



# DREAM A LITTLE

**Westmeath Community Development Ltd in association with Westmeath County Council are collaborating the development of an intergenerational arts project for 3 active age groups in Westmeath. The aim of the project is to explore, evaluate and document the potential for using arts activities with active age groups in conjunction with children or younger people as a resource for addressing the social exclusion of older people, in a way that is mutually beneficial for both groups.**

The three projects will use the arts as a way of tapping into the wisdom, experience, skills and knowledge of older people making it available to the wider community, particularly children. It will promote positive attitudes towards ageing and encourage children to recognise learning through art as a life long process. The first project entitled *Dream a little with me* is coordinated by artist Maria Kenna. This is a collaborative piece, which will involve music students from a local secondary school, the residents of St. Mary's Hospital and Mullingar Day Care Centre. It commenced in January.

The project will be centered on the participants, their experiences, home life, routine and environment. By using music and song this will aid interaction and create a group dynamic. It will also give the residents of St. Mary's and the Day Care Centre the ability to discuss and recollect memories from their past.

The Second is a Collaborative Arts Project with Ballynacarigy Young at Heart Group and Ballynacarigy National

School developed by Artist Liz Johnson. Participants will work through a variety of mediums in the visual arts to produce and complete individual and group pieces of work. The finished work will be framed and exhibited in a venue in Ballynacarigy.

The third project is co-facilitated by artist Teresa Doyle and Film Maker Fiona McGinty O'Neill. The nature and theme of the project involves a journey with the young and the older people over a period of 3 - 4 months. Using visual arts practices and drama techniques, they will explore the possibilities and tease out, with gentle encouragement, what talents, stories, skills; resources are inherent in the group.

The adult group will consist of 12 members who are all residents of Collinstown / Fore Parish. The young group of 12 will be 4th / 5th /6th class pupils from St. Mary's primary school, Collinstown.

For enquiries or further details please contact Catherine Kelly on 044-40781.



Delvin Education Group received a Community Action Scheme Grant from Westmeath County Council in 2005.

## Mary O Hara



**Many community groups and organisations will feel a sense of loss for some time at the untimely death of Mary O' Hara.**

Mary was born in Dublin and came to live in Streete where she married the late Hughie O Hara and together they had six children. A long time community activist both locally and nationally, she achieved high office in the ICA and the National Womens Council before returning to full time employment in Westmeath Community Development in 1998. Her brief there was very wide, concentrating in the early stages on Womens Issues, still her favourite cause to the end, moving later into the whole area of Childcare and assisting communities to develop affordable facilities. Mary was the main facilitator in the establishment of Westmeath County Childcare Committee and was still its Chairperson at the time of her death.

She worked with many community groups and organisations in trying to get them off the ground. She has been particularly successful in bringing a number of Disability organisations together and providing a cohesive voice on this issue locally. She maintained that her decision to return to full time employment after several years out of the traditional workforce is typical of the decisions many people, particularly women, are making. Westmeath is the poorer for her loss. Her positive attitude, wit, and wisdom, saw many an issue sorted out before it even became one. She will be missed by her family, her work colleagues, and her colleagues in the many other organisations to which she freely gave her time, not to mention the large number of friends she made throughout her life.

May she rest in peace and happiness.

## Senior Help Line

**The Senior Help Line was established in 1998 to provide a listening service for older people who are lonely and isolated. The lines are operated on a voluntary basis by older people. The volunteers are from various backgrounds, some involved with organisations working for older people, some in active retirement and others who participate with a deep interest in older people, all wishing to make a contribution to the quality of life of older people.**

The original Senior Helpline began operations at the Third Age Centre in Summerhill, Co. Meath. With support from Health Boards the service has progressed from one centre to a National Service, with approximately 300 older people providing a service from centres around the country. One such centre operates from St. Mary's Day Care Centre, Mullingar. Thirty volunteers answer the line on two evenings each week from 7pm until 10 pm at the Mullingar Centre. The volunteers come from a geographical spread reaching from Mullingar to Multyfarnham, Kinnegad, Rochfortbridge, Ballinacarigy areas.

The Senior Help Line has nine principles to inform both volunteers and the public of the philosophy underlying the service. There are also three practice criteria to guide the operation of the service delivered to older people who contact the Service Help Line.

### **Principles:**

The primary aim of the Senior Help Line is to provide telephone support for socially excluded older people who call the line during the hours of operation.

The senior Help Line seeks to provide a listening service operated by senior volunteers.

The Senior Help Line is a confidential service and all the volunteers have signed a pledge to this effect.

A caller does not lose the freedom to make their own decisions concerning any aspect of their lives and are free to break contact at any time.

Where appropriate, callers will be invited to consider seeking help from other agencies.

