinely believe that everyone has a role to play in making STEM more accessible for girls and young women.”

It may sound like a challenge, but it doesn't have to be.

Atcheson counsels community organisations to look at what's already out there. As she puts it, there's no need to reinvent the wheel if you don't need to. When asked what advice she would give to someone who wants to develop STEM skills or set up programmes for their community, she aims to inspire.

“Remember that every single person can have an impact in industry and you are no different. Understand and accept that power – it's pretty humbling and amazing.”

To play your part, visit 'Changing Ireland' on LinkedIn for details of programmes and resources that you can use to support girls and young women in your community.



CONNECT & EMPOWER

TECH IN OUR COMMUNITIES

- Technology is everywhere; so are community groups

BY KIRSTY TOBIN

In 1956, when computers were still a relatively recent innovation, fledgling company IBM – fresh from the development of its first big seller – set up shop in Ireland.

That was just the start of Ireland's tech boom, representing the first tentative steps towards a mammoth tech sector that, as of 2017, was responsible for 7.5% of direct employment on the island. Ericsson followed IBM, then came HP, Microsoft and Oracle, leading to an influx of global names like Apple, Google, Facebook and Airbnb that would put this small European outpost and its 'Silicon Docks' on the map.

Ireland became a haven for tech jobs and talent, as much at the forefront of future development as Silicon Valley and the US start-up scene, but there was also a massive talent gap, especially in the tech sector – there are more jobs going than there are people to fill them.

So, why aren't communities taking notice?

WHY SHOULD COMMUNITIES CARE ABOUT TECH?

We've already seen that tech jobs make up a large portion of Ireland's workforce, but it can be hard to see exactly why that matters on a community level.

In many ways, it's quite simple: the skills that young people (and even adults) pick up when studying science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) subjects – analytical reasoning, fact-based decision making, principles of investigation and innovation, and basic digital ability, among others – are applicable across a wide range of industries.

Or, to put it another way, you don't have to be considering a career in STEM to find value in studying it.

"Technology is everywhere," says Giustina Mizzone, the executive director at global programming club CoderDojo. "It is shaping every industry, from agriculture to healthcare. Technology and the code that powers it have become ingrained in our everyday lives. ... Even a basic understanding and appreciation can have a profound effect on a person's life."

Aoibheann Mangan, the Mayo-based Joint EU Digital Girl of the Year 2017-2018, agrees: "The world is moving at a massive digital pace, and so many of the jobs of today – and even more of the jobs of tomorrow – will require the digital skills you learn when coding or engaging in computational thinking."

IT'S ABOUT GROWTH

There's a trickle-down effect, too. As tech becomes more and more a part of daily life, those who are not among the 'tech-savvy' become increasingly at risk of isolation – not in a physical sense, but a societal one.

Dialogue and conversation have moved largely from face-to-face and phone-based exchanges to messaging services and

social media sites; basic tasks like managing finances and dealing with service providers now often require an understanding of the internet; applying for jobs, booking holidays and even grocery shopping have moved online – an understanding of tech can be as much a matter of convenience as necessity.

Because of this, giving members of a community a grounding in tech can make them more connected and less susceptible to exclusion. It can also help to grow communities in a more literal sense: when tech skills are developed, it opens up possibilities for tech businesses and startups in the community, makes members more employable in roles that require tech abilities, and encourages others in the community to learn themselves.

Tyrone's Sheree Atcheson, founder of Women Who Code UK and Technology Respect and Inclusion manager at Deloitte UK, understands this better than most: "My own personal experience has shown that a career in STEM not only makes a difference in my life, but in the lives of others. Using my STEM background, I have been able to form a career that sees me impacting thousands of lives and creating an industry that is better for all."

SO HOW DO WE GET THERE

This idea of empowering communities through tech is one of the founding principles of a programme called #techmums, which aims to make mothers part of the digital revolution.

Founded by Dr Sue Black, who used tech education to pull herself and her family out of poverty, the programme helps mothers to harness the potential of technology in order to play a part in humankind's shared digital future. In short, it allows these women to be included.

A fringe benefit of this is that it goes a long way to demystifying tech for younger members of the community. As Aoibheann says, "If I cannot see it, I cannot be it." – a succinct way of saying that if people do not see a path for them that has been successfully followed by others, they will not attempt to walk it.

