

*A Collection of Writings*  
*by*  
*Students of*  
*Clare Adult Basic Education Service*

## Acknowledgements

This publication was produced by:  
Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board  
Clare Adult Basic Education Service (CABES)  
Further Education and Training Centre  
Clonroad Campus  
Ennis  
Co. Clare

To mark the 30<sup>th</sup> issue, *Simply Said* is also available to read online at:  
<https://joom.ag/SpsY>

Your comments and suggestions are very welcome.  
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#### Back cover:

*Simply Said* ceramic tiles by learners from around the county facilitated by tutor Marie Madden.

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## Foreword

Welcome to the 30<sup>th</sup> issue of *Simply Said*, the annual collection of writings by adult learners taking part in programmes with the Clare Adult Basic Education Service, which is part of Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board. This issue marks 30 years of published writings, which is a wonderful achievement for our learners.

The writers of *Simply Said*, who write, create and craft stories through a rich variety of media, attend classes with us in centres across Clare. Some attend group classes in writing and spelling, everyday maths, computers, English language, cookery, craft, horticulture, sewing and woodwork. Others choose to work on their own with a tutor to improve their reading and writing skills. Regardless of the word count, the process of writing, correcting, editing and proofreading each draft is the same for every writer who is published here.

This year's edition has 173 articles and the writers were inspired by many subjects including rugby, GAA, travel, friendships, animals, snow, proverbs and childhood memories. Despite huge changes in the world around us, learners' interests have not changed too much over the past thirty years.

Writers continue to share personal stories about their families and homes; tell tales about farming, pastimes and hobbies; recall memories of their childhoods in Ireland, Poland and Pakistan, and advise Mayo how to win the Sam Maguire Cup.

There is a wonderful international dimension to this year's publication, with Syrian perspectives on life, Ethiopian proverbs, Russian, Venezuelan and Chinese cuisine, holidays in England and Spain and recurring expressions of love for homelands. The stories are both uplifting and poignant; the proverbs are deep and the recipes are mouth-watering.

This year, to mark the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary, our learners have worked on a variety of collaborative pieces to celebrate 30 years of stories and learning in Clare. Groups from our centres in east, west, north and south Clare came together to tell a communal story through word, through music, through art and digital media. This represents the broad range of media we use to tell stories and to represent our varied learner groups from all over the world.

Thank you to all tutors, especially the volunteer tutors, who encourage learners to value the knowledge and life experience that they have and support them on their learning journeys. Thanks and well done to those involved in the planning and production of this year's special publication.

Finally, and most importantly, congratulations and thank you to all who have written in this year's publication. We hope you enjoy reading *Simply Said 2018*.

*The CABES team*

## Contents

<b>Title</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Page</b>
Princess Lily and Princess Ber	<i>Lily &amp; Sinéad</i>	1
The room	<i>Sarah</i>	1
Aurora Hopper meets Freddie	<i>Sofia &amp; Aoibheann</i>	2
Big Paw	<i>Jack &amp; Siobhan</i>	2
The blue bottle	<i>Lisa</i>	3
Avery's adventure in the forest	<i>Avery &amp; Jackie</i>	4
Pebble	<i>Mark</i>	4
Sprout and grow	<i>Ann Marie</i>	5
Don't give up!	<i>Kasia</i>	5
Sewing makes me happy	<i>Marissa</i>	6
Letter to Teresa	<i>Beata, Lucy, Marcela &amp; Maria</i>	7
Six word story	<i>Naila</i>	7
Horticulture class	<i>Sinead</i>	8
Horticulture class	<i>Liz</i>	8
Horticulture class	<i>Gillian</i>	8
Digital drawing	<i>Kamila</i>	9
Horticulture class	<i>Carol</i>	9
Horticulture class	<i>Fionna</i>	10
Horticulture class	<i>Marie</i>	10
Horticulture class	<i>Fiona</i>	10
From Oman to Ireland	<i>Nashaat</i>	11
From Accra to Co. Clare	<i>Carolyn</i>	11
Making hay	<i>Brendan</i>	12
Summer time	<i>Yingxia</i>	12
Worst day of my childhood on the farm	<i>Luzilene</i>	13
My experience in LIT	<i>Helen</i>	14

Sewing makes me happy	<i>Sayed</i>	15
Enjoy today	<i>Bridie</i>	15
My lovely trip	<i>Susanne</i>	16
The value of salt	<i>Mahanaz</i>	17
How I got to know my neighbours	<i>Domínika</i>	18
Vipassana Meditation	<i>Tony</i>	19
The sewing class	<i>A</i>	20
Memory teddy	<i>Zoe</i>	21
What makes me happy?	<i>Zamzam</i>	21
Taking care of my parents	<i>Ammonrat</i>	21
Preparation for NCT	<i>K</i>	22
What makes me happy?	<i>Tina</i>	22
About me	<i>Franciszek</i>	22
The south of Poland	<i>Greg</i>	23
What makes me happy?	<i>Kwaku</i>	24
What makes me happy?	<i>Bibirazia</i>	24
What makes me happy?	<i>Simon</i>	24
What makes me happy?	<i>AbuKawsar</i>	24
Sewing makes me happy	<i>Ger</i>	25
My family	<i>Genet</i>	25
Sewing makes me happy	<i>Kitty</i>	25
Unsung hero	<i>Bernie</i>	26
Sewing makes me happy	<i>Anne</i>	26
Sewing makes me happy	<i>Marion</i>	27
Easter holidays	<i>Pat</i>	27
My family	<i>Besjana</i>	27
Happiness	<i>Tony</i>	28
A cold game	<i>Roman</i>	28
Sewing makes me happy	<i>Carol</i>	28
Kilfenora snow	<i>Michael</i>	29