Volunteers are forbidden to impose their religious, political, philosophical or any other personal views on callers.

The Senior Help Line does not discriminate on grounds of gender, race, religion, or social group.

The Senior Help Line operates to complement the services of existing voluntary and statutory agencies.

The Senior Help Line service will not contact other agencies on behalf of callers. We believe that the initiative and control must remain with the caller.

### **Practices**

The Senior Help Line is operated by volunteers who are trained by experienced professionals to provide a caring service to callers.

Volunteers are normally only known by their forename/first name.

The Senior Help Line offers a befriending service to callers within the operating hours of the service.

The Senior Help Line is open from 10 am to 1 pm and 7 pm to 10 pm each day and volunteers answer the line on a rota basis. The reason for calls vary from family problems, financial worries, health worries, loneliness, Information seeking and fear/abuse.

All calls to the Senior Help Line are at a low call rate. The number to call is:

**1850 440 444**

## YOU TOO CAN SUCCEED!



**Patricia Kearney, Disability Officer, Athlone IT, Mark Aherne, Author and Hugh McGuire, PWDI**

**Mark Aherne, committee member of PWDI, People with Disabilities in Ireland, recently launched his booklet called "You too can Succeed!"**

The booklet was produced on Marks behalf by PWDI in the hope that Marks experiences might benefit other young people with disabilities in understanding what can be achieved. The booklet provides the reader with an insight into a personal journey of great commitment and determination by this young man who has a disability and has progressed through primary, secondary and THIRD level education to full time employment. Mark is employed by Westmeath County Council.

He has a degree in Commerce and a Masters in European Economics and Public Affairs.

His achievements are a great source of inspiration to everyone.

The booklet can be accessed through the Westmeath County Library or PWDI Office , 96 Sean Costello Street, Athlone.



## DRUMRANEY STROKE CLUB

**Drumraneey Stroke Club formed in 1992 as a social outlet for people who have suffered from Stroke. Club meetings are held monthly and outings organised throughout the Summer. The club benefited in 2005, from a grant awarded under the Westmeath County Council "Community Action Scheme"**

## YOUTH FORUM

During 2006 Westmeath County Development Board will be establishing a youth forum, consisting of young people from Westmeath. This forum will be available to various organisations for consultation on youth issues and will develop an annual Westmeath Youth Plan. Details of the process will be circulated through the schools, youth clubs and various other youth structures. Local media will also carry information.



**IRISH FINNISH**  
*Transnational Project*

The Irish Finnish Transnational Project is between Westmeath in Ireland and the Oulu region in Finland.

The project links eight villages from Westmeath with eight villages in Oulu.

These villages are:

- Crowenstown » Etelankyla
- Emper » Pahkala
- Rochfortbridge » Eskola
- Rosemount » Plassi
- Ardnagrath » Kuusaa
- Baylin » Humaloja
- Collinstown » Saviselka
- Tang » Sydanmaankyla




**How the Transnational Project Originated**

The Irish Finnish Transnational Project originated in November 2002. This came about as part of the Leader + Programme where 10% of the budget is assigned to projects of a transnational nature. This involves co-operation with groups within Ireland, within member states and outside the EU.

Westmeath Community Development Ltd. attended a Transnational Conference in Cork to meet Leader Companies from all over Europe who were interested in co-operating with Leader Companies in Ireland. After this conference the best contact was with two Leader Companies in Finland, Rieska and Keskipiste. These areas had a lot in common with Westmeath. From here contact was made with villages in Westmeath through the National and Secondary Schools and soon there were 8 volunteer villages that were interested in participating in a project with Finland.

Following a visit in November 2003 by Westmeath Community Development, the first visit of the Finnish Transnational Group took place in April 2004 consisting of a group of 68 representing the 8 partner villages of the Oulu region in Finland. Then a group of 50 from the 8 Westmeath villages travelled to the Oulu region in September 2004.

As a result of a lot of hard work on the behalf of both the Finnish Village group and the Westmeath Village group, two projects are well underway, a website being one of them [www.eirfinn.com](http://www.eirfinn.com) and the other is a DVD compiled by the Westmeath Village Group on everyday life in each of the 8 villages in Westmeath. Westmeath Community Development Ltd. was able to fund these two projects under the Leader+ Programme as a transnational Co-operation.

It is hoped this project will develop further over the coming years.

Westmeath County Development Board

## YOUNG CITIZEN AWARD

*to recognise active citizenship.*



This award scheme, endorsed and presented by President McAleese, was launched as part of 2005 European Year of Citizenship through Education. The scheme is aimed at young people who are involved in their local communities through active citizenship projects, such as environmental work, caring for people with special needs or affirming diversity.