There are other ways that path can be shown. At last year's Inspirefest – an annual science, technology and the arts event with a focus on diversity – the crowd heard from Dr Anne Looney, executive dean of DCU's Institute of Education and the CEO of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment from 2001 to 2016.

"We need [teachers] to be innovators, adventurers and seekers," said Looney. "We need them to be activists. ... We want to prepare teachers to model what we need children to be."

And yet schools can only do so much. It is in the hands of communities (from families right up to national organisations) to ensure that no one gets left behind – that everyone is prepared to exist in our shared digital future.

Visit 'Changing Ireland' on LinkedIn for details of programmes and resources that you can use to support tech education in your community.

DISABILITY & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Empowering Young People to Create Their Own Jobs

Here is an idea other groups around the country could consider replicating:

Terenure Enterprise Centre ran a training course last summer called 'Destination Innovation' for young entrepreneurs. They hope to replicate it this summer.

The best thing about it was that the participants really got to feel that they can be their own bosses, that they can create their own jobs. It was a revelation for some of them.

The centre started the project after being approached by the Walkinstown Association for People with an Intellectual Disability.

The Association's team of employment staff knew that young people with disabilities have difficulties finding paid and meaningful employment. The labour market in Ireland is all but closed to individuals with intellectual disabilities.

With such bright and brilliant individuals, the association in Walkinstown felt supporting them in creating their own businesses could be a solution to the pressing problem. Terenure Enterprise Centre then designed a hands-on entrepreneurial training course to meet the needs of the group of young people in an accessible way.

BY VASILENA VASILEVA



It was a success because we were very flexible in our approach and did things with them that they were passionate about. We were following them.

Five young people took part and the training took place over four sessions, each lasting two-hours. The participants drew on their talents, passions and skills and developed a variety of business ideas. They proposed a handmade jewellery business, an artwork business, working as a band manager, as a DJ and as a beautician.

Each training session was filled with practical activities and tailored to the needs of the learners as they were at different stages of creating their products/services. Some participants were already testing their ideas, while others were building a body of work or refining their skills to start their business.

The students had a chance to discuss their business ideas and decide what resources they needed to make it a reality. One of them (the DJ) turned the work he was doing voluntarily into paid work.

The course also focused on their future clients, how to make themselves visible online and offline and how to continue to improve their digital skills. All participants felt the course was a valuable experience.

The project finished with a showcase event in October - organised by Walkinstown Association for People with an Intellectual Disability - where the young entrepreneurs presented their businesses and won over new clients.

The course was free for participants and was funded through 'Getting Citizens Online' (<http://bit.ly/citizenonlineDCCAE>).

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Confronted by discrimination against people with disabilities, Terenure Enterprise Centre, Dublin, provided course participants with the training, knowledge and tools to develop their own business ideas.

“Accreditation is great, but non-accreditation is where it’s at for us.”

- 3,200 people per week on courses in 40 locations
- Volunteer commitment & ‘regen’ funds keep it going
- Unique citywide network celebrates 25 years

Every week, a unique volunteer-led umbrella group helps to organise community education classes for 3,200 people across 40 venues in Limerick city. They cover everything from découpage* to the Leaving Cert.

In November, supporters gathered to mark their network’s 25th anniversary. The Limerick Community Education Network (LCEN) believes it is unique for being the longest running and widest reaching community education network in the country. The network of 15 community organisations and statutory agencies support adult learning in communities across the city.

Helen Flanagan, chairperson and local community worker, said: “We run classes in knitting, sewing, woodwork and much more. That’s where it’s at. It’s about getting out of the house. It’s about meeting people, gaining confidence and learning too. Accreditation is great, but non-accreditation is where it’s at for us.”

TDs Maurice Quinlivan and Jan O’Sullivan were present on the occasion and joined local councillors Elena Secas and Jerry O’Dea in congratulating the volunteers.

* *Découpe* means “to cut out” in French and *decoupage* involves decorating just about anything using paper or card and then coating the layers with varnish. It’s very popular.

W: lcn.ie



Adult education organiser Josephine Sheedy enjoys the spotlight. Watching on are community workers Helen Flanagan, Mary Flannery and Jim Prior.