About me	<i>Feng</i>	29
My pastimes	<i>Declan</i>	29
Mountain Mick's public house	<i>Colm</i>	30
Ali from Syria	<i>Ali</i>	30
A mirror image	<i>Lucyna</i>	31
Sewing makes me happy	<i>Anne</i>	31
Lisdoonvarna snow	<i>Susan</i>	32
Gardening	<i>Juliya</i>	32
Singing	<i>Martin</i>	32
Basket	<i>Denis</i>	33
Bruges	<i>John</i>	34
A crisis of conscience	<i>Kay</i>	35
Belgium	<i>William</i>	37
The Glen, Ennistymon	<i>Stefan</i>	38
The Nikulin Circus	<i>Algis</i>	38
Going abroad	<i>Robbie</i>	38
Music: my life	<i>Karel</i>	39
Lahinch in the summer time	<i>Seamus</i>	39
In the summer ...	<i>Margaret</i>	40
Sports	<i>Ferí</i>	40
Good friends	<i>Mariàn</i>	41
The zip	<i>Angela</i>	41
Art is important	<i>Marie</i>	41
My favourite holiday	<i>Ingrída</i>	42
Mystic certainties	<i>Rita</i>	42
My Irish husband cooks Venezuelan food	<i>Maria Teresa</i>	43
Postman	<i>Anna</i>	43
My dog	<i>Agnieszka</i>	44
Ireland	<i>Elaine</i>	44
The cold solution	<i>Lily</i>	45

The Beast from the East	<i>Cassbie</i>	45
My heart's desire	<i>Sonia Maria</i>	46
Sunset	<i>Finn</i>	46
The river minnow	<i>Catherine</i>	47
My short story	<i>Elka</i>	47
My bottle	<i>Theresa</i>	48
My first holiday	<i>Elisabeth</i>	48
Dream on	<i>John</i>	49
Reflect	<i>Joe</i>	50
Salvador Dali	<i>Sylwia</i>	51
Art is important	<i>Charlotte</i>	51
Walking the dog	<i>Brian</i>	51
Belarus and Ireland	<i>Tatyana</i>	52
A new challenge	<i>Anthony &amp; Maëlle</i>	52
Art is important	<i>Teresa</i>	52
Racing my pigeons	<i>Mike</i>	53
Celtic seasons	<i>Maura</i>	55
Hobbies	<i>David</i>	55
My favourite recipe	<i>Shirley-Ann</i>	56
Memory	<i>Maura</i>	57
My learning journey	<i>Verónica</i>	58
Take time	<i>Peggy</i>	59
Appreciate	<i>Cíara</i>	60
Twenty four hours!	<i>Donal</i>	60
Friendship	<i>Mary</i>	62
Budapest	<i>Timea</i>	63
My childhood memories	<i>Denise</i>	63
Art is important	<i>Carmel</i>	64
The place where I grew up	<i>Brendan</i>	65
Family history	<i>Jill</i>	65



Colombia	<i>Adriana</i>	66
Lost love	<i>Senan</i>	66
The moon outside the door	<i>Brían</i>	66
Italia '90	<i>Theresa</i>	67
Confession	<i>Bridget</i>	67
Art is important	<i>Tracy</i>	68
Journeying through this child's eyes	<i>Ona</i>	69
A hunger for learning	<i>Margaret</i>	70
Iraq before 2003	<i>Samr</i>	72
The Irish hare	<i>Michael</i>	73
My holiday in Albania	<i>Seví</i>	73
A day in Cádiz	<i>Ricardo</i>	74
What I enjoy doing	<i>Martina</i>	74
My visit to Shanghai	<i>Hong</i>	75
A day trip to Lahinch	<i>Tatiana</i>	75
An opportunity for Quixote	<i>Rocío</i>	76
Communication problems	<i>David</i>	76
Polish food and drink	<i>Damian</i>	77
Food and drink in Galicia	<i>Braís</i>	78
Gardening – be close to nature	<i>Agnieszka</i>	78
Guinea food and drink	<i>Fatoumata</i>	79
About me	<i>Ricky</i>	80
Leaving Pakistan	<i>Iram</i>	80
My first day in Ireland	<i>Assia</i>	81
My husband's fishing story	<i>Magda</i>	81
My story of a special friend	<i>Fatoumata</i>	82
My time in school in Ireland	<i>Adam</i>	82
My town, Baja	<i>Ildiko</i>	83
Making people happy	<i>Jamcy</i>	84
Raki	<i>Seví</i>	84

Russian cuisine	<i>Tatiana</i>	85
Sharing housework	<i>Aleksandra</i>	85
Chinese food	<i>Simeí</i>	86
Sustainable fishing	<i>Jamíl</i>	86
The best hobby is a well-paid hobby	<i>Ramílya</i>	87
Day trips	<i>Kevin</i>	87
Grand Slam 2018	<i>Tony</i>	88
Refugee	<i>Fatima</i>	89
Tidy towns	<i>John</i>	89
Happiness	<i>Mahanaz</i>	90
Hector the rooster	<i>Geraldine</i>	90
My son's Communion party	<i>Patrícia</i>	91
My family is happy	<i>Alessandra</i>	92
What I have mastered so far in my life	<i>Joe</i>	92
The Mayo team	<i>Michael</i>	93
Ramadan	<i>Heba</i>	94
From Poland to Kilrush	<i>Tomasz</i>	95
A runaway from war	<i>Omar</i>	95
I'm happy	<i>Ahmad</i>	96
My new life in Ennistymon	<i>Moharrab</i>	96
My love for music	<i>Bernadette</i>	96
My long holiday	<i>Irena</i>	97
My new life in Ireland	<i>Ela</i>	97
Something about me	<i>Mariola</i>	97
Shishparak	<i>Dalal</i>	98
What's next?	<i>T</i>	98
My journey	<i>Ann</i>	99