In her inauguration speech in November 2004, the President emphasised her commitment to building community and citizenship in Ireland:

*'It will be my mission to nurture and celebrate commitment to community and to responsible citizenship and to encourage self-belief among the most marginalized. I intend to reach out to our wonderful young people, willing them on to become good leaders rather than the badly led – problem solvers rather than problems.'*

Westmeath County Development Board endorsed six successful applications and they received certificates signed by President McAleese. The local awards ceremony was held on 28th February 2006. It is hoped that one lucky Westmeath recipient will get to attend a National Awards Ceremony at Áras an Uachtaráin in March 2006.

The following received the President's Certificate:

- Stephen Nealon, Mullingar.
- Monsignor McCarthy Youth Committee, Athlone.
- St. Patrick's 2 CBS, Mullingar.
- Green School's Committee, CBS Mullingar.
- St. Mary's Student Council.
- Coosan Foirrige Club.
- St. Loman's Foirrige Club.

*This Newsletter is an annual publication by the Westmeath Community & Voluntary Forum.*

*The publication of this Newsletter is in conjunction with the support of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.*

**Contact Details: [dce@westmeathcoco.ie](mailto:dce@westmeathcoco.ie) or phone 044 32000**

# North Westmeath Strategy

**An initiative undertaken by the Planning Section of Westmeath County Council is set to provide the spark required to enable social, economic and cultural development in the northeast area of Westmeath over the coming years. The initiative concerns a development strategy for a specified area of North Westmeath. Consultants 'Brady Shipman Martin' are carrying out the development of this strategy.**

With consultation already underway community activists and concerned individuals resident in the specified area including Coole Area Community and Voluntary Forum have been afforded the opportunity to engage in the process.

Such a strategy could not be more timely. A report, 'Perspectives 2025' estimates a projected decline in the number of full-time farmers from the current figure of

40,000 to just 10,000 by the year 2025. This report, which was drawn up by NUI Maynooth, University College Dublin and Teagasc, warns of the prospect of unacceptable regional imbalance in our economy twenty years from now. With the need for action never more apparent, a coherent plan is the solid foundation on which progress can be achieved.

For many people this initiative is long overdue and it is important that the community at large engage in the project and put forward proposals for inclusion in the strategy.

Calls for submissions have been published in local papers. The quality of the strategy will depend on the submissions received and the ability of the relevant agencies to deliver specific actions. At a consultation meeting held in Collinstown on the 19<sup>th</sup> of October 2005 concern was expressed by members of the community that the

experience of the past should not be revisited whereby local expectations were raised, only to be dashed due to a lack of resources.

It is essential that clear and deliverable actions are identified and included. North Westmeath is an area that can benefit from identifying and pursuing a model of good development practice. However, the good will and engagement of the key stakeholders must be forthcoming. With this in mind it is important that the community, delivery agencies, local business, elected representatives and all others committed to the regeneration of North Westmeath avail of this opportunity. While this strategy is confined to a specific area of North Westmeath, it, together with the Gateway Study currently being undertaken will inform development policy for the future.

**Now in its fourth year in operation, the RAPID Programme in Athlone is bringing some real benefits to the communities involved. Results include helping to secure funds for individual projects and bringing agencies and communities together to address complex issues and problems.**

Among some of the actions carried out and funding secured in 2005 were:

Midland Regional Youth Services was approved funding of €46,000 under the Dormant Accounts Fund for a Youth Worker to work within two of the RAPID areas;

Almost €260,000 was approved to St. Kieran's Community Centre under the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme, aided by endorsement from RAPID.

Following a decision by Athlone Town Council to begin a process of re-housing



**Residents of St. Mel's and Staff of Harmony on a visit to St. Michael's Regeneration Programme, Dublin.**

## RAPID 2005

residents from St. Mel's Terrace to other parts of the town, the RAPID Area Implementation Team set up a support group to St. Mel's comprising local agencies, development organizations and a representative from the community. The main purpose of this group is to develop a programme of support for St. Mel's, to help them before, during and after the planned move.

A four-week "Coaching on the Greens" programme was run in five of the RAPID areas by Westmeath GAA and co-ordinated by the GAA Development Officer in Athlone IT. This was the type of outreach initiative that the RAPID Area Implementation Team had been seeking for some time and with over two hundred children involved, it was a great success.

€165,000 was approved to Athlone Community Taskforce under the "Equality for Women Measure" of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. A full-time Women's Development Worker and four part-time Equality Workers were employed in 2005. The part-time workers were all recruited from the RAPID areas and commenced work with the full-time worker in September.