AWARDS TO CO-ORDINATOR AND LONG-TERM SUPPORTER

Helen Flanagan, chairperson of LCEN, paid tribute to Josephine Sheedy from Moyross, saying, “She has encouraged and supported learners from her community and beyond for the past 21 years.”

“She has served on the LCEN as chair, secretary and treasurer. And general dogsbody, as we all have!” she added.

Jim Prior paid tribute to co-ordinator Catherine Aylmer, saying it is her drive and commitment that keeps the show on the road. He appealed to the two TDs present for continuing support.

“Community education is so important and we are dependent on regeneration funding to continue funding our co-ordinator’s position. Please help and support us to keep that position,” he requested. Both TDs assured him of their support.

MORE INFO: Catherine Aylmer, LCEN Development Worker, LCEN office, 267 O’Malley Park, Southill, Limerick.

E: catherine@lcn.ie T: 087 7642659

FB: [facebook.com/LCENLimerick/](https://www.facebook.com/LCENLimerick/)

W: lcn.ie/history

VIDEO: Watch our video of the Southill Roses Choir singing on the night at: <http://bit.ly/SouthillR>



TDs Maurice Quinlivan and Jan O’Sullivan and Cllrs Elena Secas and Jerry O’Dea presented awards to co-ordinator Catherine Aylmer (third from right) and adult education organiser and volunteer Josephine Sheedy (second from right).

TD'S MOTHER COULDN'T WRITE UNTIL SHE FOUND COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Local TD, **Maurice Quinlivan**, has seen his own family benefit directly through support from the Limerick Community Education Network (LCEN). For him, the 25th anniversary celebrations were personal.

"Because of community education, people who never got a proper education - in Moyross, Southill and other disadvantaged areas - get a second chance to educate themselves. And what makes it so special to me is that my mother has benefitted from it."

His mother Marie learned to write and did the Leaving Cert through the LCEN.

"She's ended up in a drama group - she wouldn't have had the confidence to do that before and they've performed in various venues.

"It's commendable what LCEN has done for people. As Helen Flanagan said, 'Not everyone does a course to get accreditation; it's about getting people out of their houses and building a community'.

"They give people the self-confidence and awareness and the ability to get on with their

lives.

"They provide opportunities that our generation take for granted to people who didn't get an education when they were children. I get people coming into clinics who are embarrassed they can't read or write. In future, I'd prefer we talked about the kid who didn't go to third level, than be talking about the kid who did.

"When mothers and grandmothers go back to education, it's a win-win all around. It's the key to unlocking poverty," he said.

Marie Quinlivan echoed her son's view: "Community education means a lot to me. I left school at 13 years. Even then, I was more often missing than I was at school. I left without the Leaving Cert. I could read, but I couldn't write. So, I went back, in 2008, and sat my Leaving. I've always been doing courses since then."

Jan O'Sullivan, TD, also knew the personal stories of many of those present, from those who led the movement for education to those who benefitted from it.



Marie and son Maurice Quinlivan, TD. Marie learned to write in Community Education classes.

She has been supportive from the beginning.

"Community Education has been a lifeline for many people, particularly women, especially those who didn't have a good experience of school first time round," she said. "I know many who have got so much enjoyment, self-confidence and friendship from going to classes in their local community."

STUDENT GETS CARRIED AWAY AND WRITES LOVE LETTER TO NETWORK

A student who grew almost addicted to community education penned a "love letter" to the LCEN.

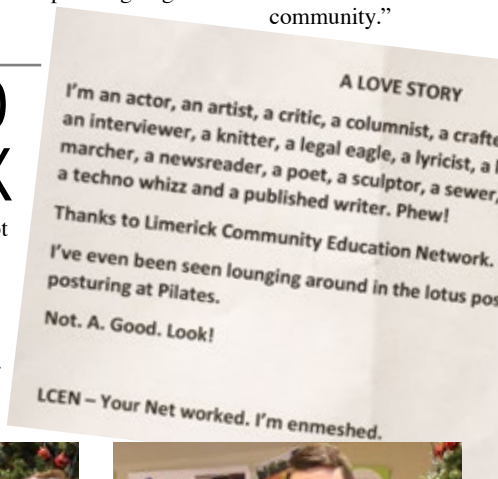
Clare wrote: "I'm an actor, an artist, a critic, a columnist, a crafter, a chorister, an historian, an interviewer... a sculptor, a sewer, a speechmaker, a typist and a published writer. Phew! It's all thanks to Limerick Community Education Network.

