



TY

St. Gerard's School
Transition Year
2024-2025



Introduction

What a year it's been. From the start of September we've been blogging, film making, blogging, camping, blogging, performing, blogging...the list goes on and you are invited to read it all below.

It has truly been a special year full of excitement and here's a chance to catch up on all that we did..

The Newsletter Team

Adam Devitt, Albert Bernon, Beth Sherwin, Caoimhe Tucker, Ciara O' Farrell, David Harmon, Emily Roche, Emma Malacalza, Eva Carey, Juliette Duffy, Kate Merrigan, Lily O' Sullivan, Michael Hampson, Pat Carey, Ruth Wilkinson and Elodie White.

TY TRIPS



Camping Adventure By Juliette Duffy

On the 12th of September, two buses arrived into the carpark of St Gerard's Senior School to transport all the TY students, and our many bags, up to Lough Dan for the annual TY Camping Trip. The first challenge was getting all the bags to fit into the boots of the two buses. There was everything from tents to stoves to onesies, along with a multitude of sleeping bags and mattresses. The air was filled with chatter and excitement about the trip ahead.

When we arrived the sun was shining, yet it wasn't warm. Ms Roy briefed us on all the rules of the campsite and then we were sent off to set up our tents. This was certainly a challenge for some people, as some of us had never gone camping before. After our tents were set up the field was filled with many different shapes,

sizes and colours of tents. It was then time to eat our lunch and relax before we headed on our hike.

At around 1 o'clock we departed for what we thought was a 5 km hike, but it was actually an 8 km hike. But this was only a warm up for the next day as that hike would be a lot longer. There were many hills on this hike so our legs were burning a bit! Thankfully, when we got back to the campsite, we were allowed to do whatever we wanted. The boys went swimming in the lake but it was way too cold so all of the girls decided it wasn't an option! We chose to walk around instead.

It was then time to cook dinner. There was everything from pot noodles to gourmet steak and pepper sauce for dinner. Home Ec students thrived!

After dinner, a bonfire was lit. This created a great atmosphere as one of the boys had brought a guitar with them. Anastasia and Ciara played some fantastic music. Everybody was chatting together despite the coldness.

As the night went on it got colder and colder but luckily the bonfire kept us nice and warm. The night in our tents was so cold even with numerous layers on you could still feel the coldness in the air. This led to everyone waking up early in the morning to have breakfast.

It was then time to pack up our tents and make sure there was no rubbish left on the ground. After breakfast we departed on our 17 km hike. During this hike we got to witness many of the beautiful and picturesque landscapes Lough Dan had to offer. We had a quick lunch break on the hike and then before we knew it, it was time to head back to the school.

At 3.30 p.m. the buses arrived back to St. Gerard's. We were all exhausted but had many memories to take back with us.

We all had a fantastic time and it was a great way to start our Transition Year.



Driver's Ed

This term most of our year took part in the Driver's Ed course in the school. It was an incredible experience to drive and learn about having a car during this workshop. We learnt so many important skills that are necessary and lots of safety rules to know when driving. I think we all enjoyed this workshop as it was an experience to sit in the back seat and watch your friends drive.

We drove a manual ignition which most cars are. We were told the basics: how to drive a manual by being able to change gears; using the clutch; using the handbrake; and learning how to reverse. These were the main skills of driving the car. I think for most people driving the car was the best part.

We also were taught the elements of owning a car by changing a tyre. In my group we had a competition of how fast we could change a tyre. The instructor told us the dangers of having a flat tyre and how it can put yourself at risk. We also had a look at the engine and how a car works.

We were also shown how being in a drunk state can affect you while driving or doing a task. We wore goggles that distorted our vision to show what it would be like drunk. With the drunk goggles on we tried to do loads of running races and having to walk in a straight line but I think we all failed.

In the classroom based part of the workshop, we took a theory test using the Irish School of Excellence's practice theory test. We were shown the steps of earning a license and getting insurance for your car. We completed an insurance application for a car and searched for the ideal first car.

Overall this was an eye opening experience and something really worthwhile.

By Lily O' Sullivan



Photography

Over the course of two weeks, starting on the 14th of October, we had the opportunity to take part in a photography course. On Thursday the 17th of October, it was my turn to partake in this extra curricular activity!

Not knowing much about photography and photo editing meant I was definitely extremely excited to learn about what this course had to offer. In the morning we were greeted, in the Multipurpose Room, by Elis who had kindly come to share with us all she knew about photographs.

We began the morning by looking through a presentation she had put together to give us a brief insight into the history of photo taking. From viewing the first photo ever taken, to seeing how cameras have evolved over time, these slides taught me lots of things I did not know before! My favourite part of this activity was how interactive and inclusive it was. From being handed the first mobile phones and smart phones to be made, to venturing around the school with our peers taking photos, we were all kept engaged and motivated throughout the course of the day!

After taking many many pictures around the school grounds, we were introduced to an editing app named Snapseed. We were taught all different ways of enhancing our photos!!

All in all, I thoroughly enjoyed my experience of photography as did the rest of my year I'm sure!!



By Ruthie Wilkinson

CTYI Interview with Emma Malacalza

What is CTYI?

It's part of an introduction to University open to Transition Years. 12 of us from St. Gerard's are going in to do a variety of courses.

What course are you taking in DCU?

I'm taking International Relations.

What made you choose said course?

I was told it would be a good course to do as it links in with many careers and would help as I speak three languages and am learning more in school.

Do you think that there is a big difference between second and third level education?

Personally I do think there is quite a big difference, as obviously third level education is more full on and

fast pace and it is up to the student alone to grasp the important parts of topics whereas in second level education students are mostly guided and told what's most important.

Do you think that CTYI has prepared you for when you go into third level education?

Absolutely, CTYI is definitely preparing me for the future as I will have a better idea of such environments and what to expect, I also found that not knowing anyone in my course was also a great experience as I could meet new people outside of my home and school environment.

By Emily Roche

Develop Me - By David Harmon

On the 20th of September, our TYs took part in a Develop Me Workshop which was a great experience that pushed us out of our comfort zone and taught us many planning skills.

The day began in the LRC when our workshop instructor, Owen, organised around 50 students into two competing groups. He then explained the strategic game that was ahead of us and provided supporting documentation in the form of cards and vital instructions. The main objective was to get to the mine making best use of the resources within the time period given.

Soon after we then started planning in groups. During this phase we were faced with the challenge of co-operating with the people on our team. Our team opted to take the longer route to the mine as we believed it would have benefitted us greatly, leaving us with more resources to finish the challenge strongly.

Once we finished the challenge the results from our team dramatically appeared on the whiteboard. We started celebrating the victory, as we felt our team had performed very well. However we soon realised that the opposing team won, having received one point more than us, using a different strategy which involved taking a faster route to the mine. Although we thought we had won, we felt dejected once we realised that we had lost. However once we saw the perfect solution, it highlighted where we went wrong in our decision making.

Although we lost, it was a very enjoyable activity and pushed us to make use of our planning and organisation skills which I believe will truly benefit everyone in the future.



Midlands Prison Trip

We were told about an opportunity to attend a once in a lifetime trip to go and visit the Midlands Prison in Portlaoise by two of our teachers. However we were also informed we had to apply via email in order to be considered for this excursion as there were only 30 available places. Upon hearing about this, I knew it was something I was eager to be included in. So without hesitation I drafted up my application and sent it on. When I heard I was chosen, I was more than thrilled!

Monday the 24th came swiftly around. We were directed not to dress in our school uniform, which would be more common for school trips, but to dress in smart casual attire. Our group gathered in school and left at 9.20 a.m.

Upon arrival at the prison, I felt conflicted. While I was grateful to be able to partake in this unique experience, I also noticed a slight sense of unease. However I knew I had to stop myself and appreciate that these are in fact people with stories none of us will know and have experienced things that only themselves are aware of, so to judge them solely based on the crimes they have committed was wrong.

We were met on the bus by one of the prison guards named Jimmy. He came on board firmly, yet effectively, set down ground rules for the tour and prepare us for what we would be doing throughout the day. Without further procrastination, we disembarked the bus and made our way into the prison. I felt a slightly surreal and nerve wracking atmosphere as we walked through the dejected grounds towards security.

We followed the guard, and one by one we all went through security. We were instructed to leave our phones in the bus, so we were not able to take any photos inside the actual prison.