Following a planning day in late 2004, work around a number of strategic



**'Coaching on the Greens' with Westmeath GAA**

themes began to develop within the RAPID Area Implementation Team. One such theme was "Social Issues" with a concentration on the two areas of addiction and domestic violence. A half-day seminar was organised in June, the purpose of which was to build understanding of addictions and domestic violence, and to look at how the agencies are currently providing services to deal with these issues. Approximately forty people attended and the event was very highly commended by all who were there. A Community Art Project was also launched at an exhibition in March, which was led by one of the community representatives on the Area Implementation Team. Follow-on plans were made later in the year to organize further training and planning sessions on these subjects in 2006.

# ID

*A collaborative creative writing project by the young people from Castlepollard, Mountmellick, Edenderry and Granard  
Coordinated by Heather Brett*

The Arts Sections and County Development Boards of Laois, Offaly, Longford and Westmeath created this six-month collaborative creative writing project for young people in Castlepollard, Mountmellick, Edenderry and Granard aged 15 to 20. The project focused on creative writing, artwork and photography and culminated in a full-colour publication, which was launched in Belvedere House and Gardens in January by Eugene O'Brien, writer of the very successful RTE series *Pure Mule*.

The writer Heather Brett spent a six-week block in each county working with an identified group of students. The young people were asked to look at what it is like from their perspective being a teenager in a small town in Ireland. They then collected their stories, used their creative talents to illustrate ideas and put it together in a book written for young people by young people from the midlands. The Arts Officers of Laois, Offaly, Westmeath and Longford felt for some time that it was important to recognise their unique regional location in the midlands and provide an inter-county forum, which would enable them to share programmes, projects and knowledge.



The project involved the VEC, Management of the Youthreach Projects in Granard, Edenderry and Mountmellick and the students of Castlepollard Community College in association with Castlepollard library.

Heather Brett was born in Canada, brought up in Northern Ireland and has lived in Ireland since 1983. Her first book "Abigail Brown" won the 1992 Brendan Behan memorial prize and in the same year she was awarded an arts council bursary. Since then she has undertaken various residencies throughout the county and her list of publications has grown significantly. She now lives in Cavan.

**A free copy of the publication is available from the Westmeath Arts Office on 044-40781.**

## WESTMEATH ARCHITECT IN SCHOOLS PROGRAMME 2006

*In conjunction with  
Westmeath Arts,  
Architecture  
& Heritage Offices*

**Westmeath County Council in association with the Arts Council, are pleased to announce the launch of their Architect in schools programme in Westmeath.**

The purpose of the residency is to explore the art form of Architecture with an emphasis on awareness and perception of the built environment in North and South Westmeath.

The project aims to develop knowledge, appreciation and awareness of architecture as an art form among schoolchildren in the County, while engaging creatively in the process, drawing on the architectural heritage of Westmeath. It also aims to encourage students to develop a better visual awareness of their cities, towns and countryside and to challenge them to question, understand and re-imagine the built environment in their communities that is generally taken for granted.

Architect John Smith will work with 3 schools in Lismacaffrey, Collinstown and Castletown Finea while Athlone based architect Finola Deavey will work with Baylin, Kilcleagh and the Convent Primary School in Moate. The project will culminate in an exhibition of work by the six schools at the end of the school year.

## Comhairle na nÓg

**The annual Comhairle na nÓg event was held on 26<sup>th</sup> November 2005 with once again a large number of young people in attendance. Five young people were nominated to attend Dáil na nÓg to be held in Dublin on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2005.**

The five delegates are :

Stephen Kerwan  
Barry McEntee  
Donna Costello  
Lily Ring  
Nicholas Barr.



These young people will be given support and training so that they can communicate the main issues concerning Westmeath youth and children to the government officials at Dáil na nÓg.

# Dancer in Residence

**Niamh Condrón has been working in Westmeath as Dancer in Residence since September 2005.**

The residency is in two parts: The first part took place in Moate Community College in association with Tuar Ard. The aim of the residency was to promote interest and participation in dance among transition year students from September 2005. An end choreographic presentation and performance of work displayed the range of experiences of participants during the residency. This successful and inspiring performance was held in Tuar Ard Arts Centre Moate on Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> & Wed 14<sup>th</sup> of December.

The second part of the residency involves a partnership between the arts offices and sports offices of Westmeath and Roscommon who have devised a programme for the development of contemporary dance in the greater Athlone region. The project is an interactive collaboration with Westmeath County Council, Roscommon County Council and Roscommon and Westmeath Sports Partnerships. The project will take place over a forty-week period leading toward a public performance and dance festival in May 2006. The performance is part of the nucleus of the development of what will become an annual dance festival alternating every second year between Athlone and Roscommon that will include a site-specific work, and theatre performances in and around Roscommon Arts Centre and the Dean Crowe Theatre.