## **Princess Lily and Princess Ber**

Once upon a time there was a deer called Princess Lily. One day she went for a walk in the woods and she bumped into a bear called Princess Ber and they became friends. They met every day in the woods to play tag but had to be home before it got dark because of the scary fox that only had one eye. They were afraid he would eat them.

One foggy day they didn't notice it getting dark and then they couldn't find their way home. Some time later, they found their way home without fox finding them. Phew!

The next day they met each other again. It was foggy and they couldn't see it getting dark again! This time fox did find them...oh no!! They ran away from fox but he chased them. They heard him say, 'I'll just go back to my house.' 'Princess Ber, he's just tricking us,' said Princess Lily. They ran and ran to get nearer to home.

Finally, they got home. They jumped into their beds, where fox couldn't get them. They decided they wouldn't go out on foggy days anymore.

*By Lily & Sinéad*

## **The room**

Through the small gap beneath the blinds, I can see the outside world. Most of the trees are skeletal, their bare branches reaching out cruelly as if to reach in through the window and take us with them. The dark brown blinds obscure most of the natural light. It almost feels like we're underground in some long forgotten basement deep underneath the town. The classroom is eerily quiet; occasionally, the scratching of the pens breaks the long silence.

*By Sarah*

## **Aurora Hopper meets Freddie**

Hi, I'm Hopper! I have really big ears. I live in a beautiful fairy meadow. I love long hops and really big naps.

Today, the sun is shining and glittery in the meadow. With my big ears I can hear my fairy friends, Jessica and Sofia. It's a great day for a hop! I love to hop!! Off I go for my long hop!! A long way from home the sun disappears. I'm getting scared. It's really dark in the woods. I'm very far from the meadow.

I'm hidden under a stump of a tree. I close my eyes for a nap. When I wake up I can feel something on my fur. 'Hi, I'm Freddy. I've got lots of eyeballs, and a big web.'

'Hello, I'm Aurora. I live in the fairy meadow. I'm very lost. Can you please help me to get to my home?' 'Of course I can,' said Freddy. I can see it from the top of my tree.' 'Thank you so much Mr. Freddy. Let's get hopping.'

After a lot of hops through the woods, I'm home in the meadow, thanks to my new friend, Freddy.

*By Sofia & Aoibheann*

## **Big Paw**

Hello there. My name is Big Paw. I'm called that because of my huge paws. Come with me on my Christmas adventure.

It was Christmas and Tobias, the reindeer, didn't feel happy because he wasn't special like Santa's reindeer. We decided to have a surprise party for him to show him how special he was to us.

With the help of Snowy the rabbit, and Slippy the penguin, we got to work. Slippy painted a colourful banner and Snowy blew up the balloons. I gathered up scrumptious food for us all to eat.

All that was missing from the party was our guest of honour – Tobias. We called to his house where he was feeling so gloomy. When we told him we had something to show him, he decided he'd go because his friends had asked so nicely.

Off we went through the snow with Tobias plodding drearily along. It was a winter wonderland. Everything was covered in a blanket of snow. We were nearly at the party so we told Tobias to close his eyes.

Finally, we arrived. Tobias opened his eyes and there, standing in front of him, was the scrumptious food, the colourful balloons and the rainbow banner. Tobias was surprised. His biggest surprise of all though was the surprise guests, Santa and his reindeer. They told Tobias how special he was and he didn't feel gloomy anymore. I love helping my friends.

*By Jack & Siobhan*

## **The blue bottle**

I went into the ocean,  
Feeling the water,  
Moving up and down  
Until it reached my upper body.

I felt this strange creature,  
Touching my leg,  
It stung as it wrapped  
Its blue strings around my leg.

I walked to the beach  
Sensing my tears  
Begin to run down my face.  
My father poured his beer  
On my leg  
To let the pain go.

*By Lisa*

## **Avery's adventure in the forest**

Hello, my name is Roblux. I'm a deer. I have antlers on my head. I live in a forest. Every day is an adventure in the forest. My best friend is Noah the bear.

Every day I play and hunt for food with Noah. We find honey, mice, bugs, and fish from the river. We love playing '52 bonkers.' Noah is the best hider. He can climb up trees and swim across the river. Noah is lots of fun.

One cold day when it was nearly winter, I went to find Noah. Noah was not there. I looked everywhere. I looked down the river, up the tree and in his favourite bush, but I could not find him.

Every day I looked for Noah. Where did Noah go? He was lost. I missed him so much. I was lonely. I had no one to play with.

I thought about Noah every day. One day, the weather got warmer and the leaves came back. The snow melted. The sun shone in the sky.

Early one morning, I was down by the river catching a salmon with my antlers. Out from behind a tree came my big hairy friend, Noah. I jumped for joy and shared my fish with Noah. Noah said he had a great hibernation and said he forgot to tell me he was going to sleep.