Once we passed security, we were led outdoors to where the police cars and vans were held, and then walked into the main security checkpoint for when the inmates arrived. We got



to experience the eerie feeling of standing outside the cells of people that had committed murder and other terrible crimes.

As our time slot of just over an hour and a half for our tour came to an end, the prisoners were let out on their lunch breaks. In order to not interfere with their schedule, we were brought into the visitors room. On our way there we saw a group of inmates doing the laundry as their chore. The visitors room was filled with tables that had a plastic divider so that the prisoner was not in direct contact with whoever was visiting. We sat down with Jimmy and had a meaningful chat about the fact that not everyone is as

fortunate as we are and to appreciate all you have in life, even if it is not as much as you wish it was.

All in all, my experience of going to the Portlaoise Prison was nerve racking but also eye opening and allowed me to learn a lot and not take the life opportunities and stability I have for granted.



By Ruthie Wilkinson

FOCUS IRELAND SLEEPOUT

There are currently 14,000 people in Ireland homeless. Since 1980, Focus Ireland have been working with many communities to help prevent homelessness around Ireland.

They are a non-profit charity and they work with schools and companies all over Ireland. When a few of our students came together with the idea of participating in the sleep-out it was a unanimous decision to go ahead with the event. A group of 29 students, with the help of some parents, organised a sleep out to take place on the 11th of October in Greystones. With the help of Focus Ireland, who kindly gifted us some t-shirts and beanies to help advertise and keep us warm we made final plans for the night. All students participating spent two weeks fundraising and before the event itself the students had raised over €15,000.

On the night of October 11th, the students started their evening in the rugby club around 6.30 p.m. After watching the SCT O' Connor Cup and a bit of fundraising during half time, they walked into Greystones and set up around the Dart Station.

The evening was spent fundraising until around 12 a.m. Then the group was split and went back to sleep in back gardens. Tents were put up, garages were readied and the sleep-out began. Most only got about 5 hours sleep due to the very cold weather and the discomfort of it all.

It was a very eye opening experience for everyone and while we all ended up in our own beds the next evening it was still unsettling to know that there were so many people still out on the streets. It was a great cause and a good experience for all.

By Caoimhe Tucker



FOCUS IRELAND

At the beginning of October this year, I and a group of my peers took part in a fundraising sleep out for Focus Ireland. In total we raised the astonishing amount of just over €17,200!

On the 18th of December, we had a lovely lady named Grace come to St. Gerard's so we could present to her the cheque. It also meant she could explain to the rest of our year what it was that our money went towards and a little bit about the charity and the positive impact our help has had.

Caoimhe and I met Grace at the front office and introduced her to our year, which was so lovely as it meant we had the chance to talk to her separately about all things Focus Ireland.

I'm sure I can say this on behalf of all that took part in this fundraiser that it was such a pleasure to raise awareness and money for those struggling with homelessness and was such a proud feeling seeing how appreciated our efforts were!!

By Ruthie Wilkinson





ANNUAL MUSIC FESTIVAL

Some of our TYs have been very busy with music related activities this year. We had the opportunity to interview a few of the students who took part in the Music Festival: **Elodie White, Ciara O'Farrell, Adam Devitt, Finn Jolly, Senan Balmaine.**

Caitlin Park, Lily O'Sullivan, Isobel Bownes, Juliette Duffy and Fredy Willis also competed in the competition.

How did you prepare for the performance?

Elodie: I prepared by practising as much as I could and I tried out loads of different songs to see what was the right fit for me.

Ciara: I originally started practising the first week back at school but I tried a song that I realised I actually hated so I switched that to "Once Upon a December" and, again, two weeks ago I decided I hated that one too. Then eventually I got Ms Olohan's feedback and she suggested the song I ended up with; "God Help The Outcasts".

Adam: We started practising before the Summer actually.

Senan: Those three, Patrick, Finn and Adam, were practising in the music room and I walked in on them randomly and asked if I could join because it sounded good.

Did anyone help you prepare?

Elodie: Ms. Olohan was a great help, of course. I was originally going to do A Sunday Kinda Love but it didn't suit my voice, so I went back to Cry Me a River which I had thought of doing before but with a jazz backing track and she was like, this is perfect. For the jazz backing track, Isobel Bownes was amazing at cutting it for me.

Ciara: Ms. Olohan too. She obviously helped me a lot with the song choice but another great help was actually Elodie. I was struggling with some of the lower notes and she really helped me reach them. Finn: Not really, no, it was all our own work.

Senan: Yeah, we kinda had everything that we needed and we started practising early so it was pretty smooth. Why did you decide to enter? Elodie: Because it's one of my favourite things to do in the school

and I love being part of it. Ciara: I wanted to come out of my shell and finally do a solo and this was a great opportunity.

Finn: I was asked to enter by Adam Devitt and Patrick Chen.

Adam: It was Patrick's last year and I asked him if he wanted to do something other than his normal piano solo and he said yes.

Senan: I just walked in on these guys one day and then got roped into it. Once we played a bit I realised it was going to be fun!

Why did you decide to enter?

Elodie: Because it's one of my favourite things to do in the school and I love being part of it.

Ciara: I wanted to come out of my shell and finally do a solo and this was a great opportunity.

By Eva Carey



South Sudan Talk By Emma Malacalza

On Wednesday the 11th of September, we had a fantastic talk from guest speakers that came from South Sudan. Students were given a very interesting introduction on the different aspects of living in a developing country and the challenges they face.

It was explained that a Loreto School has been set up for less

fortunate girls in South Sudan with the aim of giving them equal opportunities in life and a better education. The principal of the school spoke about his childhood during a war and how he fled his area and walked for days with his family. Two past pupils of the school also spoke and shared how in South Sudan girls are expected to marry at a young age and their husbands

are chosen by their families. It was an eye opening experience.

Overall, the talk was very informative and very worthwhile and the school was grateful to the guest speakers that took the time to talk to us. It made us realise how lucky we are, but also that we have the opportunity to help these groups.

Greystones Youth and Wellness Committee By Ciara O'Farrell

This year for the first time ever a committee in Greystones has been formed that aims to have more of Greystones youth voices heard. I, along with 6 others, was selected out of 10,000 under 18s in the Greystones area to represent the young people of our town. Our group made their debut at the end of September where they met with influential people of Greystones including Mark Barry the Cathaoirleach of Greystones who currently is chairing the committee. We have had 3 meetings since discussing the purpose of the group and sharing our ideas.

On the 30th of September, the group had their first interview with Declan Meehan with East Coast FM where they went into brief detail on the objectives for the committee. For example they are advocating for more pitches and a town park in the Greystones area.

I, along with the rest of the members, will be continuing our work until the new year where we will then be sending out surveys to all the local schools and sports clubs which will focus on what you think is currently working well for the youth and what could be improved.



Interview with International Friends

By Albert Bernon

In St Gerard's we are fortunate enough to have international students join us in TY. It's great to have them join our year, but I wanted to know what life is like for them and how they settled in during the first term. I had a chat with Juan, Paula, Alejandro and Matias. Unfortunately Max was away for the interview, but I will catch up with him again.

The opening question was

How is your time in St Gerard's so far?

Juan: "It's nice, very easy to enjoy because the people are very nice and help a lot with integrating."

How are you liking Ireland so far?

"I like it, very different from Spain in some parts. The day to day is different but I like it a lot."

How are you finding the people?

"The people are very nice because they will help you if you need anything and help you integrate."

Paula: "It is really good; the people are very nice and the teachers are very helpful."

How is it adjusting to a new country?

"At first it is difficult and scary because I don't know anything about here and everything is very new for me but overall, it is good."

What has been your favourite activity so far?

"Games after school because I am with friends."

Alejandro: "Really good because everybody is very nice and funny."

How is Ireland compared to Mexico?

"It is very cold but it is really green and I really like it."

Matias: "Good, it is very nice so far."

How is Ireland different from Mexico?

"It is a lot colder, like really a lot colder."

How are you finding the people?

"They are very nice."

What has been your favourite activity so far?

"St Gerard's Day or maybe camping."



RIDING WITH THE DISABLED

By Caoimhe Tucker



For the past 6 weeks, 12 students have been going to Ballintreskin Farm and Feistina Lente to volunteer with children from St.Catherine's School.

Every week around 4 of us go down to provide support for the children riding the horses. We arrive down around 10 a.m. to set up the arena and get the horses ready. The kids arrive around 10.30. The set up consists of one person leading the horse and two people on either side for safety. We spend the hour walking around, playing games and singing songs. It is a time where the kids get completely immersed in another world of freedom. They are constantly smiling, laughing and having great chats. The movement of the horse beneath them helps with their physiotherapy with the movement of their hips.