## Biography

Niamh Condrón has been working as a professional dance artist, in Ireland and abroad, since 1999 when she graduated from the Northern School of Contemporary Dance, in Leeds, with a BA in Performing Arts with Distinction. In 2001 she established her own dance group; This Torsion Dance Company, after working as a dancer with The Curve



Foundation in Scotland and Dance Theatre of Ireland in Dublin as well as winning a scholarship to train at the prestigious Impulstanz Summer Dance Festival in Vienna. Since then she has created numerous dance works for platforms and festivals including Earthquake International Dance Festival; Northern Ireland, Dance Theatre of Ireland, Dublin Fringe Festival in 2003 and 2004, the International Dance Festival in Dublin and Welsh Independent Dance. Niamh has also continued performing and teaching dance during this time with Earthfall Physical Theatre Company, Wales and the Sioned Hews Dance Company, Belgium.

## Dance Project

During the project Niamh will be guiding the students, through class work, to develop their confidence, to become physically active and to develop as creative people. This is a wonderful opportunity to strengthen the art form of dance here in Ireland and to teach the pupils a new means of physical expression and exploration. For further information contact Niamh Condrón on 0876370567 or the arts office on 044-40781.

## New Three Year Action Plan for Westmeath County Development Board



**During 2005 a comprehensive review of the Westmeath County Development Board Strategy, "Bringing Quality to Life", was carried out.**

The Strategy for the Economic, Social and Cultural Development of the county, was published in March 2002. The Strategy aims to meet the challenges facing the county and the people of Westmeath in a time of rapid change. Westmeath County Development Board has proved to be an invaluable forum for networking and sharing of information and will continue to do so. The co-ordination and co-operation of agencies and organisations is vital to the future development of the county and to ensure social inclusion. Westmeath County Development Board strives towards the achievement of a more integrated and improved service for people living and working in Westmeath.

The purpose of the review carried out during 2005, was to assess progress to date and to develop an implementable Action Plan for the years 2006 to 2008. The strategy continues in force, enhanced by the implementation of the action plan over the next three years.

The action plan was adopted by the County Development Board at their meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> December. The actions fall under the general headings –

- Ensure social inclusion
- To develop a multi-agency approach to Enterprise
- Build Communities
- Implementation of the Integrated Target Group Plan for Older People
- Deliver Life Long Learning
- Enhancing our culture
- Planning for Education

## VOLUNTEERISM

Westmeath County Development Board in conjunction with the Community and Voluntary County Forum submitted an application for funding under the cohesion programme for a project on Volunteerism. The application was successful in being awarded the maximum grant of €50,000. Westmeath Community Development Ltd. will administer the project funding and appoint a project worker to advance the project. The objective of the project is to facilitate and support volunteerism in Westmeath and to develop a volunteer pool. Groups will be contacted over the coming months to determine their needs in relation to volunteers.

**This funding is awarded by the Department of Community, Rural, and Gaeltacht Affairs.**

## Recycling...Recycling...Recycling

The blue recycling bin is now part of most households in County Westmeath. The bin will accept Cardboard, Newspapers, Magazines, Plastic Milk and Soft Drinks Bottles, Aluminium Drinks Cans, Steel Food Cans, Tetra Pak Milk and Juice Cartons. Customers should rinse and squash containers. Contaminated blue bins will not be collected.

The blue bin is collected every second week on the same collection day as your ordinary waste bin. If you wish to join the Council Bin Service phone 044-32000 for application details.

In continuing its recycling policy Westmeath County Council in 2005 expanded the number of clothes banks to 20. The council has also recently introduced household hazardous waste bring



days. The types of waste accepted are: paints, inks, glues, adhesives, weedkillers, pesticides, medicines and aerosols. It is proposed to have two collection days during 2006. The council also wishes to increase the number of bottle banks throughout the county. If you are interested in locating a bank on your premises or lands contact the Environment Section, Westmeath County Council 044-32000 for application details and criteria.

## GREEN SCHOOLS

Co. Westmeath has 48 schools registered with An Taisce under the Green Schools Programme. The number of schools in the County with the prestigious Green Flag grew to 11 during 2005.

The following schools are applying during 2006 for renewal of their flags: Milltown National School, Rathconrath, Ard na Grath National School, Walderstown, Athlone, St. Mary's National School, Collinstown, Lorreto College, Mullingar, St. Colman's National School, Mullingar, St. Mary's National School, Athlone and Scoil na gCeithre, Athlone. All these schools have already been awarded the flag for their achievements in managing waste and litter. They are now working towards an accomplishment in energy. In addition to the above schools renewing their flags, the Convent Primary School, Rochfortbridge has applied for Green Flag status. Congratulations to all those involved. Following a Green Schools Seminar for Teachers hosted by Westmeath County Council in February it is expected that a number of extra schools will register and others will apply for the Green Flag. Good Luck to the schools applying for the next round of Green Flags.