"I've even been seen lounging around in the lotus

position at yoga and posturing at Pilates... Not A Good Look!"

"I remember the first day I walked into my Community Resource Centre, seeking information on anything going on locally. I had been ill and out of circulation at the time.

...."I had no idea if I could be creative or not."



SUMMER'S COMING: Plan ahead!

Health Fair in Castleblayney was a knockout

Summer is but a few months away and many communities are planning ahead to hold festivals, open days, sports days and other events. One event community groups could also consider are health fairs.

In Monaghan, the local development company there has developed a good model for how to run a one-day health fair with a strong social inclusion emphasis.

Gerard Callan*, believes that their health fair “has the potential to be replicated across the country”.

Monaghan's health fair is held in a different town each year and the organisers view it as a relatively simple, low-cost event that gets across important messages to the public about healthy living.

Last summer, around 500 people attended the health fair held in Castleblayney.

As Gabriel O'Connell, Monaghan Integrated Development's CEO, pointed out, “In the modern world, health care is an expensive business, but events like the fair show people the very low-cost steps they can take to preserve their good health and prevent illness.”

“The low cost steps include getting your blood pressure checked on a regular basis, keeping an eye on your weight, taking some exercise and cutting down on cigarettes and alcohol,” he said.

Already, many community groups organise health fairs, but Monaghan's fair comes with all the bells and whistles. In 2018, it was held at Glencarn Shopping Centre, in Castleblayney.

When he visited, Monaghan County Council chairperson, David Maxwell, declared it “a knockout”, because he was particularly impressed by the Boxercise class. He suggested that all public representatives should join the classes. In fairness, nobody ever gets hurt during ‘Boxercises’ (see opposite page).

Other interactive events included: Baby Massage, ‘Chairobics’, and a lunchtime ‘Workers Walk’.

A healthy lunchbox includes fruit portions and staff of the newly opened ‘Rainbeau’ store showed that it is easy to present fruit in an appealing and tasty way. Their free fruit samples were a hit, particularly with children from Castleblayney Convent Girls National School and Gaelscoil Lorgan.

Throughout the day, chef Paul McGarrell from Monaghan town delivered demos on Portion Sizes, Fun Food for Babies, Cooking for One and Healthy Lunchboxes.

Dinkins Café also offered free samples of their health breads, which included yeast-free and sugar-free samples, spelt bread and low-GI bread for diabetics.

In fact, there were lots of freebies.

Public health nurses from the Cavan/Monaghan Primary Care Team offered free body mass index checks, while the Irish Heart Foundation offered free blood pressure checks.

As one member of the public who availed of



Staff of SOSAD, suicide prevention and bereavement support group, at the Health Fair.

the free blood pressure checks remarked, “That’s fifty euro and an hour in the waiting room saved, now I don’t need to go to my doctor!”

The public were also able to test the levels of carbon monoxide in their lungs through the ‘Fit For Work and Life’ programme.

Overall, the fair offered support and advice under four headings: Healthy Eating, Physical Activity, Mental Wellbeing, and Anti-Cancer support.

Every exhibitor had staff on hand to explain how their organisation could help and the message from all 26 exhibitors was to:

- Get out, get active, build your mental resilience, eat properly, cut down or cut out smoking, be careful of the amount you drink and, above all, look for help if you need it.

This year, Monaghan's Health Fair is taking place in Carrickmacross, in March, and the event will be part-funded by Healthy Ireland.

* Gerard Callan (pictured, right) works in Employment/ Education Support with Monaghan Integrated Development, based in Castleblayney. Thanks to Gerard for the in-depth information and photos for this story.



Pupils from Castleblayney National Schools at the Boxercise with Gabriel O'Connell, CEO Monaghan Integrated Development and David Maxwell, chairperson of Monaghan County Council.



Monaghan Integrated Development is one of 49 Local Development Companies across the country promoting social inclusion and community development across the country. They follow plans drawn up in co-ordination with Local Community Development Committee and receive funding from the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP).

PUBLIC VOTE FOR TOP TEN IDEAS

A unique aspect of Co. Monaghan's health fair in 2018 was that it was timed to coincide with a drive for a big vote on ideas that would make Castleblayney a more inclusive place to live.