Some of the kids that come, weeks ago wouldn't have been able to or wanted to have a conversation and are now complete chatterboxes. It is a complete confidence boost for them and they are some of the greatest kids we know.

After an hour with one group we switch over and a new group of kids come in and we begin the process all over again. Every Tuesday, the group is always looking forward to going down and seeing who's going to be there this week. It is an honour to be going down every week and it makes everyone's day.

The Ploughing Festival

By Kate Merrigan

This year a number of TY students including myself attended the National Ploughing Festival in Ratheniska County Laois, some were just visiting and others were working there. Visiting the Ploughing Festival was an enlightening experience for those of us in attendance as none of us had attended the event before. We only realised upon arrival just how much there was to do with a petting zoo, farming equipment on display, live music, food trucks and shopping stalls so our whole day was filled so much that we didn't have time to go to the actual ploughing competition.

Several of the TY boys worked in coffee vans at the festival for the three days. "Getting up so early was hard" The boys had to leave at 5.20 in the morning to set up in Laois before the event started every morning. "I enjoyed working in the van as it gave me useful skills and I got an insight to what it's like to be behind the counter" one of the boys told us.



Irish Hockey By Eva Carey

This summer and throughout last year our senior start and TY student Juliette Duffy played internationally in hockey for the Irish U16s. This is an amazing achievement and she told us all about her experience.

What is the trialling process like to get on the team ?

The trials began with a Halloween camp in Ulster University which lasted three days and two nights. It was intense and consisted of fitness testing, gym testing and training. Each day we would be working and training for a total of 6 hours. It was quite tense and stressful. After this camp we had two more days of five hour trials. Once this was all complete they publicly announced the panel on Instagram and that's how you found it if you made it. Then you would have to be selected from the panel to play.

How long have you been on the Irish team ?

I was on the U16's team since October and this team has finished up now for the season, you have to trial for the U18's team. You have to re-trial every year even if you have another year with U16's.

Where did you play this summer?

There were three trips altogether. In February I was selected but couldn't travel as I got a stress fracture. The one in Easter took place in Lilleshall in England and was selected for this one. The summer trip was the main trip as it was home and they never really hosted them at home so it was a big deal. It was the Four Nations. We were against Wales, Spain and the Netherlands. Our first match against Spain was really close until the last 5 minutes where they scored 3 goals, but we had improved so much since we had played them in Easter. Our second match was against the Dutch which was an intense and fast paced match which we sadly lost but I was delighted to have scored. We played Wales in our last match and won 5-0 and then one against them again in the 3rd and 4th playoff.

Did you enjoy your experience on the team?

I did really enjoy being on the team. It was stressful at times as the weekend before the Junior Cert I had to travel up to Ulster twice for training. I made a lot of close friends though that I still keep in touch with. The whole experience overall was really fun.

How often do you train and play?

I train everyday and sometimes twice a day if I have a club and school. For Ireland then I had training most Sundays which were six hours or sometimes a two hour regional session. Over the summer we also had overnight camps.

What are your ambitions for next in hockey?

My ambition for hockey would be to represent my country again at any age level and to win the Senior Cup in school.



Touch Rugby By Pat Carey

Over the summer TYs Noah O'Neill and Rhys Tanner played for the Ireland touch rugby team and competed in the Junior Touch Rugby Championship, in Vichy, France. Noah was playing for the Irish U18 mixed squad and Rhys was on the U15 mixed squad. It was great to catch up with them and hear all about their international experience

How did representing your country make you feel?

Noah O' Neill: Representing my country made me feel many different emotions like excitement but also nervousness. Overall I was thrilled with the opportunity and wanted to give my very best.

Rhys Tanner: When I was representing my country I predominantly felt two emotions, pride and joy. Walking onto a pitch knowing you're one of the best teams in the world is amazing.

Was it a big commitment or challenge to get onto this team?

Noah O' Neill: The biggest commitment that being on this team took were the trials and training process. The trials were often a decent journey away as they had to be thoughtful of everyone trying to join. The training sessions were much closer but were often very long hours and required a high level of fitness. Despite this, these days ended up being extremely fun and an enjoyable experience.

Rhys Tanner: Yes, at times it could be really hard to make it to trials and training sessions every week as we were going all over Leinster to make it accessible for everyone on the team. Training sessions could extend for more than 6 hours, which required high amounts of endurance and physical strength.

Did you enjoy your time in Vichy?

Noah O' Neill: During my time in Vichy, aside from playing games and meetings, we played a lot of table tennis, football and had many trips to McDonald's! This definitely made this trip extremely fun and I am looking forward to trialling again next year!

Rhys Tanner: The time we spent over in Vichy was one of the best weeks of the summer, largely because of the close relationships I built with my teammates and with players from other teams. A lot of the time between matches was spent either eating or sleeping because of the physical exertion we were under, one of the many methods we would use to recover was drinking chocolate milk and sitting in ice baths. When we would get time it would be spent playing basketball, walking to the nearby shops and getting to know the other teams. Thanks to Billy for all his help with this.



Self Defence

The best activity this term has got to be the Self Defence Course run by Daragh from Focus Martial Arts.

The entire year successfully completed the level one self defence course. To complete this we had to take part in an assessment of all the skills we learnt throughout the activity.

Over the week Daragh taught us different skills and techniques if you needed to defend yourself. Daragh always said that fighting and using self defence was a last resort and first you should always try to defuse or get out of the situation. We practiced these techniques and strikes on pads and on each other. This was a lot of fun but also very tiring. We started with simple moves and strikes like, palms, elbows, knees, and kicks. We also learned blocks and counter moves to incoming strikes.

Daragh taught us how to get off the ground and how to defend ourselves while on the ground. Another activity we did was wrestling against one another. This was so tiring but not compared to the assessment.

To complete this course we had to do a five minute test of endurance, strength and technique. This test consisted of doing a certain strike for thirty seconds, then running to the wall and back, doing either push ups, squats or burpees and repeating nonstop for five minutes. Doesn't sound like a long time but when you are doing it, it does.

Everyone was wrecked by the end of it but thankfully the effort was worth it because everyone passed.

By Pat Carey



Law Ed. Workshop By Ciara O'Farrell

Law Ed Over 60 of our year took part in the Law Ed workshop this term. In the beginning Jack Meredith, our barrister for the day, ran through many slides discussing the layout of the courtroom and the different roles people have in the courtroom.

We then briefly talked about different crimes that took place across the country and internationally. For example we went into detail about the horrific Anna Kriegel case which took place in 2018 and a case by the US border where people were caught trying to sneak in drugs disguised as watermelons into America.

For the last hour of the workshop we completed a fun mock trial and we were each given different roles in the court. We had to act out the various scenarios and cases. and put into practice all we had learnt. This element of the day showed us what a real court case would be like. This course tied in excellently with our visit to Portlaoise Prison.

Overall everyone was in agreement that we saw a whole different side to law than we previously thought and it's safe to say we had a great time!

Ecology Trip By Lily O'Sullivan

On the 12th of November 2024, our year group went on an Ecology Trip to Lullymore Heritage & Discovery Park in Co. Kildare for an entire school day.

This was originally for the biology classes until we realised it would benefit the whole year so this trip became open to everyone. We had the experience of taking an ecological survey of a measured area, this was not new to us as we had previously done experiments in school. We were given handouts and had to identify the different species of flora and take a reading from the forest's soil. This was a very engaging experiment.

Throughout the trip we learnt a lot of things about using tools to measure biodiversity to understand conservation. The experience gave us all a better understanding of how scientists study ecosystems. We were taught how to use a soil meter (to measure pH, temperature and moisture levels of the soil), a Lux meter (measure the luminous intensity of the sun) and a quadrant, which we used to conduct a 'Quantitative Study of Flora and Fauna' by putting in random locations in the area.

We were also taught about the different types of 'animal collection equipment' used to identify different species of fauna in the area in a 'Quantitative



Study', such as a cryptozoology trap (a big wooden lid placed on the ground to simulate a dark and damp environment in order to attract various species of fauna) and a Pooter (a cup with two straws, one used for sucking (and has a filter) and the other used for collection, that are used when an insect needs to be).

This was a super whole year activity. Thanks to Ms Brady for organising it.