## GARDA YOUTH DIVERSION PROJECTS

Westmeath has two Garda Youth Diversion Projects – The **ALF** Project in Athlone and Mullingar **EYE**. Garda Youth Diversion Projects are funded by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and are administered through the Garda Community Relations Section. Both projects are managed by the Midlands Regional Youth Services.

Midlands Regional Youth Service works in partnership with young people and their community to develop, co-ordinate and promote a comprehensive response to youth needs throughout Counties Westmeath and Offaly.

Garda Youth Diversion Projects are community based multi-agency crime prevention programmes, which seek to divert young people from becoming involved (or further involved) in anti-social and/or criminal behaviour by providing suitable activities to facilitate personal development and promote personal responsibility. Young people aged 12-17, are referred to the projects by the Garda Juvenile Liaison Officer, Community Gardaí, Schools, HSE Personnel, Parents and other Youth workers in the area. The voluntary participation of young people is one of the key principles underlining the work of the Garda Youth Diversion Projects. Other key

principles are that the activities and programmes of the projects are needs based and youth led. The participants on the project identify their own needs and decide on the activities and programmes that will best meet these needs.

The ALF project is based in Gleeson St. Garden Vale, Athlone and has been in operation since September 2000. Thirty-five young people regularly attend the project and some of the activities and programmes include personal development, creative arts, social education, health education and sports. Some of the highlights of the ALF project since its inception are:

- Five young people were involved in the making of a short film called A Fistful of Euros, which was supported, by the Westmeath Co. Council and the Irish Film Institute. This film was awarded two prizes in the Cork Film Festival in 2005.
- Participation in the Leinster Football League Youths Division.
- Participation in You're a Champ and the Galway World Cup Fun Weekend.
- Facilitation of the Go for life Programme, which is a partnership between the members of the ALF project and Athlone Active Age Group.

The Mullingar EYE Project is based at Dublin Bridge, Mullingar and has been in operation since 2002. Forty young people attend the programme regularly. Some of the activities and programmes of the Mullingar EYE project include Personal Development, Sports, Creative Arts, Social Education and Outdoor Pursuits.

Highlights of the Mullingar EYE Project are The Lifebuoy Programme, which is co-funded by the Equal Project and targets young people outside the formal education system and the Suspension Intervention Programme offering support to young people experiencing difficulty in the school setting.

For further information on these projects or on the work of the Midlands Regional Youth Service, contact them at Gleeson Street, Garden Vale, Athlone on 09064-77075 or email at [midyouth@eircom.net](mailto:midyouth@eircom.net).

# WESTMEATH COUNTY CHILDCARE COMMITTEE LTD.

**The key aims of Westmeath County Childcare Committee are to assist in the co-ordination of childcare, both nationally and locally and to assist in prioritising funding. Also to increase the supply of childcare services in the county and to monitor the implementation of the Childcare Strategy.**

The Committee are delighted to offer support to childcare providers who are applying for funding to develop new and existing childcare facilities.

2005 saw a number of large scale capital projects being approved for County Westmeath amounting to €4.9 million in funding.

Cairdeas Childcare in Kinnegad received €1.9 million. This centre has been built and is a very successful childcare facility.



There are a number of other childcare community groups in the county who have been approved for over €1 million in grant aid.

Westmeath County Childcare Committee also provide childcare training, information and networking with other local service providers.



Story telling in Mullingar Library.

The new "Childcare Package" announced by Finance Minister Mr. Brian Cowen has put childcare to the forefront with the introduction of a five year strategy to increase the supply of childcare places and to assist parents with the costs of childcare. This strategy which covers both current and capital spending, costing a cumulative €2.65 billion over the five years 2006-2010. The aim is to fund an additional 50,000 childcare places by 2010.

The Committee also supports childminding in the home. A new childminding relief is also being introduced, where an individual minds up to three children in the minder's own home. No tax will be payable on the childminding earnings received, provided the amount is less than €10,000 per annum. If the childminder's income exceeds this, the total amount will be taxable, as normal under self assessment. An individual will be obliged to return their childminding income in their annual tax return and also to notify their County Childcare Committee that they are providing a childminding service.

Westmeath County Childcare Committee can be contacted at 6 St. John's Tce., Blackhall, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath. Tel: 044 35454.

## Westmeath Sports and Physical Activity Strategy

**Westmeath Sports Partnership is embarking on a Sports Strategy for County Westmeath. The Sports Strategy will direct the development of Sport and Physical Activity over the next three years.**

Over the last few months public consultations have been held and hundreds of research questionnaires distributed.

