

# PROSPER Times



## New Players on Dublin Art Scene

A "pop-up" art exhibition held in A4 Art Gallery, beside the National College of Art & Design (NCAD), recently exhibited the work of budding Prosper Fingal artists much to the delight of all who attended.

During the month of February, Seatown Road Trainees collaborated with three art students from NCAD. The students (who all have a sibling with Down's syndrome) approached the Training service with a proposal to do weekly workshops that would introduce new art ideas and techniques. They were interested in how creativity and learning disabilities can intersect to encourage self expression and self confidence. They hope to inspire the Trainees to get more involved in the institutions of art, visit more exhibitions and join in more community classes. They feel that art can help those who have trouble with verbal communication to express themselves visually and creatively.

The Trainees and students produced an impressive body of work. It varied from prints to plaster casts to larger group pieces that were influenced by music. The work culminated in the 'Pop Up' exhibition which was a first for all the Trainees who displayed their work. The NCAD students sent out invites and press releases and advertised on entertainment.ie in advance which ensured a great turn out for the event.

On the night everyone was blown away by the work they saw. There was variety and creativity on every wall in the very cool A4 Gallery. The plaster cast pieces came out of the wall as if they were alive and visitors could listen on headphones as they looked at the group paintings that were created to the rhythm of songs chosen by the Trainees. There was even a darkroom where you could get a behind-the-scenes look at how the art was created. The three students had recorded some of the workshops and showed the video on a projector in the gallery.

People were so taken by the work that by the end of the night offers were made to buy some of the prints on display. It was truly a night to remember for Trainees and art lovers alike.



The walls are alive!



Class act

## Little Theatre goes Large!

Following many years of having drama in the main hall in Skerries it was decided that a change of direction was needed. The Piercetown and Skerries Drama Group felt that their talents were better fitted to a proper stage and what better place to use than the local Little Theatre.

They approached the Transition Year Coordinator in the Community College to see if they would be interested in getting involved with the drama group and were delighted when six students were chosen to help produce their annual show. In fact, 30 students volunteered for the project and so the school had to whittle the number down to just six! This is the first time that the Skerries/Piercetown Drama has joined forces with the Community College and it is an exciting project for both parties. The Service Users get the pleasure of the students' youth and ideas and the students get to see their wonderful dramatic abilities.

Following much discussion, they decided to put on Mamma Mia which is a favourite with everyone as they all know and love the music. The production is well under way with rehearsals held each week in the Little Theatre. The students have a lot of experience in art and music and are helping with the songs and set design.

The show will take place over two nights in May – one for some of the other Prosper centres and one big show for families and friends.

## You Can DIY It

A group from the Rush Centre recently had the unique opportunity of taking part in a woodwork workshop in the B&Q hardware store in Liffey Valley. This particular B&Q outlet provides classes for adults in how to do DIY in a practical and safe environment.



Let me at it!

There was great excitement amongst the Service Users as they arrived and were introduced to the B&Q instructor – Ricky – who guided them through “how to make your own bird feeder”. Everything that was needed was provided including hammers, nails, glue and wood. Everyone wore a B&Q apron with its logo which made them feel like staff and look very professional. The aprons were also necessary when the larger saws and drills were being used as the sawdust went everywhere! Another important safety aspect was to wear safety glasses to protect your eyes and ear protectors for the noise level. All the Service Users found the glasses and ear protectors funny looking and enjoyed the banter and joking with each other when they were wearing them.

The Service Users each made their own bird feeder with minimal support from staff. They used hammers and glue independently and used the bigger power tools with help from Ricky. Ricky made sure everyone was safe and showed people where to put their hands and how to hold the tools. A few people were nervous at first using the larger power tools but once they got the hang of it they soon started to enjoy it.

The workshop experience proved to be very successful and the Rush Service Users highly recommend it.

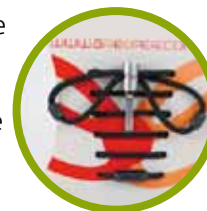
***“I enjoyed the workshop and the jokes, I would like to go back and do another workshop to build something else as it was very enjoyable and loved that I could take my bird feeder home”.*** – Anthony Conroy

## Tips for Parents

### Shoe laces:

For many Service Users tying shoe laces can be a challenge. Here are two tips to help with this:

1. **Spring Shoe laces** from China Blue Shoe shop, Merchants Quay Dublin 2 these cost €3 and can be used on Doc Marten boots. However they may not provide the same security as the ones listed below.
2. **Greepers** which, though expensive at approximately €22, are excellent because they provide support and security for the foot in a shoe without the need for the person to actually tie a lace because they are always tied!



Practical solutions to a very common problem! They are available from Murrays Medical, Talbot Street Dublin

For further information contact Aislinn Finn (Occupational Therapist) in Seatown Road Tel.01 8493600







Ireland's new front row!



We found it Cillian



Temple Bar - Not just for tourists



Smile for the birdies



How to dress for work



Can I fix it - Yes I can!