DCG Trip By Albert Bernon

On the 25th of October, the two TY DCG classes went up to Dublin City for the day on a trip organised by Mr Jolly and Mr Shelly.

We went on a walking tour around Merrion Square which is a beautiful square surrounded by historic Georgian townhouses; one of the last few true Georgian squares left in Dublin.

In the middle of the square is the very famous Merrion Park which is home to an even more famous statue of the author Oscar Wilde. Oscar grew up in Merrion Square. We even walked by the very building.

After a short 10 minute walk we arrived outside the Mansion House which is the residence of the Lord Mayor of Dublin. Dermot, our guide for the day, spoke about the

importance the Mansion House had in the early days of the Irish Government as this very building hosted the first Dáil of the Irish Republic.

While we were coming to the end of the tour we stopped just outside the StoneMasons' building which is a world-wide group that operates out of many important cities around the world. The group is a male only club and is covered in mystery.

After a lunch break, Ms Donovan organised for us to go see the National Archaeology Museum which was very interesting to see these ancient Irish artefacts.

Overall, it was a really interesting tour and gave us a much deeper insight into our capital city and huge thanks to our teachers for organising.

HAMPER PACKING AND DROP OFF

On Monday, December 16th, our Transition Year group worked together alongside some Fifth Year students to pack hampers to help people in less fortunate situations during the Christmas season. These well stocked hampers included items such as food and sanitary products.

We started the day off by listening to some guest speakers who worked for Saint Vincent de Paul. They told us some more about their organisation and how all of our help and donations have a positive effect on the community. Afterwards, we headed down to the Sports Hall and were split into groups and given lists of items that needed to be sorted and packed into the hampers. Said products were scattered around the hall so we had to take roughly 25 of each and bring them to our packing stations.

Making the hampers took a lot of effort as it was important to make sure that each bag had the same amount of items in each. This was to ensure that no one was left without a certain product. The hampers were then stored in the changing rooms, ready to be delivered.

After our hard work, we received hot chocolate in the Dining Hall as a reward for our efforts.

Later in the day, a number of parents arrived who had offered to transport the students in order to deliver the hampers. We collected six hampers each from the changing rooms and loaded them into the cars to be dropped off. All the cars had six houses to deliver the hampers to, some even including toy bags.

Visiting these houses was an eye-opening experience as it made us realise how lucky we are as we saw how grateful people were to receive the hampers.

Doing charity work for Saint Vincent de Paul was a really great chance for our year group to work together with Fifth Years towards a great cause which helps people get by during the busy and expensive Christmas season.

By Emily Roche



Gambling Talk with Tony O'Reilly by David Harmon

On the 11th of November our year attended Tony O'Reilly's speech on his struggles with gambling. In this talk Tony went through what his addiction caused him to do.

Tony told us about how gambling separated him from his family and friends; this was due to him being severely addicted to the feeling of gambling. This was a very important part in Tony's story as it forced him to come out about his issues. This taught us the very important lesson of seeking help when you need it. Tony was using this addiction as a getaway from reality and this made him do things he must not have been proud of, such as stealing over £1.4 million from the post office that he was the owner of.

Once he was convicted of this he was placed in the Midlands Prison. This was significant because months prior to this our

year visited the Midlands Prison and this made us picture Tony in confinement with many other inmates.

After hearing this devastating story from Tony, it encouraged me to do my own research which taught me that it is estimated that around 1-2% of the population experiences some form of gambling addiction. However, the stigma surrounding it makes many individuals reluctant to seek help. This heartfelt speech from Tony inspired me to come out with any problems. This shows the importance of Tony's work and what he is doing to help others not make the same mistakes as he did.

In conclusion, Tony's speech inspired us to speak up about any problems and to break through the barrier that people have to speak about their problems.

Home Ec Trip One

By Juliette Duffy

On Friday, 8th of November, the first Home Economics trip of the year took place. The group was made up of our Fourth Year Home Economics class and the Fifth Year Home Economics class.

In Gino's we learnt how gelato was made. We were shown what ingredients are used for making gelato. Most of the Fourth Years already had some experience making gelato as we made gelato during our time in Rome in Second Year. We made a multitude of flavours including bubble-gum, chocolate and strawberry gelato.

After Gino's we got on the bus and made our way to Newtown Mt Kennedy to go to the Wicklow Wolf Brewery. Inside we got to see the whole platform from a viewing area. Quincy, the creator and co-founder of Wicklow Wolf began to tell us how their beer is created. He also taught us about different kinds of beer and what is needed to make beer.

After the lesson we made our way downstairs to the pizza van where we got pizza for lunch.

A huge thank you to Ms O'Connell for arranging this super opportunity.



Home Ec trip Two

By Caoimhe Tucker



The Home Economics class took a trip to the Butler's Chocolate Factory on the 9th of December.

Upon arrival we were given a white chocolatier coat and taken on a tour. We then walked into the chocolate factory from a viewing point. We were able to see the whole factory at work. We could see all the different stages of production. The moulding of the chocolate to the

decoration. We got to learn about the history of chocolate and it was very interesting to see that the easter eggs were already in the making.

We then moved onto decorating our own chocolate Santas. We were given a bowl of white chocolate and a chocolate Santa each to decorate. It was so much fun and a bit chaotic. It was such an interesting experience, throughout our

chocolate making we were shown how different moulds and methods can affect the end product. We were shown the machine that helps mould the chocolate and everyone was shocked to learn that it would take up to 2 hours at least to make before cooling.

Everyone had such a great time and were very grateful for Ms. O'Connell for bringing us.



Shoebox Appeal By Kate Merrigan

This term a large group of TY students organised a shoe box appeal for the children of Eastern Europe who are struggling this Christmas as part of their YSI module. "We were all really happy with the number of shoeboxes everyone brought in and hope they make lots of children happy" Darragh Kelly commented. Thanks to Ms Ní Fhéinneadha and Ms Buckley.



Dignity Bags By Ciara O'Farrell

This month's YSI module class has got up to a lot, but what is most noticeable and important are definitely the Dignity Bags. Dignity Bags are bags filled with hygiene products, clothes, food and water. These bags will be going to the homeless which will be supplied by 5 Loaves. A lot went into making these bags and I caught up with Isobel Bownes from 4A to hear about it. She explained to us what went into making these bags.

She firstly emailed the organisation who were more than happy to hear from her. Next, 4A made posters which were then hung up all around the school. Along with the posters, Isobel made an announcement to each year what supplies they were to bring in.

Once everything was donated a larger group of TYs went through each bag sorting it until 5 Loaves arrived with a van to take everything away.

This was a really eye opening experience and it made us reflect on how small actions can really help people.



Work Experience

By Micheal Hampson

A key part of our Transition Year curriculum is our work experience opportunities. They help provide us with valuable insight into the working world and help us find out where our key interests lie. Here we have a few interviews from our TY's on which work experiences they participated in.

Luke Redmond

Q: So what does the company do? STRATxAI is an investment company that uses AI and machine learning to make investment portfolios.

Q: What kind of work were you doing? My work was a lot of coding for them. I was working on a project to create an LSTM, for predicting stock returns.

Q: What were the most difficult parts of working there? The project was tough because there were some new concepts I had to get my head around but I enjoyed it anyway as the job involved a lot of my interests. Another thing that wasn't really challenging but tiring more than anything were the long days. Getting up at six in the morning to take a 2h bus to arrive for the 9-5 and then only getting home at around half seven was tough but I guess I'll get used to it when I get a full time job.

Q: What did you learn from working there? I don't know, they gave me a lot of useful tips and information in the industry of investing and coding, and it really gave me an idea of what kind of things we would be doing in the industry.

Q: Are there any interesting stories to share, or was it mainly work based? It was pretty work based, like long days, proper 9-5, it was a tough project, I was familiar with LSTMS and some concepts but there were some things I had to wrap my head around.

Q: What skills did you learn from this? I learnt about working with other people, as I had to integrate my code into their system. So I had to work with the team and it gave me skills to work and collaborate with others. This was one of the most important skills I learned. Time management was also a key part of this project, managing commuting and the project deadlines. I also learned skills directly related to coding.

Emma Malacalza

Q: So who were you working for? RPS group in Cork, which is an engineering firm that specialises in mechanical, electrical, structural and civil engineering. The course consisted of five days of working with their specific software used to engineer buildings and their projects around Ireland.

Q: What were the most difficult parts of working there? Probably the first day, learning how to use the software correctly, it was quite technical. We were very independent so we were mainly working by ourselves.