The findings of these pieces of research have been summarised and developed into an ISSUE PAPER. Some of the key issues arisen to date, include:

- Need for more volunteers
- Over-emphasis on competition is damaging sports and recreation participations.
- Young people dropping out of sports and recreation in their teens.
- Lack of communication between sports clubs resulting in conflicting fixtures.
- Too little visibility for female participants in the media.

Once the submissions from the Issue Paper are received and analyzed, the first draft of the strategic plan will be

drawn up. If you have issues around your sport or recreational activity that are specific to you or your area, please let us know. It is vital that the people of Westmeath take ownership of this Sport Strategy and lead the workings of the Westmeath Sports Partnership and all its partners. The key objective of the Sports Partnership is to increase participation in sport and provide help and direction to achieve this.

Westmeath Sports Partnership is now requesting that the people of Westmeath submit any comments/suggestion to the Westmeath Sports Partnership, Marlinstown Office Park, Mullingar or call 044-90208.

## WESTMEATH WAY 2006

The first completed section of the Westmeath Way Walking Route has been accepted for inclusion into the National Waymarked Ways Network. This section, which extends from Kilbeggan to Mullingar covers a distance of 33km(21miles) over private land, public roadway, along the banks of the Royal Canal and through Coillte property. It is important to recognise and express gratitude to the parties concerned and in particular the seventeen landowners who allowed the route to cross their property. Without the co-operation of all concerned this development would not be possible.

A number of agencies have co-operated on this venture including Westmeath County Council, Westmeath Community Development Ltd, the Irish Sports Council, Coillte, Waterways Ireland, Westmeath Tourism Council and the Community and Voluntary Sector. Westmeath Way can be viewed as a tourism product and a recreational amenity. In this context its status as a recognised and insured "Way Marked Way" ensures that it may be marketed and promoted locally, nationally and internationally.

Westmeath Way is the twenty sixth walking route in Ireland to be recognised by the Irish Sports Council and an official launch will take place in the near future.

### WESTMEATH SPORTS PARTNERSHIP CALENDER OF EVENTS to MAY 2006

DATE	EVENT
April 1st and 2nd	Rescue Emergency Care and Sports First Aid
April 3rd and 4th	Code of Ethics Awareness Training
April 5th	J4- Volleyball Coaching
April 7th	Speed, Agility, Quickness Foundation Level
April 22nd & 23rd	Rescue Emergency Care and Sports First Aid
April 25th	Walking FIT clinic
April 28th-30th	Walking Leaders Workshop
May 3rd, 10th, 17th, 24th, 31st	Midland Running League
May 6th	Speed, Agility, Quickness Level One
May 19th-21st	Walking Leaders Workshop
May 25th, 26th, and 27th	Dance Festival

*If you are interested in any of the above events, please contact [westmeathsportspartnership@westmeathvec.ie](mailto:westmeathsportspartnership@westmeathvec.ie) or 044-90208, for further details including times and locations.*



Members of Westmeath Community & Voluntary Forum attending the Communications Seminar held in Mullingar in March 2005. A second Communications Seminar was held in Athlone in November 2005.

#### APPRECIATION

### Cllr. ADRIAN MURRAY

1946-2005

*"If you are going to do a job, do it well"*



**This is one of many words of wisdom Adrian Murray imparted as he went about his daily life. However, Adrian applied these principles in his own life. He brought that thinking to each and every area in which he became involved during his life.**

Those who knew him were always aware that his family were both a great source of pride to him and support for him. He was above all else a family man, even with the wide variety of activities he undertook, the central concern of his life was always his own family.

Adrian worked for many years in St Loman's Hospital. Those who worked with him attested to his great commitment to this work. Retirement from St Loman's Hospital in Mullingar meant more time for his family, more time for politics, his beloved Crookedwood Hurling Club, the Westmeath GAA and his obligations at county level.

His encyclopaedic knowledge of GAA matters and his passion for the game of hurling and the Crookedwood Hurling Club was always evident.

He was at the start of what could only prove to be an illustrious political career. It is clear that all shades of political opinion viewed him as a man of integrity, substance, determination and perseverance. From Adrian's point of view he had taken on the task of doing a job and he would do it well. The tributes paid to him from political parties across the board reflected not just the work he had done in his 18 months as a Councillor but also reflected the outstanding contribution he had made to his county and his community over his lifetime.

*"That shadows fall is evidence of light"*

# Heritage News...Heritage News...Heritage News

## WESTMEATH'S HERITAGE ON DISPLAY

Ten villages in Westmeath including Streete, Lismacaffrey, Fore, Clonmellon, Kinnegad, Killucan, Multyfarnham, Rosemount, Tyrrellspass and Kilbeggan are celebrating their local heritage. The ten villages were successful applicants in a bid for funding under a collaborative project between Westmeath Community Development (LEADER), Westmeath Tourism Council and Westmeath Co. Council to develop the publication of Village Heritage leaflets and Heritage information boards for each of their localities. Each village will proudly display a very attractive and informative heritage board explaining the features of interest around their area.