*By Avery & Jackie*

## **Pebble**

The pebble looks heavy but feels light and hollow. The touch of the pebble feels rough and coarse. It feels cold to touch and fits into the hand snugly. I can see a small shadow on the table underneath the pebble; it's like the colour of the table and the pebble nearly blends in. It takes me back to when I was a child throwing pebbles in the sea in the warm evenings.

*By Mark*

## **Sprout and grow**

She was four years old but she was growing like a giraffe. She had a healthy appetite, always ate her greens for her mum. She towered above her friends in school. Some of the boys teased her, calling her lanky legs. Sometimes she'd tell them to shut up, other times she'd cry in the bathroom so no one could see her tears. She liked being tall; her mum was tall. She wanted to be like her mum. She wondered if her mum was bullied at school because of her height. She'd ask her this evening. She wondered how tall she would grow to be. Would she always be taller than her classmates?

*By Ann Marie*

## **Don't give up!**

*You are a credit to yourself! (Said by an important person to me)*

It started thirteen years ago...new life, new rules...

I was one month pregnant, and my daughters were five and three years old. We came to Ireland without anything. Everything was different...air, food, people and language. At the beginning, I found the language was very hard. It was a shock for me as I couldn't buy the travel tickets, but I had a piece of paper with me and an English note written in the Polish alphabet saying: 'ai wod laik tu bai tu (2) tiket;' 'I would like to buy two tickets.'

At the beginning, we were living with my brother-in-law and his family. It was really hard. I left my sisters, my brother, my parents and my parents-in-law in Poland. My husband had to work twelve to fourteen hours a day, even at the weekends. He wasn't at home most of the time. I had to sort out all the things by myself. I know it seems silly now, but I was scared even to go to school to collect my kids. One day, I found a note at the classroom door saying: 'Tuesday and Thursday - tracksuit, please.' I was frustrated, and I had to wait till there was nobody in the school yard, then I wrote the note in my notebook. At home, I translated every single word and that was the start with my English. I went to English class, but I couldn't find the motivation to learn. I was thinking about going back to Poland; why? Because of the language only. Very simple things, like parent-teacher meetings

(10 minutes) or collecting kids from school (a few minutes) were hard. I wanted to hide somewhere because I was afraid to speak to people who were talking to me and I couldn't understand. Even when I shopped I used to give 20 or 50 euro to the cashier because I didn't understand how much I must pay. It started to be very scary and every day was worse than the day before. Then I was very down, and I thought there is no future for me in this country. I went to church to have a few minutes with God and myself. I talked in Polish and I was 100% sure He would understand me. I came back home - a surprise dinner made by my husband, who said to me: 'Honey, I know that it is really hard for you here and I am not at home to help you; for me, also, but I will understand if you want to go back to Poland.' His eyes looked very sad. That made me make the decision to not give up!

After all those years, I am a different person, so I decided to do something else in my life, something for myself. I started a course, Healthcare Assistant, in September. At the beginning, it was very hard for me. I wanted to run out from them after a few weeks. All day in class, I didn't understand what they were talking about; lots of new words, assignments, exams and presentations...too much, I said. But no! I started it, and I will finish it! First results, I got a distinction. Yeah! It started to be only better and better. I got my first student card ever. Wow! I was so excited! I usually don't ask for help but, this time, I asked for it and now I am going to school three days a week; two days I am going to my work experience, which is so amazing, and also I am going three times a week to the English class, my favourite. People that I met in my course and the decision I made changed my life. I can talk, understand, write and read. I can do everything! It was the best decision that I made. I am thinking about another course, more difficult, but nothing will stop me, not any more.

*By Kasia*

## **Sewing makes me happy**

Sewing makes me happy because it de-stresses me.

*By Marissa*



## Letter to Teresa

Dear Teresa,

At the beginning of this letter we would like to greet you! We thought to write to you to see how everything is.

We want to ask how are you and your family? You were saying that in March your baby would be born, so we are hoping that everything went well and you are okay. How are you and your baby? We were curious whether it was a girl or a boy. We hope you are happy.

We miss you. How do you feel in England? Have you got used to it? We are well. We hope you made new friends and your children are well and they like their new school. We miss your son.

We are writing this letter to you from our English class in Ireland. It's been a long time since your last visit to our class. We would like the English lessons to continue, but there are only three of us and our teacher and Lucy! This is our last English class; then we will finish.

Today it is sunny here and it's a beautiful day. We hope you like the English weather.

We wish you good health and all the best for all of your family. Are you going to come to Ireland again and, if you do, will you come to visit us with your baby?

We will remember you, and you do not forget us. Good luck Teresa!

*By Beata, Lucy, Marcela & María*

## Six word story

My mom, mothers never stop praying.

*By Naila*

## **Horticulture class**

I have just completed a ten week horticulture course. I'm sorry to see the class finish as I have learnt so much. I have continued on at home with my raised bed! Also, I've been passing on my newly learnt skills to my kids and mum. I would love to continue on. From total novice to having confidence! Thank you.

*By Sínead*

## **Horticulture class**

I would like to say how much I have learned over the last ten weeks in this gardening course. My children have benefited from it. I have attended each class, and took away so much pleasure at being able to learn, with no pressure placed on me. I look forward to continuing my gardening and would be so pleased to go on to do more. The tutor was so helpful and encouraging that it was easy to attend. Thank you.

*By Liz*

## **Horticulture class**

This is the first horticulture course I have ever attended. It has been hugely informative and given me a lot of knowledge and confidence to grow seeds and grow my own vegetables. The tutor is an excellent teacher and has a very effective way of communicating and sharing her expertise. Working in a hands-on way in the polytunnel, and seeing the fruits of our labour on the last day of the course, has been a wonderful and life affirming experience. Thank you so much for this new dimension in life.

*By Gillian*

## Digital drawing

I first got interested in fine arts when I was 11. I started attending an art school, where I learned to draw, paint and make sculpture. Most of all I liked watercolours, but also wanted to study oil painting. However, my circumstances changed and I left the fine arts for a long time. When I was an adult, I decided to return to art and learn fashion illustration, but my dream of mastering oil painting did not leave me.

Once, on a wonderful day, I was given a graphic tablet as a gift, which I thought would make drawing easier. However, everything was not as beautiful as it seemed at first. It was a completely different matter, drawing on the tablet – my hands did not obey me; my mind did not understand how it worked. It was like a nightmare until, one day, I met an illustrator on the web, who was a master of her craft. I started taking lessons with her online. A month later, I opened for myself an amazing world of digital drawing, where you can imitate pencil, ink, watercolour and even oil painting! My dream had come true. Of course, I still have a lot to learn, but I continue to study and improve myself in that field.

I find digital drawing fascinating and very useful in home decorating. As a result, I find this leisure-time activity enjoyable and relaxing. I would recommend it as a hobby because, to some extent, it is cheaper (you do not have to buy expensive art supplies) and it is cleaner than traditional drawing. The tablet does not require much space. All you need to do when you have finished work, is unplug it from the PC. Last, but not least, the software makes it easy to fix errors!

*By Kamila*

## Horticulture class

I would like to say how much I learnt from and enjoyed the horticulture course we did. I learnt so much and have spoken to so many friends who would love to have done the course as well, had they discovered it in time. Hopefully, we will see more courses of a similar nature after summer.

*By Carol*

## **Horticulture class**

I have had a great experience on this course. I already have gardening experience but learned so much more with the tutor. She is very knowledgeable about every aspect of horticulture. I would love to study more and take it further. My daughter is planting with me at the moment – anything that gets her off her phone is a welcome outcome!

*By Fionna*

## **Horticulture class**

I loved this course so much as, at last, I am able to make use and get produce from my own garden, and teach my children how to grow from seed, look after plants and bring them to the table. My flowers have really done well for the first time ever from the information learned on this course. I have found a lot of peace digging and working in my garden and am no longer afraid to make mistakes in the garden. I would highly recommend this course to anyone who wants to grow herbs, vegetables, and flowers but feel they are not green fingered, as this course will prove anyone with a desire to grow just needs a little encouragement to get started. The tutor had so much information to share, no question she couldn't answer. I really look forward to coming back to expand my learning in horticulture.

*By Marie*

## **Horticulture class**

Just a short feedback note on the horticulture course I attended. I found the course very stimulating and informative. The tutor is an excellent 'encyclopaedia' of knowledge and was very willing to answer all of our questions, no matter how small they were. I revived an old passion for gardening and growing vegetables that I thought I'd lost many moons ago! Thank you for providing this opportunity and every continued success wishes to everyone involved.

*By Fiona*

## **From Oman to Ireland**

My name is Nashaat. I am a consultant engineer for roads and bridges. I finished college in 1971. I have four daughters. Their names are Rana, Rasha , Raghed and Noor-Alhuda.

Dr. Rana lives in Vancouver, Canada, with her husband and son. She is working as an eye doctor in British Colombia University Hospital since 2015. Dr. Rasha lives in Muscat, Oman, with her husband and her son and two daughters. She is working as a doctor in Oman Medical College since 2004. Dr. Raghed lives in Nizwa city in Oman, with her husband and two sons. She is working in a private pharmacy since 2010. Dr. Noor-Alhuda lives with her husband in Muscat, Oman. She finished college in 2017. She is working as a dentist now.

Now, I live with my wife in Ennis. We came to Ireland in 2015. My teachers are very good at the Further Education and Training Centre in Ennis and my friends in school are good also.

*By Nashaat*

## **From Accra to Co. Clare**

From the Gold Coast to the UK, to Chile, back to the UK, to Somalia, back to the UK, to Colombia, back to the UK, to Zambia, back to the UK, to South Africa and finally to Ireland permanently!

My mother came from Ireland, and my father from England. He worked for an international company, hence all the travelling. I had an interesting life. It was a challenge being educated in many different schools and learning different languages.

I never thought I would be 'back at school' at my age, doing computer courses...one's never too old to learn!

I love the quote, 'Beyond the clouds is sunshine.'

*By Carolyn*

## **Making hay**

'Watch what you are doing,' smiled Paddy. I was trying to climb onto the back of the horse-drawn cart. I was in too much of a hurry; the day was warming fast. Paddy was the ageing farmer, and being in a hurry was never part of his vocabulary. I slipped as my foot lost its grip, fell briefly to my knees. I was trying to climb too quickly but, being too smart, I was on my feet. Another burst - this time I make it. Paddy looks at me, his peaked cap down over his forehead, saving himself from the rising sun. I smiled with a, 'Well, I made it,' look in my eye. The young never listen, he thinks, but does not speak it. We were on our way to the big meadow, ten acres or near enough. We were making hay. You might laugh, how do you make hay? Or what is hay in the first place?