Q: What did you learn from working there? I learnt about the specific different types of engineering that I didn't know before, and I learned that structural engineering was my main interest, as we engaged in a project on designing an office block. As well, I learnt some practical skills on using the software.

Q: Are there any interesting stories to share? Not really, it was mainly just working, but it was interesting to work with new people on an experience I wouldn't have otherwise.

Defence Forces

I had the incredible opportunity to take part in a work experience programme with the Irish Defence Forces at Cathal Brugha Barracks. Brodie Mc Neill also attended this course with me. Over the course of five days, I took part in a variety of activities which were really fun.

On Monday, the first activity we did was a hands on weapons display where we got to hold and look at the guns and try on bullet proof vests. The highlight of the day was we got to go in the tanks. To finish off the day we got a tour of the barracks and the Michael Collins Museum within the barracks.

On the second day we tried a simulator

where we were to respond to different scenarios such as somebody forcefully entering the barracks. My favourite activity we did during the week was trying on the protective bombs suits which weighed 60kg. We also got to drive the machine they use to do diffuse bombs. This was really fun to do and we practiced picking up buckets.

On Wednesday morning the Defence Forces helicopter came in and went really low near us. It was really interesting to see and was so close to us. The next activity we did was drills. These drills showed us what soldiers do during combat and how they deal in different scenarios. To end the day we did physical training which was quite difficult and showed us how fit the soldiers have to be.

On Thursday we all took a bus to the Curragh Barracks in Kildare. This day we got to watch a military training exercise which was urban tactics. They were using rifles with blank rounds and smoke grenades and gpmgs. This was incredible to see and after they even let us have a try shooting blank rounds. To finish the week they told us about cadetship and recruitment on how to join the army and go to college while being in the defence forces. They gave us all a certificate for completing the week.

Overall, I it was a fantastic week. It was such a memorable experience. I learned so much and made great friends over the week.

By Eva Carey

Film Workshop By Ciara O'Farrell

One of the extracurriculars we took part in this year was the film workshop. During this we got to learn a lot about the film industry and production with Emmet. We started off by filming our own five second clip. He made us act out a scene where two girls had just gotten in a fight and were about to head into the principal's office. Everyone learnt how to use and operate the equipment. He showed us all the different purposes of lighting and how to use the camera and monitors.

We then set out to work on our main goal for the was to create a short two to three minute movie. Overall this workshop was great and it has definitely been one of the best extra curricular activities so far during this school year.



Engineering DCU By Beth Sherwin

The CTYI Engineering course in Dublin City University's Glasnevin Campus took place over the past three months. I took part in this course along with three other TY students; Eva and Pat Carey and David Harmon.

For me it was definitely a challenge to keep up with the level of work that the first years doing this module complete, but it was also very beneficial. We did two different strands of engineering throughout the course. They were materials engineering and electrical engineering. We all agree that materials engineering was harder for us. This was probably because it wasn't as interesting and we couldn't concentrate on what we were being taught.

In the mornings, we had a lecture. For me it was always materials in the morning but the other classes, class A and B, rotated through both modules each morning. This lecture lasted from 1000 to 1200, and then we had an hour's lunch.

In the afternoon we had a tutorial, where we answered questions based on the morning's lecture. The last lecture for me was about electronic engineering. Again, Eva and Pat's class and David and Finn's, would swap and do the other module from the one they did in the morning.

I feel like I got a lot out of the DCU CTYI Engineering course and I'm very glad I did it. It was a great experience and I would recommend it to anyone who has the chance to do it.

Christmas Carols By Kate Merrigan

On Friday 13th of December, a group of girls and boys from the choir went and sang Christmas Carols to the elderly at The Dargle Valley Nursing home. When asked about the experience Hannah, one of the pupils who went carolling said "It was really enjoyable, it was nice to see how happy we made the residents". It was a really fun experience. We really loved it.

Summary of Sister Act

By Juliette Duffy

The musical “*Sister Act*” follows the story of an aspiring nightclub singer: Deloris Van Cartier. She witnesses her boyfriend Curtis murdering one of his associates who he suspected was talking to the police.

After Deloris witnesses this she is placed into hiding in a convent for her safety. Here in the convent she is forced to dress as a nun and follow all the rules but her flamboyant personality gets in the way which irritates Mother Superior greatly.

She attends one of their choir practices and is immediately horrified by what she hears. Quickly she transforms the choir, turning it from a dull lifeless group into a talented enthusiastic ensemble. Slowly Curtis begins to catch up with her and her lies are beginning to unfold. Luckily the nuns have her back and it embodies the true meaning of friendship.

While in the convent Deloris learns many valuable lessons and makes many new friends.



Lead Interviews

By Albert Bernon and Pat Carey

Diego Quiros - *Sweaty Eddie*

How did you find the audition/ were you confident that you would get a part? I was extremely nervous during the audition process, mainly because I have never sung in front of my friends. Afterwards I was very confident that I would get a main role. I have always been decent at singing and Ms. Olohan knows this from my years in Junior School.

How did you feel when you got the part? At first I was unsure if my character Sweaty Eddie was a main character in the show. When I did find out that it was a principal role I was nervous and happy at the same time. I was nervous because of the size of the role I am taking on but happy because I was picked out of all the boys for this character. I am very anxious that I might get stage fright and freeze up on stage.

Has learning the role been difficult/ did you spend a lot of time learning your lines? Personally, I am very bad at learning lines and I have found the process very difficult and time consuming. Since getting my script almost all my free time has been taken up with learning copious amounts of lines.

Are you excited/how are you feeling about performing? I am excited to perform in front of my family and friends but worried that I may crumble under the pressure of performing in front of a crowd. I will be extremely glad when the show is over, as I'm going away on holiday afterwards.

Brett Gordon - *Curtis*

How did you find the audition/ were you confident that you would get a part? I knew that I was good at singing but I didn't know how well I would perform when putting on an American accent and with dancing. When I didn't get a call back I thought I didn't have a chance but the day we found out our roles we had a rehearsal and that's when I got a chance to sing and act. However, I was scared because I haven't been on stage before.

How did you feel when you got the part? I wasn't too excited to get the part: I get stage fright. But I knew that my mam would be happy as she is very big into stage performing.

Has learning the role been difficult/ did you spend a lot of time learning your lines? I have spent a lot of time learning my lines but I keep forgetting my lines and it is becoming frustrating coming up to the play. I found my song was the easiest part, however I found the Spotify song is a lot different to the instrumental version.

Are you excited/how are you feeling about performing? I am excited about performing, but I'm excited to have it end as it has taken up my whole January.



Lead Interviews By Kate Merrigan and Ruth Wilkinson

Elodie White - *Deloris Van Cartier*

How did you find the audition/ were you confident that you would get a part?

I was quite confident for the auditions as singing is something I love doing and I have sang in other school events before, so for me the auditions were more exciting than nerve-racking.

How did you feel when you got the part?

Hearing I got the lead role was such a great feeling!! I was definitely very, very excited.

Has learning the role been difficult/ did you spend a lot of time learning your lines?

I have found learning my lines a lot of work as I have a lot to learn but, despite this, I think I've done a good job and I know them all now!!!

Are you excited/how are you feeling about performing?

Up until the week before the show I felt confident and extremely excited, however with the show being a week away nerves are starting to kick in!!!

Aya Salman - *Mother Superior*

How did you find the audition/ were you confident that you would get a part?

I genuinely had no hope that I would get the role of Mother Superior or even any role at all as I didn't get a call-back originally, but when it was the last audition, I finally got a chance and I didn't care if I was embarrassed when acting and gave it my all. I crossed my fingers and luckily I got it.

How did you feel when you got the part?

I felt ecstatic. I couldn't even believe it... I knew my mum would be so happy. In a way I was sort of nervous as I knew my character had 2 solos and I have no experience singing in front of people.

Has learning the role been difficult/ did you spend a lot of time learning your lines?

I have spent an awful lot of time learning my lines and because my character is old and strict with a British accent I found it hard to embody her. The songs I have to sing are pretty difficult too.

Are you excited/how are you feeling about performing?

I'm so excited, it's something that I've looked forward to since first year but now that we have only a week before the show I'm getting a little nervous.

Diary Of Musical

By David Harmon

Day 1

On the opening day of the musical the atmosphere was ecstatic. We were all very excited to show everyone how much work we had put into this show. Although there were looks of nervousness, after the first song it had soothed our nerves and then the fun began. Although we had performed it many times before in front of other people, this was a different experience as people had paid to watch it. After the show finished we were delighted with our performance and were excited to perform on the second day.