The Village Heritage Boards and Heritage Information Leaflets were officially launched in the Mullingar Arts Centre on January 19<sup>th</sup> 2006 by Cathaoirleach Cllr. Mark Nugent and attended by Cllr. Nicky McFadden, Chairperson of Co. Westmeath Heritage Forum and Joe Potter, CEO of Westmeath Community Development Ltd.. In his address the Cathaoirleach said he was delighted to see such a good geographical spread of villages displaying and celebrating the heritage. "The information contained within these leaflets and boards will make us see these places with new eyes." He went on to say "there is a very interesting range of facts and features presented in these publications. We're all aware of the seven wonders of Fore but what about the wonders of Streete or Rosemount? Daramona House just north of Streete was once the home of W.E. Wilson who built an observatory and was the man responsible for the first series of photo-electric measurements of the brightness of the stars. Knockastia near Rosemount along with the Hill of Uisneach was one of the most important hills in the midlands during Pagan and early Christian times. These are just two such points of interest but it is clear from reading any of these leaflets that all these villages provide features of amenity, landscape and heritage value"

Cllr Nicky McFadden said "this initiative delivers an action in the Co. Westmeath Heritage Plan to support the provision of heritage information in towns and villages. The educational value of heritage is wide reaching and the boards will encourage local school children to find out more about their local areas"

She commended 'Ireland Unwrapped' who were commissioned to prepare the text and design the boards and worked closely with local communities who had input into the content of the information

displayed on the panels. "The boards will be of value not just to local people in reminding them of their local heritage value but also to visitors who come to the area. The provision of more information on these sites will add to the enjoyment of their experience." She acknowledged the work of Bernie Lynn (WCD Ltd) and Bernie Guest, Heritage Officer and said "they must be very satisfied with their efforts".

In his address CEO Joe Potter reflected on the importance of communities in projects such as this and also the need to recognise the changes taking place in rural areas and the need for development. He thanked all parties involved in the project and commended the publications.

Copies of the Village Heritage leaflets will be distributed to public venues in all the respective areas and also will be distributed at tourism fairs and exhibitions. The leaflets are also available from the offices of Westmeath Community Development Ltd. and the Heritage Office of Westmeath Co. Council. Contact Bernie Lynn at 044 48571 or Bernie Guest at 044 32000.

## GUIDANCE ON LANDSCAPING FOR RURAL HOUSING

Westmeath Co. Council Forward Planning Section have just published an informative guidance leaflet on what to plant if building a new house in the countryside. Trees and shrubs obviously help blend new houses and buildings into the landscape and greatly enhance the amenity and wildlife value of rural development.

However with the extensive range of nursery stock available it is not always easy to know what to plant. This leaflet offers guidance to new home owners on the choice and suitability of tree and shrub stock for their gardens and grounds and promotes the use of native species. It describes what types of species and size of plants grow best where in accordance with scale of planting, exposure of site and budget.

Copies of the leaflet are available free of charge from Westmeath County Council Area Offices.

Contact [heritage@westmeathcoco.ie](mailto:heritage@westmeathcoco.ie) or 044 32000 for further information.





## COMPETITION

Answer the following questions and be in with a chance to win one of two prizes of €75 (for individual entries) or one of two prizes of €100 (in respect of group/organisation entries):

- 1 What is the Number of the Senior Help Line?
- 2 What is the Web site of the Irish Finnish transnational project?
- 3 Who is Westmeath's Dancer in Residence?
- 4 What organisation is developing the Sports Strategy?

Please submit your answers in number order, stating your name, address and contact telephone number. N. B. for groups/organisations please ensure that you state the name of your group/organisation.

Entries should be sent to:  
Community & Enterprise Section, Westmeath County Council  
County Buildings, Mullingar

Closing date for receipt of entries will be Friday 28<sup>th</sup> April 2006.

## ISSUE 4 NEWSLETTER COMPETITION WINNERS:

**GROUP WINNERS**  
(each received €100):

**DELVIN I.C.A.**

C/O Betty O'Keefe (Secretary),  
Graftonstown, Kilucan,  
Mullingar, Co. Westmeath

**LOUGH LENE ANGLING  
ASSOCIATION** C/o Michael Healy  
(Hon. Sec.), Mullingar Road,  
Collinstown, Co. Westmeath

**INDIVIDUAL WINNER**  
(each received €75):

**TOM HENEGHAN**

Dublin Road, Athlone, Co. Westmeath

**MRS. BRIDGET NEVILLE**

Monilea, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath .