



## BRIEFS

## Lees Road hosts Park Walk

LEES Road's Park Walk initiative is a continuation of Operation Transformation, to encourage more people to walk at Parkrun every Saturday. Walkers are always welcome at Parkrun but surveys have shown that fear of being last, or standing out as very unfit, are barriers for people starting Parkrun. The Park Walk initiative is aiming to break down those barriers.

On Saturday at 9.30am, a six-week Park Walk initiative will start at Lees Road Sports Complex, Ennis, Clarisford Park, Killaloe, and Vandeleur Park, Kiltrush, along with the other 82 Parkrun Ireland locations.

By highlighting Park Walk for a fixed time period, organisers hope to attract walkers of all abilities by providing them peer support during Parkrun.

Organisers are teaming up with the Irish Heart Foundation, Get Ireland Walking and Clare Sports Partnership.

## Daffodil Day

DAFFODIL Day volunteers from Ennis launched Daffodil Day 2019 at Treacy's West County Hotel on Monday. Daffodil Day takes place on Friday, March 22 and funds the Irish Cancer Society's vital services for cancer patients and their families nationwide.

The local Daffodil Day volunteers are appealing to the public to volunteer to sell daffodils on March 22 and to donate to support people affected by cancer.

Speakers in attendance at Monday's event included Hilary Neville, local Irish Cancer Society night nurse, who spoke about her work supporting terminally-ill cancer patients at home; and volunteer driver Frank O'Sullivan, who discussed his role in bringing patients to their chemotherapy appointments.

## Gathering of reflection

EUCARIST ministers from all parishes in the cluster area are invited to a gathering of reflection next Tuesday at 8pm in St Flannan's College.

## Trócaire boxes

ASH Wednesday is next Wednesday. Trócaire boxes will shortly be available and during Lent this year, morning prayer will be prayed in the Cathedral each weekday morning at 7.20am for 15 minutes before mass.

## Education fund

THE second collection at all masses this weekend is the annual appeal to help educate students currently studying for the priesthood. This second collection is to support their formation to ensure priests will be available in the coming years.

## Baptismal team

THE parish is currently forming a new baptismal team and would welcome expressions of interest from parishioners who would like to help in this ministry and would have one hour to spare in the month. Contact Fr Tom for more details.

## Cloughleigh Social Club

ANYONE who would be interested in joining a social club in the Cloughleigh area can contact Fr Ger or Kieran Walsh on 065 6824043 or 087 2870399. The vision for the club would be to build up community spirit by holding fortnightly social gatherings, music nights, card playing, chat, cup of tea and hopefully, in time, to arrange small trips away.

# Orla triumphs over adversity

Carol Byrne

ORLA Platten, a student of Coláiste Muire Ennis, who scooped a special achievement award at Saturday's Clare Garda Divisional Youth Awards, has been described by her nominator as someone who might have been "born with the heart the size of a walnut" but in reality, "her heart is the size of an ocean".

As I sit with her and her family to discuss this award, one cannot but be moved by the warmth and the love this family share. Orla is brimming with emotion from the recognition she has received and is not shy about telling the world how much the support she has received from mum, Jean and Jean's husband, Anthony, has meant to her.

Explaining what her daughter has been through, Jean details the hospital visits, consultants and surgeries that Orla has had over the years.

There can be no doubt but that Orla has been through a lot, having undergone 14 major operations, including four heart surgeries, four cervical spine surgeries, a neurosurgery on her spinal cord, as well as four operations on her right hip and one on the left hip. However, to meet her, you wouldn't know she had been through all that trauma.

The trials and tribulations of those events in their lives is evident in how Jean recalls them. Immediately afterwards, it is with huge emotion that Orla asks for the chance to say, "I'd like to thank my mam because I love her so much. Thank you for supporting me and I just love you so much."

"This, Jean says, "is Orla". "This wonderful personality.



Orla Platten with her Special Achievement Award and her mum, Jean.

She is the first to look after kids if they are upset; she has a lovely nature about her. We are awful proud of you," she said.

Orla was born with Down Syndrome and a heart condition and had her first open heart surgery at four months old.

"She was very ill as a baby and when we were discharged after the first three weeks in hospital,

the first thing I was told was to find my way back to the emergency department, so that if we needed to get back there in a hurry, we would know where we were going. We were living in Southampton when she was born. She has had intermittent surgeries in her life but every time she gets back on the horse," Jean said.

Having been nominated for her award by her teacher, Gemma Hassett, Orla and Jean said it was so fabulous to be acknowledged in that way. To get the award and to be considered for the national award selection process is wonderful.

"I was shocked and I was so delighted I got it. It was a great feeling. When I collected the

award, I got a standing ovation," Orla said.

Jean said as a family, "We are absolutely so proud of Orla. We have witnessed every single bit of her highs and lows in her life and we acknowledge every day the bravery and courage she has shown and she has been brilliant. She has gone to a mainstream school and Coláiste have been

great; they are so inclusive."

Orla started first year in secondary school in late October because she had major surgery, which was hard because friendships were formed. Despite that, Orla has a great network of friends, who have stuck by her throughout.

Supporting her on the day of the awards were her family; teacher Ms Hassett; Bernie McDermott, who looked after Orla from the age of four; Bernie Glynn, her SNA; Martina Reynolds, Orla's respite worker, and Noreen Buckley, a psychologist with the Clare children's disability team, who offered her support.

Jean said, "I couldn't stop crying on the day. For us, it was about celebrating Orla's journey and these were the people who have been here."

Her award is currently on the kitchen table at the centre of the house for all to see, with a specially designated area due to be constructed soon in the living room, where it will have pride of place.

Having watched the Oscars earlier this week, Orla said when she heard she was getting an award, it was her Oscar equivalent.

Currently in the middle of studying for her Leaving Certificate Applied, Orla is hoping to get involved in the Streetwise programme in Ennis once she finishes school.

Orla acknowledged her teacher Ms Hassett for nominating her. "I felt delighted and I'm so glad you are my PE teacher and my nominator," she said, adding that she really enjoyed the day.

Ms Hassett described Orla as "our little warrior on wheels"

and said she is a prime example of Joanne O'Riordan's famous phrase "There is no such word as impossible, as to me that reads 'I'm possible'".

Ms Hassett chose to nominate Orla because she has been through so much in such a short space of time.

"She's a miracle really. Orla's tenaciousness to succeed has been infectious around the school. I taught Orla in Leaving Certificate Applied leisure and recreation last year but I have known Orla since she was a young child, who was in halo brace [a steel brace that had to be screwed into her skull to prevent any spinal damage to her vertebrae]."

She said although Orla was in this brace, that was not what people noticed about her; it was her huge smile and greeting that caught everyone's attention.

Orla took part in every PE class she could with the utmost motivation and enthusiasm and Ms Hassett explained it was a big moment for her to go on an activity trip to Delphi in County Mayo last year.

"It was her first time away on a school trip and with the help of her SNAs and her classmates, she had a brilliant time participating in all the activities. When I saw all she had to go through, just to be able to go on the trip, get around to get breakfast, try and do activities the same as her classmates, she really impressed me. She never complained once and had us all in stitches laughing. She has the drive of a whole rugby team driving to get over a finish line when it comes to getting things done."

Orla's application now goes on to be considered by the national awards selection board.

## Hurley/Hoey fundraiser to finish on a high

Derrick Lynch

THE seventh and final Hurley/Hoey Run, Walk and Cycle will take place on Saturday, March 9, starting at the St Joseph's, Doora-Barefield GAA Club grounds.

The event has been running in memory of two well-known figures in the Doora-Barefield parish, Eilish Hurley and Ger Hoey.

To date, it has raised more than €92,000 for local charities, with this year's running set to take that figure over the €100,000 mark. This year's two nominated charities are the Barefield-based Clare Crusaders and the Clare branch of the Samaritans.

St Joseph's, Doora-Barefield clubman Seánie McMahon is one of those who has been involved in the event since its inception and he said it has proven to be a huge local event.

"We have had a great run with the Hurley/Hoey. It has been a

great community event down through the years and it has actually been supported by people right across the county from various clubs. It was an event set up to honour Eilish and Ger, who both passed away too young, and we are delighted with how it has gone.

"We are hoping to finish in style now with this year's event. We have added a few bits and pieces to it as it has gone on. For example, three years ago we added the cycle element to it. There's a 25km cycle and a 50km cycle and we have added a 5km walk to it this year. We are trying to accommodate everybody because there will be people who want to be competitive over the 10km and you will have others who just want to leisurely stroll around. It's the same with the cycle. We have a nice spin of 50km and a shorter one too, so we would like to feel we are catering for everybody in that sense.

"There's a fantastic committee involved in the background and there's never a shortage of refreshments after the event. It has always worked out to be a great day and because this year is our last one, we are eager to make sure it's going to be one to remember for everyone," he said.

Seánie lit up the hurling field for many years for both club and county but will be taking on the 50km cycle or the 5km walk in the 2019 Hurley/Hoey event?

"As I keep telling people, I am there to steward and make sure people get home safely but not too many are buying that. I will be giving a hand on the sidelines again this year, so hopefully it will go ok," he smiled.