Day 2

On the second day, although we were tired, we were still excited to perform in front of a new audience. This was our best performance as we had the perfect amount of practice and we were extremely confident as we had received great feedback from the audience the night before. Fatigue was starting to kick in, however the rush of adrenaline helped the cast deliver an unforgettable show. Once the second night had finished we were happy with our performances over the last couple of nights however we were exhausted and needed a good night's rest to prepare for the finale on Thursday night.



Day 3

On the final day we were all worn out and tired however we were excited to give the production staff, the audience and everyone who was there a great finale and mark ourselves as one of the best TY musical year groups. We were ready to have the best show of the production. During the show backstage we were all very nervous although we had performed this many times. This was one of the biggest nights in our TY year, there was no room for error and after the musical we concluded that we did our best and gave the best show we could.

Ms Olohan Interview

By Ciara O'Farrell

Why did you pick "Sister Act"?

"I thought that the girls needed a good shot at a show this year, a lot of musicals are male dominated. I thought they were a nice bright and lively group and that I felt I could cast it."

What's your favourite song in the production?

"Take Me to Heaven- Reprise."

What has been your most challenging number to plan?

"Fabulous baby reprise as there's a lot of elements to the song."

How long have you been producing musicals?

"I did my first show when I was nineteen."

What's your favourite dance?

"Take Me to Heaven- Reprise."

Would you do Sister Act again?

"Yes, if I could cast it, it's very important that you can cast it with the best of talent."

How long have you been preparing?

"Since casting, so November."

Interview with Roisin

By Emma Malacalza

Why did you pick "Sister Act"?

"Ms. Olohan and I came to the conclusion that this was the best show for this particular group based on the auditions everyone took part in at the start of the year."

What's your favourite song in the production?

"My favourite song is 'Take Me to Heaven - Reprise' as the nuns are singing and dancing for the very first time."

What has been your most challenging number to plan?

"I'd say anything with the boys - only because they aren't used to dancing and it's a new experience for them, but they are doing it very well."

How long have you been producing musicals?

"I was about eighteen when I started."

What's your favourite dance in the musical?

"Once again, probably 'Take Me to Heaven - Reprise'."

Would you do this musical again?

"Absolutely, it's a lot of fun and I think it's something that the audience will know from the movies, even though they're a bit different from the musical, however it's a fun show and there's something for everyone."

Costumes By Eva Carey

The costume design for our production of "Sister Act" the musical plays an important role in bringing the story to life. The costumes reflect the setting of the show, which is a combination of the colourful, urban life of the 1970's and the traditional clothing and atmosphere of the convent.

Firstly we had to get all the main characters body measurements to order all the costumes and make sure they would fit once they arrived. The day the costumes arrived there was great excitement as all the principal costumes and nun costumes finally made an appearance. To make sure we all looked the part and the same everyone had to order or buy their own plimsol black shoes.

The majority of the girls are nuns which means our costumes consist of a black nuns habit, black tights and black shoes. Two nuns are specifically different to show distinction between their personalities. This is seen in Mother Superior and Mary Roberts' costumes. As well as being nuns a handful of girls are also fantasy dancers and their costumes consist of silver and purple sparkly dresses, knee high boots and blonde curly wigs.

The majority of boys were in two different groups: the gangsters and homeless people. The boys had to supply their whole costumes themselves. For the gangsters they wore black trousers, a shirt and a jacket. For the homeless dance including some of the girls they all wear a long coat with a hat and a scarf.

My favourite costume would have to be the "costume" worn by Robert. He comes out in knee high purple high heels which match Deloris while also sporting the match blue fur from the beginning of the musical.

I also thought that Diego's quick changes on stage displayed his character well. He quickly changes on stage from policeman to disco then back to policeman all in one scene.

In my opinion the costumes really brought the musical together and help set the scene of Sister Act.

Ms Magee Interview

By Emily Roche

How long have you been creating sets for the musicals in St. Gerard's? "23 years."

Where did you derive inspiration from for the set of 'Sister Act'? "So, I looked up some other shows, and then I spoke to Ms. Olohan, to see what she needed, and then I went to the internet a lot of the time and put together a mock-up on my iPad to show it to her and then get her approval."

Would you say the set of 'Sister Act' is one of the easier or harder sets you've worked on? "It's not been the hardest but it's had its challenges. Things like trying to figure out that rose window pattern, it actually came out, worked out ok, but yeah they all have their challenges."

What musical would you say had the hardest set to create?

"See it used to be much bigger, we used to have two roll down blinds so to speak, and the back so it was a huge amount of work. I think I find doing buildings full stop really difficult, I always find 'Grease' difficult because it's got that school façade and then you're left with just a big building in the back so I suppose 'Grease'."

Are you a fan of 'Sister Act'?

"I don't know it very well at all. I like the movie, but I don't know the musical. I haven't seen many rehearsals so far, but I say it will be good fun."

This is the school's first time having 'Sister Act' as the TY musical, do you think Ms. Olohan will do it again in the future?

"I'd say so, it's a good fun one, it's got a mix of everything, a bit of life and music and all the rest and a story that people can relate to, so yeah I'd say for sure, it's a change."

How long have you been preparing?

"Since casting, so November."



Behind the Stage

What's it like working backstage?

Zack: It's pretty fun, a lot of hard work at parts though.

Michael: It's a lot of work, but it's definitely worth it to see the show go well

Will: Working on lights isn't always riveting, but it can be good fun with Zack and the crew.

What's the best part of working backstage?

Zack: Getting to see everyone perform their best, all that sort of thing. It's tough in certain parts, but other than that it's almost like a front row seat to watch everyone, and you get to see all the actors as well, talk to them, even though they're classmates, it's very fun to see them in their roles.

Michael: I really like seeing everyone from backstage, because you get to see them in their costumes, and you really feel like you're there with them, as if you're watching in the audience.

Will: My favourite part is just hanging around backstage, but it's also really good to learn how to use the lights and the different types of lighting.

What's the worst part of working backstage?

Zack: In certain scenes, there's lots and lots of stuff going on, and it gets a bit hectic, bringing all the benches down, making sure the props are brought off at the right time and we're not wasting time. That's probably the toughest part, but it's not too often so it's not too bad.

Michael: There's a lot of work involved, lifting the benches and all that.

Will: The worst part is definitely being backstage and having to take stuff off the stage, it's a huge pain.

What do you think of the show itself?

Zack: I think it's a good one, quite entertaining. There's lots of good acting, great songs, great dancing and a very good cast as well. I think everyone fits their roles.

Michael: I think it's great, it's really coming together. At the start, I didn't really think that it would happen, cause it was all over the place, and during rehearsal's people weren't fully committing, but as the days go by, every time we practice and rehearse, the show gets better.

Will: The show itself is pretty good, and it's coming together nicely. I think it'll be really good in the end.

If you could have a different role in the show, what would you choose?

Zack: I don't really know if I'd want to change, I really enjoy backstage, but if I probably had to... I don't know, I think everyone's already in their perfect role.

Michael: I think I'd stay with this job. I like it a lot. Because I'm not great at acting, et cetera, I think this is the best one for me

Will: If I could choose a different role, I would be the drag queen, because I would look good.

By Michael Hampson



Production Assistants

Isobel Bownes, Ciara O'Farrell and **Anastasia Kane** assisted the production of the TY Musical this year. They managed a lot of the behind-the-scenes things and I interviewed them about what they did.

They all agreed that their first job was helping Mrs. Olohan with the auditioning process. Isobel said that she helped with things like "what people's names were and how they were in general."

When asked if they put themselves forward for the job or if they were chosen, Ciara said she was chosen by Mrs. Olohan as she has "Helped with a lot of other events like the Carol Service". Isobel thought that she became a part of the production as a mix of both. She put herself forward for one thing a long time ago and that ended up with her being asked to do other things from then on.

I asked Isobel to give me an outline of her job, to which she said, "I work on everything from auditions to props. I know the show almost inside out so if people have a question they usually come to me. It can be stressful at times but at the end of the day I love it."

The final question I asked them was what their favourite part of stage production was. Ciara said she loved it all. "Working with the musical side, the costumes, the lighting, the stage- it all comes from being a production assistant." Isobel pinpointed her two favourite parts being "taking some of the weight off Róisín and Mrs. Olohan's shoulders," as well as "seeing something we've worked so hard on come together."