The call went out before the fair day calling for ideas for "small changes that could make a big difference" in the lives of people in the town.

Ideas came flooding in to improve public amenities, improve accessibility, give more support to community groups and so on.

Throughout the week leading up to the Health Fair, the ideas were on display in the Glencarn Shopping Centre and four other centres.

During the fair, volunteers encouraged the public to select their favourites.



They were led by somebody dressed as a giant furry pig who handed each person they met on the Fair Day a list of 40 ideas and got them to pick their top ten, in order. How could you say no to a super-friendly piggy asking you to make the town better!

Votes were also accepted online.

The top idea was developing a piece of waste ground in Drumillard Housing Estate.

Monaghan Integrated Development is working with the proposer of the idea to develop the project.

The competition was called 'Thriving Together' and was supported through the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP).



Regina Byrne and Patricia Woods of Monaghan Integrated Development counting the votes for 'Thriving Together'.

INTERACTIVE ELEMENTS



Chef Paul McGarrell from Romantica Restaurant shows parents how to make a healthy lunchbox.

The Health Fair in Co. Monaghan included interactive elements. Boxercise classes were delivered by Orla McCarthy, while Aisling McDermott facilitated chairbics.

So, what are they?

Chairbics is a sit down exercise class that includes a range of low impact aerobic routines. It begins with a blend of yogic stretches and gradually progresses to more accelerated types of movements, all performed while sitting

down.

Boxercise is an exercise class that is based on the training concepts boxers use to keep fit. A typical class may involve shadow-boxing, skipping, hitting pads, kicking punchbags, press-ups, shuttle-runs and sit-ups.

Most boxercise classes are aimed at men and women of all ages and fitness standards. It is a fun, challenging and safe workout, as no class involves the physical hitting of an opponent.

CHAIROBICS



DISABILITY: **Activists re-organise**

The Centre for Independent Living is gone... but only in name

- Groups entitled to a rebrand every so often

The Centre for Independent Living was established in 1992 and is based in Carmichael House, Dublin, but you won't hear much more about it. As a brand, the name is history.

While its work will be continued by the same organisation, it has rebranded itself as the Independent Living Movement Ireland (ILMI).

A new logo and website - www.ilmi.ie - have been launched emphasising freedom, rights and empowerment.

It will be run "by and for people with disabilities with the main aim of ensuring that people with disabilities achieve independent living, choice and control over their lives and full participation in society as equal citizens".

It's not unusual for groups to change their name. Community Work Ireland used to be the Community Worker's Co-op until it changed its name in 2015.

Pobal was called Area Development Management, from 1992 to 2006.

Launching the new look for the 26-year old organisation, ILMI chairperson Shelly Gaynor said, "We are a campaigning, national representative organisation that promotes the philosophy of independent living and to build an inclusive society. Central to the way we work is to ensure that policy decisions that impact on the lives of disabled people have to be directly influenced by those whose lives are directly affected."

"Our philosophy can be summed up as: 'Nothing about us without us!' and 'Rights, Not Charity'.

Those have, in fairness, been how genuine disability activist organisations led by community development principles have behaved for decades now.

"Our vision is an Ireland where disabled persons have freedom, choice and control over all aspects of their lives and can fully participate in an inclusive society as equals," she said.

Speaking at the launch, Ms Gaynor said: "Central to disabled people achieving equality and having their human rights protected is the principle 'Nothing About Us Without Us'."

"Independent Living Movement Ireland is about building a collective, grassroots organisation across the island of Ireland," she said.

She said they wanted to become the voice for people with disabilities in the development of policies and practices based on lived experience.

"We are the experts in our own lives, we know what needs to change and in ILMI, we will build an organisation that empowers disabled people to collectively lobby and campaign for that change," said Ms Gaynor.

At the launch of the ILMI, Minister of State



At the launch of the Independent Living Movement Ireland (ILMI) and its new three year strategic plan. Both launches took place at a conference called 'Building a Movement for Change: Working together to fight for disabled people's human rights in the 21st Century'.

for Disability Issues Finian McGrath TD said, "Having ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Disabled People, it is vital to recognise the role of Disabled People's Organisations to monitor the implementation of the Convention."