The cycle event gets underway at 10am with the run/walk commencing at 11am. Registration is at the St Joseph's, Doora-Barefield clubhouse in Gurteen and more information is available on the Hurley/Hoey Facebook page.



Runners and walkers taking part in the Hurley Hoey event last year.

Photograph by John Kelly



Coláiste Muire's All-Ireland senior finalists receiving tops from Jerry Donnellan of Donnellan's Centra, Loughville, Lahinch Road Ennis. (From left) Finia O'Brien, Meadhbh O'Connor, Jerry Donnellan, Damian O'Halloran, Mark Sweeney, Darragh McMahon, Emily Cahill and David Greene (deputy principal).

## Enterprising students showcase their ideas

MORE than 400 second-level students from 15 schools across Ennis and Clare will be bidding to secure a golden ticket to this year's Student Enterprise Programme National Final in Croke Park, when they showcase their business ideas at the county final on March 6 and 7 in Treacy's West County Hotel.

Hosted by Local Enterprise Office Clare, the programme was launched last September.

The upcoming two-day event will see students from junior, intermediate and senior categories showcasing their businesses, products and services across four categories; food, craft, retail and technology and manufacturing. A panel of local entrepreneurs will engage with the students, before the successful group or individuals are selected to represent Clare in the Student Enterprise Programme

National Final on May 3. "Participating students have demonstrated a wealth of entrepreneurial skills and an acute understanding of how to develop and promote a business idea," explained Pádraic McElwee, head of enterprise at Local Enterprise Office Clare.

"Some exceptional ideas have been developed from ideas to trading businesses over the last nine months," he added. "This is

a great opportunity for students to experience what it is like to set up a business and we at the Local Enterprise Office are delighted to be a part of it. It is inspiring to see how students have engaged in the programme and it is great to see the potential that some of these student enterprises have going forward. I cannot wait to see the businesses delivering their best pitch on the day of the final."

## Whistle-stop tour of a history of Ireland

GLÓR Theatre has a special treat in store for St Patrick's Day, as it presents a new theatre production that brings audiences the history of Ireland in an entertaining way for the whole family. Based on his hugely successful YouTube series and published books, John D Ruddy brings *Manny Man does the History of Ireland* to Ennis on Sunday, March 17.

Delivered by Donegal's An Grianán Productions, it also features Louise Conaghan and is directed by Rachael Devir. In the show, Syn and Oppy plough through Irish history with illustrated cut-outs and craziness on their nationwide tour.

It moves from the Ice Age all the way to Ireland today, all in less than 90 minutes.

*Manny Man* creator and one of the leads in the upcoming stage production, John D Ruddy has said it has been very gratifying to see his character and brand grow

over the past decade.

"When the YouTube videos first went viral, it was very exciting, as hundreds of views turned into thousands. Five years later and the channel has had over 30 million views. "Bringing it to life on the stage has been a very different experience in its creation. When I adapted the videos into books, it was simply a case of structuring and expanding on what I had already written. Writing for the stage had an entirely different set of challenges. I couldn't just have a narrator flying through all the history and so I came to finding the characters of Syn and Oppy, who bring us through the roller-coaster of Irish history, playing over 50 characters each. It adds a whole new dimension to *Manny Man* and I look forward to what this will do in the future."

John said he is very excited to be taking *Manny Man does the History of Ireland* to thea-

tres across the island of Ireland. "It's been a wonderful opportunity to have this play been seen by anyone, let alone having the opportunity to bring it across the country. I was on tour with Co-Motion's Frank Pig Says Hello by Pat McCabe during October and November last year, starting with the Gaiety Theatre and heading round the country, which gave me good insight into what was in store for *Manny Man* hopefully."

*Manny Man* appeals to very broad audience, John said.

"Adults will enjoy the little subtle nods, kids will love the slapstick and the different characters. "Eight-year-olds enjoyed it and 80-year-olds enjoyed it when we premiered it during Earagail Arts Festival in County Donegal last year. It was wonderful to have created something that could bring friends and families together to enjoy a night of laughing and even a few tears along the way."

## 20 new jobs at McDonald's

THE McDonald's restaurant on the Gort Road, Ennis which is owned by local franchisee Kieran McDermott, has received a major €1 million digital makeover that has created 20 new jobs for the

local area. The innovations are aimed at improving the customer experience at the restaurant, which recently reopened to customers.

To improve the speed and ease

of ordering, customers will have the option to use one of the restaurant's self-order kiosks, while table service will also be introduced. Diners can also avail of on-site Samsung Galaxy tablets.