By Beth Sherwin





Trip to Killary

On Monday, the 24th of February, the entire TY group set off for a trip to The Killary Adventure Centre. Nestled beside a fjord on the west coast of Ireland, the center is surrounded by breathtaking landscapes. To the north lie the mountains of Mweelrea and Ben Gorm in County Mayo, while to the south are the Maumturk Mountains in County Galway. The group stayed in this wonderful setting for three nights, engaging in both outdoor and indoor activities while bonding with each other.

Upon arrival at Killary, the group enjoyed a quick lunch before heading to the activity centre to meet their newly assigned groups, which would remain their teams for the duration of the trip.

The first activity was the infamous bog run—an obstacle course set in thick mud, where the teams raced against each other. For some, this was the most challenging part of the trip. The mud was freezing cold, and hail was falling, but despite the difficult conditions, everyone made the most of it, laughing off the experience together.

After a hearty dinner, the group enjoyed a lively karaoke night, which was a great way to unwind. The next morning began with high rope team-building activities, which were thoroughly enjoyed by everyone. One of the more nerve-racking activities involved jumping from a high platform, an experience that provided an exhilarating adrenaline rush.

Following lunch, the group participated in gorge walking, which involved walking through a freezing cold river and climbing small waterfalls. Despite the chill, the activity provided an excellent opportunity for the students to have

meaningful conversations with classmates they hadn't spoken to much before.

That evening, the group took part in fun puzzles and games organized by the Killary instructors. Everyone was exhausted by the end of the day but excited for what the next day would bring.

The following day was just as enjoyable, though it passed more quickly since there were no water sports. The group took part in bushcraft activities, where they built shelters and made bread over a campfire they had started themselves. They also tackled a rock climbing wall and engaged in a team-building activity. The evening ended with a memorable drumming and rave session with an energetic drummer.

Despite the fun, there was a sense of sadness as the group knew that the following day would be their last. However, they cherished the time spent with friends, chatting and laughing into the night.

On the final day, the group enjoyed a morning of archery before heading back to the center for lunch and then making their way to the bus for the journey home. Though the trip was short, it was full of fun and unforgettable experiences. The students left with a sense of sadness that it was over but with memories that would last a lifetime. Many agreed that the trip had been their favourite part of TY.

By Elodie White

Difference Day By Ciara O'Farrell

On the 8th of April, 2025, the year group took part in this year's Difference Day activities for Festina Lente.

They arrived at Belfield House in Kilpeddar by 9 a.m. Upon arrival, they placed their bags inside the house and made their way up to the area where they would be working. The first job was to build a pagoda. The group began by leveling the ground. There was a massive pile of mud and dirt that had to be removed.

Other students started digging holes that needed to be 30 centimeters deep. Once the ground was level, they began laying down wood. It took considerable time and effort to ensure the ground underneath the wood was even. They continued stacking, drilling, and screwing the wood together to form the base of the benches. Timber was nailed to the outside of the benches, and one of the poles was placed in the original hole and secured with cement.

Earlier in the day, some other students had also helped take down an old rotten fence to make space for a new and improved one. An orange string was laid down to mark

where the new post holes should be dug, each needing to be 45 cm deep. The students tackled the holes together. This was challenging due to the amount of rocks and roots they had to dig out.

By the end of the day the students had dug about a total of about seventy holes. Afterward, they helped mix water and cement in the holes and carefully positioned the fence posts. Aligning and balancing the posts before the cement set proved tricky. Once secured, they used drills and measuring tools to connect the posts with wooden planks. Other students were working on the seating area, laying out the walls and flooring.

After lunch, work resumed on reinforcing the bench bases and attaching the timber tops to complete the benches. With two hours left, they began constructing the structure's walls by stacking timber and nailing each piece to the earlier-installed pole, ensuring proper balance and spacing. To finish the project, black mats were placed on the ground.

Overall, the group was very happy with the work they accomplished. The students felt that contributing to a project like this was important and expressed pride in their efforts for this year's Difference Day.



Howth Hike

On Friday, the 4th of April, our Transition Year students embarked on a hike along the stunning Howth coastline to raise funds for Difference Days, an organization we've partnered with for several years before. Each year, our TY students raise money and volunteer their time for charitable causes, and this year they are supporting Festina Lente, an organisation offering equestrian centered activities for people of all ages and abilities, specifically those with additional needs.

The day started early at 8 30 a.m., with the students gathering at the school before heading to Bray Dart Station. The train ride to Howth took an hour and a half, and the journey was filled with excitement, chatter, and laughter as the students anticipated the hike ahead.

Upon arriving in Howth, the students set off on the red route, which winds along the cliffside of the peninsula. The breathtaking views of the coastline and the Atlantic Ocean were an immediate highlight, making the hike even more special. Though the trail was challenging for some, they persevered with great determination, and teamwork. With every step, students pushed through the difficulties and supported each other along the way.

Teachers also joined the hike, offering great encouragement. They helped ensure everyone was safe while motivating the students to appreciate the natural

beauty around them and enjoy the journey. The hike was not only about reaching the destination but also about learning to appreciate the process.

This experience deepened the TY's understanding of the importance of giving back to the community and supporting meaningful causes. The hike also served as an opportunity to connect with nature and develop a deeper appreciation for preserving such beautiful landscapes.

After the hike, students had time to rest and enjoy lunch in the area near the Dart Station. As they ate, they shared their favorite parts of the hike and reflected on the experience. There was a sense of accomplishment as they realised the impact of their efforts—not only had they completed a challenging hike, but they had also raised funds for a cause that would help others.

The Howth Hike was not just a physical challenge but also a powerful learning experience. It taught our TY students about resilience, teamwork, and the importance of giving back to others. Most importantly, it reminded them that even small efforts can make a significant impact.

By Michael Hampson

Convent Trip

A small group of us TY's embarked on a trip to visit the Redemptoristine Sisters in Dublin on the 26th of March.

We had the privilege of meeting with two of the sisters who shared their stories on how they were called to live a religious life. We heard all about what life is like for them in the convent.

This insightful discussion was so interesting as it gave us an understanding of how devoted they are to Christ and how much they sacrifice for the sake of Christianity. They also told us how their main role as nuns is to pray for the forgiveness of others.

While some nuns from other convents around the world participate in community service where they interact with those who may be in need, the nuns at the Redemptoristine Convent put their faith in prayer.

Later we had the pleasure of joining the sisters in prayer for Mass, we were blown away by their knowledge of the bible as they recited the verses off by heart and sang with such strong passion.

We were all inspired by the dedication and hard working attitude of the nun and were so grateful to have had the experience to get a glimpse of their daily life.

By Kate Merrigan



London Business Trip By Caoimhe Tucker

For our TY business programme we were given the opportunity to travel to London as a group of accounting, economic and business students. This will definitely go down as an amazing TY experience. We did so much it was hard to comprehend.

We started the trip off with a walking tour of the Financial District. We went to the Royal Exchange, Lloyd's of London and some of the old accounting firms and coffee houses where business and information was exchanged. After a quick lunch the group headed off to explore the Bank of England Museum. This was very interesting and we even got the chance to hold a bar of gold. We took a 20 minute walk

down to the River Thames. We went on a cruise past the London Eye and the Palace of Westminster.

The next day we went to the Museum of Brands. This was an all round favourite of the trip. It was such a fascinating experience and everyone enjoyed it. After lunch we had a workshop on the Business of Theatre Talk and a trip on the London Eye.

On our last day we started with a tour of Wembley stadium. This was definitely one of the coolest parts of the trip. We got to see the footballers changing rooms and go on the pitch. It was such a cool trip and everyone thoroughly enjoyed it all!



Work Experience

For this week of work experience I was originally going to work at the wall climbing gym in Sandyford. However, a week before work experience Mr Grumley emailed me about a course that Trinity College was doing called the Transition Year Physics Experience (TYPE for short).

Each day started with a lecture from different PHD students and professors about their research. This was followed by tours and more discussions. I found all of this really interesting.

The first 4 lectures were about exoplanets and discovering them, which I found really insightful. The rest of the lectures were about quantum physics and related topics (also really good). They were all very relative to the time and I thought that was really cool.

We also learned about what it's like to research your phd. For example I did not know you got paid to research.

After the lecture for the first 3 days we then had tours around the labs of phd students: most of them seemed to be working on nano technology of some kind, and one team was working on a dry lubricant that could be used to save energy due to reduced friction.