WOW smart casual Heather



# City Centre Exploring

By Áine O'Connor



Áine - a girl about town

This year I joined the City Centre Exploring class which is a new initiative set up with staff member Cillian Sparks. Once a week, a group from Seatown Road meets Cillian somewhere in Dublin city centre to learn about places around the Capital and how to travel there independently.

Every Thursday we meet Cillian at a different place and at different times and we all travel independently from our houses. Some of the places we have been to are Dundrum Shopping Centre, St. Stephens Green, Temple Bar, the O2, Trinity College and Jervis Street Shopping Centre. These are also good places to meet up with friends for a friendship outing.

We do this class so we can be independent and can meet friends in town. We also learn where to go and where exactly places are. Cillian also sends us off in pairs to the different venues so we know how to get there on our own.

Over the Christmas break, I travelled to the Dundrum Centre on my own on the bus and the Luas. I went shopping in HMV had a look around a few different shops. Then recently, I planned a friendship outing in Dublin with my friend Gillian. We met up at the Spire on a Saturday and went to the St. Stephens Green Centre where we went to the Disney and Art & Hobby shops. We travelled independently into town and home again and had a really good time.

I really like travelling independently around the city.

# Hi-Tech Buses

Dublin Bus has new hi-tech buses with plenty of extras to make travelling on public transport easier and more comfortable for commuters. The new buses will be starting on only eight routes and luckily the 33 is one.

From the outside the buses themselves do not appear to have changed much. It is on the inside that the real difference can be seen. They are more spacious and all have a platform that lowers to allow people in wheelchairs get on and off. The new monitor beside the staircase shows a live feed from the CCTV cameras which help passengers see if there is any available seating upstairs. Passengers can also see what bus stop they are coming up to with the easy to read information signs.

The middle doors have made a re-appearance, making it easier for passengers to get on and off. The doors now slide open sideways, making the entrances larger and easier to navigate. The number of CCTV cameras has also increased to help passengers feel safe and the drivers to keep an eye on everyone. For those of us that love the internet and can never put our smart phones down there is now free wifi.

These new environmentally friendly buses have plenty of new feature but some things never change. Our Service Users still meet the regular bus drivers, although they now have more comfy driving seats!



Easy on - easy off



Foot for Fone!!

# Fit for Fun

Fit for Fun is a class that makes exercise accessible to all and uses the mantra that any movement is good movement. It includes quirky warm-ups and stretches and then moves onto fun team games.

A group of Rush Service Users had been doing the same Fit for Fun class for the last couple of years and felt it could do with some variation. They decided to jazz up the content with the help of Audrey Nolan, a student from I.T. Blanchardstown. Audrey has taught dance for the last ten years so was the perfect person to help.

The class was divided into two halves. The first was exercise using stretch and balance and the second involved the dance routine. This way the group could work up a sweat and get fitter before introducing the element of dance. They started to do a contemporary dance routine as this style of dance helps self expression and is therapeutic. They began with simple steps and as they became more confident harder elements were added. Service Users were given the chance to come up with their own moves and help choreograph the final routine.

Everyone involved loved the new Fit for Fun class. They also helped Audrey create a special poster and module that explains the exercise programme in easy steps with plenty of visual aids and photos. This will help staff and other groups adapt their fitness and dance classes too.



## Howth Continues in a New Direction

The Howth service is a member of The National Federation of Voluntary Bodies *Next Steps Project*. This a shared learning initiative to assist federation members to embrace the change outlined in the new vision for services and individualised supports for people with intellectual disability in Ireland. As part of this project Howth staff were invited to present at the *Next Steps Dissemination Event* which took place on 31st January in Portlaoise. This conference was attended by over 200 delegates from more than 60 agencies including; Dept of Health, Dept of Social Protection, the HSE, Local Authorities, Parent Groups, The Housing Agency and other voluntary organisations. Also present was Minister Kathleen Lynch with responsibility for Disability, Older People, Equality and Mental Health.

The conference allowed the staff to share their experience on the new Prosper Howth service to date. It also provided the opportunity to share the story and opinions of one of the individuals supported by the service and her mother (Claire and Bríd Finn) who were video interviewed as part of the presentation. Howth staff used the opportunity to network with other voluntary organisations around the country and learn about various other pilot projects and initiatives also embracing change in service provision.

Some presentations were made by Service Users themselves and the staff were moved by the powerful message they delivered. One young lady who has moved from a group home in the community to independent living said "If I can do it you can do it too". While another suggested that the most important thing staff and families can do to support people to live independently is to "Stop stopping us!"



Reaching out across the divide

## Everybody needs Good Neighbours

Somebody once said that "good fences make good neighbours" but some of the Service Users at Seatown Road have had a different experience. A recent project has seen them link in with the neighbouring Fingal Community College with very positive results.

One of the choice classes offered in the Training Centre is "Community Education". The aim of this class is for Service Users to help mainstream students reach a better understanding of people with intellectual disabilities. It was agreed that some Service Users would meet with a class from first year as it is always a good idea to introduce new ways of thinking at the earliest possible stage.

Before meeting with the students the group spent a number of weeks deciding on what they wanted to say about being a person with a disability. They agreed that some things are hard for people with disabilities like reading, managing money and learning new things. As one person said, "some people learn faster than others". They wanted to tell the first year students that having a disability did not mean they found everything hard and wanted to highlight that everybody, with or without a disability, finds some things hard and some things easy.

The group met with the class over three weeks and spoke about these points. They also spoke about how people with disabilities hang out with friends, have relationships and get jobs just like anyone else and that many would like to move out of home at some stage. These were things they hoped to have in their own lives. The Service Users enjoyed testing themselves in a new environment. Each of them was nervous presenting to an audience but felt their confidence had grown after doing so for a few weeks.

One of the highlights was when the four Service Users taught the class ten Lámh signs. Darra Dockrell, Gary O'Brien, Tiernan O'Briain and Shane Caffrey each took a group of six students and taught them signs like "hello", "thank you" and "music".

The feedback from the school was very encouraging. In fact, they were so taken with the positive effect of the project that they asked us to repeat the experience with other classes. And so the project has grown and now another group of Service Users are in contact with second year students.

By showing people in our community how able people with disabilities are, we can open new doors of opportunity. The work done by Darra, Gary, Tiernan and Shane might just mean that the first year students they met might be the ones opening these doors in the future.

## FYI

We have just heard about one of our Service Users who had his bus pass confiscated in recent days because the address on the new pass did not match the address on the original ID card. If any Service User changes address they are required to go into CIE to update their information and a new pass will be issued.

## Congratulations

We send our congratulations to Niamh Carroll (Rush Service) and her husband Trevor on the birth of their daughter, Lucy Mae, to Susan Donoghue (North St. service) and husband Declan who welcomed a son, Aaron and to Pauline Andrews (Skerries service) and partner Paddy on the safe arrival of baby Charlotte.

We also congratulate Lucy O'Boyle (Portmarnock service) who was recently married to Darren Brady.

## Thank You

Well done to Donal Delaney, father of Orla from the Portmarnock service, who gave a very indepth and impartial presentation at the most recent meeting of the Prosper Fingal Parent/Family Forum on the issue of Individualised Budgets.

## Acknowledgment

Kitty Reilly, mother of John who attends the Piercetown service, died recently following a short illness. Kitty's husband, Hugh Reilly, was one of the first Directors of Fingal Workshop Ltd. when it was established back in 1978. Both Kitty and her husband worked tirelessly for Fingal Workshop Ltd., later renamed Prosper Fingal and for the Fingal Association for the Handicapped throughout their lives.

It is because of the contribution of Kitty and her fellow founding pioneers that we have the Prosper Fingal organisation we have today.

**Contact Clare Murray**  
086-3867592 or email  
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## WOW - What a Week

In the past, every Monday in Seatown Rd was WOW Day when people would dress smartly and feel good about themselves. However, it was decided to have a whole week of WOW days at the end of February. Many people we support always dress smartly but the idea was taken a step further during WOW Week when they were given the chance to dress according to different 'themes' each day. This meant that people had to think about different types of clothes and plan their outfit for the next day.



Looking good Philip

We all dress in different clothes depending on what we are doing. It wouldn't be right to wear a tracksuit on work placement nor would we feel comfortable wearing a suit and tie going to the cinema. WOW Week was optional but loads of Trainees took part and really enjoyed the experience.

A video presentation was shown to introduce WOW Week and everyone was given a handout to take home with some tips for the different days. Monday and Thursday were to be smart casual, Tuesday was the day to wear something suitable for work experience, Wednesday was favourite t-shirt day and Friday was leisure wear.

Photographs were taken and posters made to show off people who made a real effort and these were displayed around the building. Everyone looked so good the posters stayed up long after WOW Week was finished!



Selling like hot candles

## Money for Old Rope

Before Christmas the Balbriggan service decided to run a fundraising event to help out people in need. All the families were asked to search their attics for old decorations which were then recycled into attractive Christmas logs by Service Users and staff. On what was the coldest day of the year, the Balbriggan team set up their stall at the market in St. Georges Square

to peddle their wares. Business was brisk and in no time at all the logs were all sold. They raised almost €300 which was donated to the local Conference of St. Vincent de Paul and Geraldine Flynn a Balbriggan lady who is working with street children in India.

Well done everyone

## Blind Date

It's Thursday morning in the Portmarnock centre and the drama group are taking part in a fun role play of 'Blind Date'. The idea is that Service Users pretend to be staff members – voices, actions and all!

Three lady contestants vie for the opportunity of the big prize - a dance with Willie Scully (aka Andrew Flood). Host Cilla Black, played by Eoin



Who will it be.1, 2 or 3?

Hall, leads the way with questions for the girls and the fun starts. After much deliberation and mind changing the winner chosen is Breda McCallion (aka Claire Hunt).