"I congratulate ILMI on their new strategic plan and wish them success on building on the legacy of the Centre for Independent Living."

STRONG COLLECTIVE VOICE

As part of the launch of the new strategic plan and website, ILMI delegates at the conference discussed strategies for building a strong collective voice in campaigning for change.

Ms Gaynor said, "Our strategic plan will focus on the four pillars of Independent Living over the next three years: Personal Assistance, Housing, Transport and Employment. We've begun engaging disabled people across the country to campaign for a real Personal Assistance Service."

She said, "The Personal Assistance Service is a key tool that allows many disabled people to live independently. It needs to be defined that it is led by disabled people not service providers. It needs legislative protection. It needs to be invested in to ensure people can get the hours they need to live independently and it needs to be promoted

"Our new strategic plan is based on three core objectives: Leadership and Representation; Equality and Human rights; and Strategic

Political Campaigning."

She said the plan seeks to build a grassroots collective approach, where disabled people across the country are active participants in the movement and are empowered to be part of policy development and political campaigns. The movement will be led by disabled people.

"People are stronger together, and a collective voice can be heard," said ILMI CEO Damien Walshe. "Building a movement for change needs disabled people to become actively involved and see ILMI as a vehicle for getting involved in collective action."

The ILMI believes in a rights-based social model of disability. It will challenge the unacceptable charity / medical model of disability.

"We are working towards the removal of societal barriers that prevent active equal participation of disabled people and we are challenging the denial of people's rights and the promotion of the philosophy of independent living," said Mr Walshe.

The ILMI is keen to build relationships with people across the country and also with organisations supporting disabled people, particularly ones providing support through the SICAP programme.

For more information, see www.ilmi.ie or email info@ilmi.ie

NEW ZEALAND'S COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT APPROACH TO PREVENTING FAMILY VIOLENCE

BY CRISTY TREWARTHA*

Imagine if 40% of Ireland's police work was responding to family violence. That's the case in New Zealand.

While the country is renowned for its beautiful natural landscapes and sporting prowess, a lesser known fact is that it has a major issue with family violence.

Due to the high rates of family violence that exist, and the complexity and intergenerational nature of it, it is unlikely that responding solely after violence has already occurred is enough to change anything. We must look elsewhere for a solution.

We cannot service our way out of this problem. We must also focus on prevention and on creating new social norms. Since 2002, there has been an increased emphasis on prevention in New Zealand, which has led to greater public awareness, attitude change and more people seeking help than before. However, our response and prevention efforts have not yet reduced rates of violence.

In the search for effective approaches to preventing family violence, work within communities has gained momentum since the mid-2000s. This has included fostering relationships between those working in the family violence and community development sectors. Here, the voice of community members is more important than ever.

While early responses to family violence started within the community-based feminist movement, over time New Zealand followed global trends and moved away from collective approaches to become more individualised and service oriented.

Now, there is a growing movement back towards collective approaches and new evidence suggests that community mobilisation (CM) — a specific community development strategy — is an effective approach to addressing family violence.

CM is a transformative approach used to create social change on complex issues. It is long-term and multi-faceted, and engages large numbers of community members in local action for change.

PROMOTING HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS TO PREVENT VIOLENCE

In one community, the desire to focus on prevention and long-term change led to the development of a CM initiative called the 'HEART Movement'. The Tāmaki community (pop. 12,000) in Auckland had experienced high rates of family violence for decades and, in 2008, practitioners and community leaders committed to addressing the problem.

The community wanted an approach that was inclusive and would build the capacity of local residents. They wanted to work towards a positive goal by not only preventing family violence, but by promoting healthy relationships.

HEART is evidence-informed and uses local insight and research to guide development. The first step was to conduct a community readiness assessment to see how prepared the community was to make change. This assessment informed the development of a theory of change to guide action. HEART has two action strands: (a) community mobilisation and (b) building organisational capacity and collaborative development.

CM work is driven by people who are change agents. They are local leaders living and working in the area who commit to building awareness and challenging the status quo. They support each other to take action to change unhealthy social norms and behaviours, and build healthy relationships in their homes and communities.

They share their knowledge and skills through their social networks

and host courageous conversations. While they are supported by an organisation called 'Te Waipuna Puawai' (part of the Sisters of Mercy), the change agents are the engine room of the CM approach. They are involved in all aspects of HEART, including leadership development, art, music, theatre, events, conversation spaces, training, research and planning.

Training is the key focus of capacity development work. It is provided to local practitioners and community members for free. Each year the HEART network of 350 people is surveyed for their training needs. The high-quality training has been successful in giving people the skills and information they want and need.

HEART uses a community mobilisation questionnaire to track change over time. The first assessment was completed in 2016 and looked at key elements in community mobilisation, such as leadership, participation levels and shared concerns.

Ongoing assessments will assess change every three years or so. Community readiness assessments in 2011, 2014, and 2016 show that readiness to prevent family violence and promote healthy relationships is increasing.

The results are very much visible, with one participant saying, "They're building capacity in the local people and community. That's creating a sense of worth. Local people are actually finding or using knowledge that they didn't know they had. That gives them a sense of pride, and then they become a role model."

Check out the paper by Hann and Trewartha (2015) for more information on CM in NZ and HEART.

For more information on the HEART Movement and a copy of the Theory of Change, contact the programme lead, Nandita Mathur.

E: heart@twp.org.nz

*** Cristy Trewartha is a family violence prevention practitioner and researcher currently completing a doctorate measuring community mobilisation to prevent family violence.**

She worked on HEART for three years, before handing over to focus on finishing her PhD.

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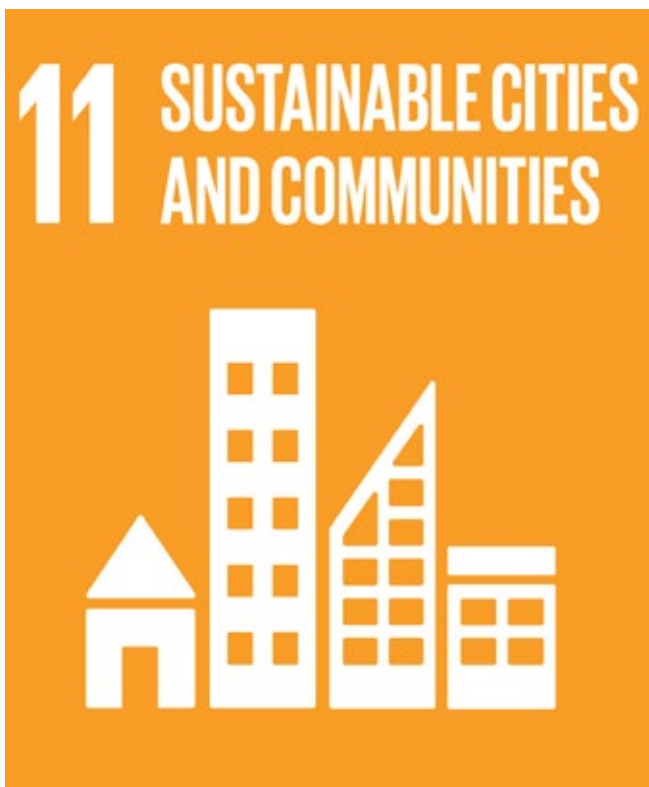
Cristy Trewartha speaking in Maynooth in 2018:



"Giving and receiving help is a much more natural way of creating change in communities. We need to give survivors of domestic violence a place to share what they've been through and learned with others."

"Family/domestic violence in New Zealand isn't an individual problem - it's a collective problem and it needs a collective solution. Tackling it needs to be long term, community-led and holistic."

UN GOALS: Sustainable communities



HOW'S THE AIR IN YOUR CITY?

- GOAL 11 PROGRESS IN 2018

The aim of Sustainable Development Goal 11 is to “make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable”. The UN’s *Secretary-General, António Guterres*, last year reported a little progress. It may help to think of your city, or the nearest city to you, as you read this.

He noted that, “Many cities around the world are facing acute challenges in managing rapid urbanisation - from ensuring adequate housing and infrastructure to support growing populations, to confronting the environmental impact of urban sprawl, to reducing vulnerability to disasters.”

Between 2000 and 2014, the proportion of the global urban population living in slums dropped from 28.4% to 22.8%. However, the actual number of people living in slums increased from 807 million to 883 million.

Based on data collected for 214 cities, about three quarters of municipal solid waste generated is collected. That still leaves a quarter uncollected.

In 2016, more than half of the urban population worldwide were exposed to air pollution levels at least 2.5 times higher than that safety standard. In 2016, an estimated 4.2 million people died from high levels of ambient air pollution.

From 1990 to 2013, almost 90% of deaths attributed to internationally reported disasters occurred in low- and middle-income countries. Reported damage to housing attributed to disasters shows a statistically significant rise from 1990 onwards.

Source: Secretary-General, Sustainable Development Goals Report 2018.



IRELAND - WORLDWIDE: Stats & dates

TRALEE: TRAINING TO ENGAGE MEN

Tralee is hosting two-days of training for community workers, volunteers and agency staff in how best to engage men to mind their health and wellbeing.

The training will be held on March 28th and April 9th.

It will be delivered by a community support group called 'Engage' and it seeks to promote best practice for engaging men on matters of health.

The closing date is March 18th. Places on the training will not be allocated unless a completed application form is completed and returned.

The same training is being provided in Cork in February (applications closed).

For more information, contact Ms. Anna Foley. E: anna.foley@hse.ie T: 022-58634



1 Mar	Zero Discrimination Day
3 Mar	World Wildlife Day
8 Mar	International Women's Day
20 Mar	International Day of Happiness
21 Mar	International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
21 Mar	World Poetry Day
21 Mar	International Day of Nowruz
21 Mar	World Down Syndrome Day
21 Mar	International Day of Forests
22 Mar	World Water Day
23 Mar	World Meteorological Day
24 Mar	World Tuberculosis Day
24 Mar	International Day for the Right to the Truth concerning Gross Human Rights
25 Mar	International Day of Remembrance of Slavery Victims & the Transatlantic Slave
25 Mar	International Day of Solidarity with Detained and Missing Staff Members

Apr 2	World Autism Awareness Day
Apr 4	Mine Awareness Day
Apr 6	International Day of Sport for Development and Peace
Apr 7	World Health Day
Apr 7	International Day of Reflection on the Genocide in Rwanda
Apr 12	International Day of Human Space Flight
Apr 21	World Creativity and Innovation Day
Apr 22	International Mother Earth Day
Apr 23	World Book and Copyright Day
Apr 23	English Language Day
Apr 25	World Malaria Day
Apr 26	World Intellectual Property Day
Apr 26	International Chernobyl Disaster Remembrance Day
Apr 28	World Day for Safety and Health at Work
Apr 29	Day of Remembrance for all Victims of Chemical Warfare
Apr 30	International Jazz Day



UN DAYS - MAR-APR 2019

Men's Sheds in Ireland, 2019



Over **422 sheds** throughout the island.

10,000 estimated per week use Men's Sheds.

Opening **2 new sheds per week**.

All-island organisation.

Also, see page 8.

National Community Weekend

GET READY TO MEET THE NEIGHBOURS!

4-6 May (Long weekend)



Photo from PxHere.com

Michael Ring, Minister for Rural and Community Development, is encouraging communities to come up with ideas to make the first ever National Community Weekend a success.

It will be held over the long weekend in May (4-6th) which includes Labour Day, a public holiday.

“I invite people throughout the country to begin thinking about how they can help make National Community Weekend events a success,” he said. “National Community Weekend belongs to everyone. We don’t want to tell communities what they should do - the events will be very much driven by communities.”

There are many good reasons to hold a Community Weekend. People are busier than before, digitally distracted and often do not know their neighbours.

It presents an opportunity to involve or say ‘hello’ to those living among us who are living alone or isolated.

“The weekend is a chance for people to foster a sense of helping each other,” said Minister Ring. He said he too does not see

as much of his own neighbours as he would like, as he is often away on government business, and he looks forward to the day.

Events could include themes around sport, history, baking, anything that will help neighbours to come together. It could be as simple as neighbours coming together for a cup of tea and a chat.

Share your ideas with us and we’ll pass your brainwaves on via social media.

THEY HOLD ONE IN THE CARIBBEAN

National Community Days or Weekends are uncommon, so perhaps Ireland will set a new trend.

Dominica (pop. 73,000) in the Caribbean, holds a National Community Day of Service during which people engage in ‘Tidy Towns’ type activities and acts of kindness. Australia has a public holiday called National Family and Community Day.

If you know of others, please let us know.