We also worked on a group project in threes on different applications of physics in our life. My group focused on physics in rugby, badminton and ping pong.

We focused mostly on the aerodynamics of each sport. We worked on it for 1 hour each day except for Friday which is when we had a small conference for most of the day.

All in all it was great fun, really interesting and all the staff/ lecturers were really nice. I would definitely recommend the TYPE for anyone who thinks they might take physics in Leaving Cert or even to college!

By Adam Devitt

Neurodiversity Talk

Early in March, we had the opportunity to attend a talk on neuro-divergence in the Junior School Hall. The talk focused mainly on dyslexia and gave us all a better understanding of what it is and how it affects people in everyday life. It was a really good experience that helped break down a lot of common stereotypes and misunderstandings.

The speaker started by sharing her personal story, including the challenges she faced growing up with dyslexia. She explained that she was diagnosed at a young age and often felt like she was behind or different from her classmates. But as she got older, she began to see that dyslexia wasn't a weakness, it was just a different way of learning and thinking. She made it really clear that dyslexia doesn't stop you from achieving your goals. In her case, it helped her discover creative strengths, have a great job, and build a happy family life.

She spoke with honesty and confidence, and it was inspiring to hear how she turned what others may see as a setback into something positive. Her story showed us that being neurodivergent isn't a disadvantage, it may just mean that your brain works differently.

Overall, the talk was a big success. It gave us all a new perspective and helped us understand and appreciate the strengths of those with dyslexia.

By David Harmon

Trip to Paris By Elodie White

From the 28th to the 31st of March, our French class went on a once-in-a-lifetime trip to Paris. From delicious food to unforgettable sights, it was truly an amazing experience.

We started bright and early at the airport and headed straight to the Stade de France for a fascinating tour. After settling into our hostel, we took the metro to the Champs-Élysées, where we saw the sun set behind the Arc de Triomphe before enjoying dinner and shopping with friends.

The next day, we visited a science museum, then explored the area around the Louvre and the Tuileries Gardens. We had lunch by the Seine and went on a walking tour of Paris, learning cool facts about the city. We visited Montparnasse Tower for amazing views and then the Basilica of Sacré Coeur which had a peaceful and beautiful atmosphere. After a delicious dinner, we were exhausted but happy.

Day three was all about Disneyland Paris! We went on thrilling rides, including the Hollywood Tower, and ended the day with magical fireworks at the castle. It was one of the highlights of the trip.

On the final day, we visited the Eiffel Tower, took some last photos, and had one final crêpe before heading back to Ireland.

Overall, the trip was incredible. I got to practice my French, make great memories with friends, and experience what might just be the best holiday of my life.



First aid By Juliette Duffy

The TY students were lucky enough to have the chance to participate in a three day first aid course. At the end of this course anyone who did the full three day course would be a certified first aid responder. There were many different modules that we had to get through and many practical sessions as well.

We spent a lot of time learning the different steps that are involved when you have to do CPR. After we were all familiar with the steps we got to practice doing CPR on the mannequins they had brought in. We all got our own pocket masks so we could even practice giving breaths. This was a great way to practice such an important life skill that you could have to use at any moment.

It wasn't just CPR we were learning about. We learnt how to manage many other medical emergencies. We were shown how to properly bandage deep cuts on your arm or leg and were

also told and shown how to put on a triangular sling for someone who had broken or dislocated their shoulder.

After we were all very familiar with these techniques we moved onto the medical conditions that you are born with or can grow into such as diabetes anaphylactic allergies and seizures. We all learned how to administer an epi pen and even got to try it on ourselves as the instructor had brought in a trainer epi pen. We learned the signs to look out for if someone with diabetes sugar drops or gets too high. Lastly we learned what to do if someone is having a seizure.

At the end of this course we all had to take a 20 question multiple choice test. This was to make sure we all knew exactly what to do in these situations. This was a very helpful and informative course that I'm sure will be very useful to us all when we are older.

Hospitality skills By Emma Malacalza

This March the whole year had the opportunity to take part in a hospitality skills course. The course was a one day workshop where we were able to learn skills that will come to good use in years to come. We were split into groups and shown how to set a table professionally. Then, we practiced how to hold a tray with drinks correctly, carry multiple plates in one go and take orders properly.

The course was split into two halves; during the first half of the course we learned all our new skills involving serving and taking orders, whereas in the second half we put our skills into practice by creating a mock restaurant and had people both working as staff and customers. This was a fun activity because everyone had their own role varying from chef to demanding customer.

This workshop was very helpful to everyone and whether people had done a similar work experience or was there first time practicing hospitality everybody learnt something new.

Sign language By Emily Roche

Over the 24th and the 25th of March our year group took part in a Sign Language course where we learnt various hand gestures and symbols that would allow us to have a conversation in ISL (Irish Sign Language). These are good skills to have if you were to encounter one of the 5,000 deaf people in Ireland.

We were taught by Claudine, a lady who works for a company where they hire interpreters for deaf people. The first thing we learnt was the alphabet so that even if we couldn't understand some of the more technical signs, we could still spell out whatever we wanted to say. We got the hang of this by signing out our names and where we're from. Some specific towns and countries had their own symbol to identify them.

To test us further, Claudine stopped talking entirely and asked us questions only using ISL. We had to work together as a group to figure out what she was asking us and give back answers using sign language. While this did take a while, we eventually got the hang of it and it gave us an idea of what it would be like to have a real conversation in ISL.

Afterwards, we were given a brief history of ISL and some more background in sign language as a whole. We looked at various celebrities who are deaf and how they are represented in t.v. shows and movies.

This course was very beneficial as it helped us to establish effective communication with individuals who are deaf.

Connor Harris Talk By Ciara O'Farrell

We had the chance to attend an inspiring and thought-provoking talk by Connor Harris. His presentation was both eye-opening and deeply personal; it left a lasting impression on the whole year.

Connor spoke openly about his life experiences, including the challenges he has faced and the lessons he has learned along the way. He talked about mental health, resilience, and the importance of looking out for one another. His honesty and vulnerability helped create a real connection with the audience, and it encouraged many of us to reflect on our own lives and how we treat others.

One of the most powerful parts of Connor's talk was when he spoke about the pressures young people face today—social media, fitting in, and the fear of failure. He reminded us that it's okay not to have everything figured out, and that asking for help is a sign of strength, not weakness. His words offered reassurance and gave us a fresh perspective on how to deal with everyday struggles.

The talk wasn't just emotional—it was also full of useful advice. Connor gave practical tips on how to take care of our mental wellbeing, support our friends, and be more aware of what others might be going through behind the scenes.

Wayne Denner Talk By Albert Bernon

Wayne Denner is a well known public speaker who focuses on internet safety. His intention is that his talks and his actions will help the digital world become a safer environment for young people.

We, as a TY group, learned a lot from Wayne Denner's speech on internet safety.

Through his talk we become more aware of both the benefits and dangers of the internet. He brought up the fact that seven different families have come to him in the last twelve months with cases of their children being blackmailed for something they sent. It is alarming that there is such a high amount of people that have these problems. However, to be told about this makes us much more aware of the potential dangers.

He also explored solutions to safeguard your social media accounts and protect you from these dangers. Steps such as turning your account to private can be taken, but the main one being two factor authentication to add an extra layer of security. We enjoyed this speech because Wayne presented it in a very pleasing way but the information he was spreading was serious and helpful.



Barista Course By Emma Malacaza

This November, as part of the optional extra curricular activities, Transition Year students had the opportunity to take part in the one day Barista workshop. This was the highlight of the month for many as the course was very interactive, educational and enjoyable at the same time.

The workshop consisted of learning the basics of the machines, producing the ideal espresso, heating and aerating the milk and working in a mock up

coffee shop where we learned how to work together under time pressure while serving our classmates and teachers.

Firstly, we were instructed step by step how to prepare the machine under supervision. Everybody got multiple turns and eventually, once we were ready, we moved on to producing the espresso and calibrating the perfect coarseness and taste of the coffee.

After this, we were shown how to aerate the milk for drinks like hot chocolate, mocha, latte and the cappuccino and briefly learned how to

pour the milk to create designs as part of latte art.

Lastly we were all assigned different roles and given orders to then serve to our "customers" - in other words our classmates and friends and their teachers in need of a coffee.

In order to complete the course and receive the certificate, we were required to complete a three hour theory course followed by quiz questions. Overall it was really a great experience enjoyed both by students and teachers who benefited from the free coffees.