Paddy taps old Blackie on the rear, barely touching her shining coat. One, two, three - click, click, click - she starts to make moves. 'She's been doing it twenty years or so,' so says Paddy. 'Making hay.' 'Watch out! What are you doing?' he says again. I glance over at him, giving him the, 'You told me,' stare. The cart rolls on. Stone walls, fields, the hum of traffic in the distance, a world far removed from the current one. The mobile phone hadn't been invented. Now everyone wants to make hay. What did they really know about it anyway?

*By Brendan*

## **Summer time**

My name is Yingxia and I'm from China. I live in Ennis with my husband. I'm studying English twice a week at the Adult Education Centre in Ennis. I sometimes go to the beach and visit friends. I like the fresh air. I don't like the cold. I like Irish grasslands. They are good.

*By Yingxia*

## **The worst day of my childhood on the farm**

I am going to write about my personal story. I have good memories of my childhood, and others...not so good.

I was 9 years old when it happened. It was a bright morning. The sun was shining; the birds were chirping, and my mother asked me to help her harvest some cassava (cassava grows in the ground and people in Brazil eat it or use it to make tapioca or tapioca starch).

My mother and I were harvesting cassava when the accident happened. I was walking when I suddenly felt something strange on my left foot. Scared, I quickly looked down. I had just stepped on a huge snake. I almost died of fright when I realised it was a snake. I ran out and called my mum and explained to her what had happened. She immediately took off my shoe and found that I had been bitten by the snake. Quickly, I was taken to hospital but when I arrived there, I was blind. I couldn't move and my body was very sore. I was in very bad condition. I stayed 9 days on a life support machine. After that, I was feeling much better and the doctor said I could go home. The sun started shining for me again and I was very happy about that news! I knew I was going to meet my family and my lovely dog again. I said, 'Thank God for all.'

After that horrible day, I was always afraid of going out in the field as there are a lot of different kinds of snakes there. I was very careful and looking on the ground all the time, as I was afraid to step on one again.

The name of the snake I got bitten by is a rattlesnake (cascavel in Portuguese). This type of snake is very dangerous. It is estimated that 129 people are killed by snakes every year in Brazil. There are 380 species of snakes in Brazil and most of them are very poisonous.

*By Luzilene*

## **My experience in LIT**

I started in LIT college in January 2017. I got a student card. You can use it when you go shopping, to the cinema and different places. You are able to get a discount with it. It has my name and photo on it. I got a bag and a pen. I bought a pen, a pink and purple hoodie - it has the LIT logo on it, plus my initials. I love being a student in LIT. I meet new friends and also other students in the college. It is a lovely college. I always look forward to going down there.

It has a library, Millennium Theatre, and students' union games room. There is a canteen where you have tea break and lunch. You can have whatever you want. There are nice treats, juices, everything you need. I always wanted to go to college. I am enjoying it. It is a good experience for me. I am graduating on 16<sup>th</sup> of May 2018. I am really looking forward to it. I will be wearing a hat and a gown. I will be getting two certificates. I will be graduating twice because I did the course in Limerick and Ennis.

In LIT I was doing a course in Advocacy Leadership and Independent Living. I really liked it and I learned a lot in the course. I did it again in January 2018 in Ennis, in the Clare Education Centre on the Kilrush Road. This was with a different group. I met more new friends.

This is what I learned in the course. I learned about my rights and how to speak up. We were put into groups and talked about shopping and the things you need for your shopping and counting money. On our lunch breaks, a few of us talked about what we learned in class. The course was good. You learn different things. I loved it. I enjoyed meeting new people. The course was very interesting. I would recommend this course to anyone that is interested.

Advocacy is all about speaking up, talking about your rights and making sure your voice is heard. You get to talk about your problems and make choices. Independent living is when you have your own home. You get to make choices in your own apartment or house. You get support where you are living. You get to choose what you want in your house or apartment and the way you want it, with advice from a staff member. Leadership is when you get to oversee your future and make choices of your own. Also, you get to pick leaders that you think are good. You learn who are bad leaders and good leaders.



I am very proud of myself for being able to go to college and being able to graduate. I learned how to speak in front of a group. It gave me great confidence.

*By Helen*

## **Sewing makes me happy**

I like sewing because it reminds me of when I was a little girl. My mum used to make clothes for me and they were really good. I started sewing last year. I really enjoy creating things and it really calms me down. It relaxes me and I love to see what I have made in the end. Finally, sewing can connect you to a community of women who share your new ideas and make fashion. I love it.

*By Sayeda*

## **Enjoy today**

I am a learner at Scariff FET Centre where I am doing maths and computers. On 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2017, I suffered a heart attack. Thankfully, I have made a great recovery and am back in my classes again.

I have had to make changes to my life, and one I would like to share with everyone is my new motto.

'Never worry about tomorrow; it takes the enjoyment out of today.'  
Take this tablet every day for a longer, better and more enjoyable life.  
This is the voice of experience.

*By Bridie*

## **My lovely trip**

My mother passed away this year, 2017. My brother, Max, thought it was a good idea for me to go away with him, and my nephew and niece from Germany, for a few days on holiday.

We looked at places and hotels online and then Max booked the B&B on his mobile phone on the 13<sup>th</sup> August. We decided to stay 1 night in Annascaul and 1 night in Portmagee in Co. Kerry.

18<sup>th</sup> August

My brother, Max, asked me to go on the trip with them. We left Ennis at 18:40 with my dog, Mossy, and went to Tulla. We arrived in Annascaul at 22:00 and stayed in a B&B.

19<sup>th</sup> August

Max and the two kids went surfing in Inch Beach in Kerry. We went to a café in Inch Beach. We drove to Portmagee. We stayed in a B&B again. We went to a seafood restaurant to celebrate Max's birthday and we had supper there. After supper, Max drove us around Portmagee. I thought Portmagee was a beautiful place.

20<sup>th</sup> August

Beside Skellig Michael was a café and we went in for a coffee. We went on a boat tour to Skellig Michael for 2 hours and 30 minutes. Josef was sick.

I was in the wheelchair. Max bought a ham sandwich for me and I ate it in the car, not in the café. After that, Max drove me home to Ennis. We got home at about 19:30, then Max drove home to Tulla. Mossy came home to me on Monday morning.

This was my first holiday after my mother passed away and my first holiday for a long time. I needed a holiday to get away from the house. I enjoyed it very much.

*By Susanne*

## **The value of salt**

Once upon a time, there was a mean king. He only liked people who praised him and talked about money and wealth. He had 3 daughters whom he really loved. One day he called them all to his room and asked, 'How much do you love me and what do I mean to you?'

One by one the daughters answered him. The first daughter said, 'I love you like you love gold. My life without you would be as sad as your life without gold.' The king was very happy to hear that. The second daughter said, 'I love you like diamonds. You are like a shiny, new diamond in my life.' The king felt really happy.

Now he asked his third daughter and she said, 'For me, you are as valuable as salt in a dish.' This time, the king got angry and shouted at her and said, 'How dare you compare me with valueless salt? Am I that much hated by you? Do you have no respect for me? You are no longer my daughter.'

And, with that, the king threw his daughter out of the castle, sent her to a jungle and left her there. The girl started to cry under a tree. A handsome prince was passing by and heard her crying. He came over and asked her what was wrong and she explained her sad story.

The prince took her to his castle with him and, a few days later, married her. She was living a happy life but she missed her family. Then she asked the prince to invite her father along with the others. But the prince said, 'What if he doesn't come?' She replied, 'Don't tell him anything about me.'

Later, her father came and she hid behind the door so he would not see her. After having a chat, the prince offered the king lunch and he agreed. Then the prince said, 'My wife is the best cook in the kingdom. You must try her dishes.'

The king took a bite and said, 'It's tasteless! How come you say your wife is the best cook?' The prince asked, 'What do you think is missing?' The king replied, 'Salt!'

Then the girl said from the other side of the door, 'You are the king, your highness. How can I put such a valueless thing in your food?' The king was shocked. He got up and asked to meet her and she came in front of him.

After seeing his daughter after such a long time, the king started crying and he realised what a big mistake he had made. He apologised for his deeds and he was forgiven. He understood that every little thing matters in our life – even a pinch of salt.

*By Mahanaz*

## **How I got to know my neighbours**

I moved to Ireland in summer 2017. I live in a quiet village with only a few people in the neighbourhood. At the beginning, it was difficult to get to know any of my neighbours because my English was not good enough. I often meet someone when I go in and out home who says, 'Dominika, we'd like you to come to our home for a cup of tea,' but I kindly thank them and say, 'Maybe next time.'

A few months ago I learnt one of the rarest occasions how people get to know their neighbours. Winter 2018 brought in one of the most snowfalls in Ireland for over 40 years! Our road, like most parts of the country, was covered by snow. My neighbours and I had to clear the roadway and move away some of the broken branches, which was an icebreaker, in every sense of the word and a great opportunity to get to know each other. While doing that, we talked about the weather in Ireland and my country, Poland. We later had a cup of tea and laughed together. This was the beginning of our good neighbourly relationships.

*By Dominika*

## Vipassana Meditation

I spent ten days at a Vipassana Meditation course. This is an experience that I and 80 other people from all walks of life had in Drogheda in March this year.

A vow of silence started from the first evening you arrived till the morning you left on the tenth day. Men and women had separate spaces to sleep, eat and walk around. The food served for the course was vegetarian.

Here is the timetable for the day:

4:00 a.m.	Wake up bell
4:30-6:30 a.m.	Meditate in hall or room
6:30-8:00 a.m.	Brekky
8:00-9:00 a.m.	Group meditate in hall
9:00-11:00 a.m.	Meditate in hall or room according to teacher's instructions.
11:00-1:00 p.m.	Lunch/Rest/Interviews with teacher if you have any questions
1:00-2:30 p.m.	Meditate in room or hall
2:30-3:30 p.m.	Group meditate in hall
3:30-5:00 p.m.	Meditate in hall or own room according to teacher's instructions.
5:00-6:00 p.m.	Tea break
6:00-7:00 p.m.	Group meditate
7:00-8:15 p.m.	Teacher's discourse in hall
8:15-9:00 p.m.	Group meditate
9:00-9:30 p.m.	Questions in hall
9:30 p.m.	Retire to your room; lights out.

During break time you could walk around the grounds. Initially, the lack of food/sleep was hard but, in time, I overcame this. Having a lot of time in your own head space, your mind could wander but, after a while, this settled-ish!

For me, this was a way to refocus my thoughts and my outlook on life itself. As an experience, the feeling of being so at peace with one's self felt good. After the course, it felt good to talk to and meet people with the same interests.

It was a great course (for meditation), not for everybody, as everyone has their own path in life for sure. I intend to do this course at least once a year and keep up the practice.

*By Tony*

## **The sewing class**

I first heard of this class when I was in a crochet group. It was to be a short six week sewing course for beginners in Ennistymon.

I started a patchwork quilt there but hadn't finished it by the end of the course. By then I was really enjoying it and was sorry to be finishing. The career guidance person, Jacinta, came and spoke to us about the courses available at the Adult Education Centre. I decided I would travel to Ennis to do another sewing course and I've never looked back.

Since starting, I have completed many projects and I really enjoy coming into the Ennis centre and working with our group. We have such a fantastic teacher. Nicola is an inspiration! She makes her own clothes and wears them with such elegance, like a model. She has shown me how I can make my own clothes. So far I have made skirts (some good, some not so good), trousers and, more recently, even a coat.

Nicola and the group have given me the encouragement and the confidence to turn a room at home into a sewing room for myself. There, I have set up two sewing machines where I spend many happy hours. What I love about it now, is that my daughter likes to come in and learn from me how to make clothes for her dolls and teddy bears.

End

*By A*

## **Memory teddy**

My mum passed away last year. It was a big shock for all of us. We didn't expect her to get lung cancer as she never smoked or drank. It was very sad.

I kept some of her clothes and some of her belongings. I was delighted when my sewing teacher, Nicola, taught me how to sew. I came up with an idea to help preserve my mum's memory by converting her clothes into a teddy. Nicola gave me a pattern that helped me make it.

This was a great idea as I can bring it with me wherever I go and it keeps her memory alive in my heart.

*By Zoe*

## **What makes me happy?**

Making cakes makes me happy.

My family makes me happy.

My children make me happy.

*By Zamzam*

## **Taking care of my parents**

My name is Ammonrat. I'm from Thailand. I have two older sisters and one brother. When I was a child, every day I saw my mom and dad get up early in the morning to go to work in the market to sell food. Sometimes, I went with them. I saw them work hard and I promised myself that when I grew up, I would work hard to get good pay and send them money to take good care of them.

*By Ammonrat*

## **Preparation for NCT**

I normally prepare my own car for the NCT. First, I check the brakes. I may have to adjust them, as I have to make sure they are pulling equally. After this, I check the bulbs to see if there are any that have blown. I replace them if needed. I spray the underside of the car with a solution to prevent it from rusting. This can happen due to salt on the roads over the winter. Next, I change the plugs and oil. I make sure the tyres are inflated enough and that they are not worn. I check the wipers for wear and tear as, sometimes, wiper blades break and need to be replaced. I then Hoover out the car and adjust the seat belts, making sure they are clipped in place. I give the car a good wash and buff up the paintwork.

This method of preparing my car for the NCT must be working, as I have never failed an NCT. I have done 10 NCTs and my car has passed each time. If I ever have a problem that I am unsure of, I look for a solution on YouTube. It is a great source of information for fixing cars.

*By K*

## **What makes me happy?**

My children make me happy.  
Sunny weather makes me happy.  
My family makes me happy.

*By Tina*

## **About me**

My name is Franciszek. I'm from Poland. My wife, Danuta, and I live in a small Irish town, Ennis. I'm a carpenter but I'm not working now. I'm looking for a job. I learn English at the Adult Education Centre. We have two sons, Luke and Matt. They live in Poland. I like when my friends visit Ireland. I like learning about the history and listening to the music. I like fishing in the lake and the Atlantic Ocean.

*By Franciszek*



## The south of Poland

I would like to write about my motherland and lovely Krakow. Krakow is the second biggest city in Poland and is a very popular tourist destination. The city is divided into 18 or 19 districts, which include Old Town (where there is the biggest market square in Europe), Kazimierz, Nowa, Huta and Podgorze (my place!).

Krakow was the capital of Poland and is where the Polish kings reside. All the kings are together at Castle Wawel. The monuments and churches are amazing. There is an urban complex of old buildings that is especially a nice place for me; the name of it is Błonia (which kind of means 'big field') on one side. On the other side are two sports clubs, the oldest in Poland. They were founded in 1906. Cracovia Krakow and Wisla Krakow have two rich football stories in their history. There is big rivalry between the fans of both teams. We call this The Holy War. When the two teams play each other, there is a lot of violence. Unfortunately, many young people are lost because of hooliganism. I love only Cracovia and I never go to the Wisla stadium.

We have an ice hockey team in Krakow. We are the champions of Poland. Every year, when the first goal of the hockey league is scored, we throw teddy bears and other mascots for children.

Near Krakow is a small town called Wieliczka where there is a large salt mine. There are beautiful monuments of salt. About 70km away is Dead Camp in Auschwitz where the holocaust happened. During the Second World War over six million people died. It is a very sad place.

South of Krakow is a nice city called Zakopane where there is snow. This is an amazing place for tourists. There is ski jumping, a lot of snow and the huge mountains, Tatry. Across the border, to the south of Krakow, is Slovakia.

I don't know what more to write. To see everything, I invite you to visit for a month.

*By Greg*

### **What makes me happy?**

Good food makes me happy.  
Money makes me happy.  
My family makes me happy.

*By Kwaku*

### **What makes me happy?**

My family makes me happy.  
Shopping makes me happy.  
Holidays make me happy.

*By Bibirazia*

### **What makes me happy?**

Waking up in the morning makes me happy.  
Learning new things makes me happy.

*By Simon*

### **What makes me happy?**

My work makes me happy.  
My family makes me happy.  
Sunny weather makes me happy.

*By Abu Kawsar*

## **Sewing makes me happy**

Sewing makes me happy because you can help people and fix tops and clothes for them. It makes me happy to see someone smile when their favourite top is repaired.

*By Ger*

## **My family**

My name is Genet. I live in Ennis. I have a lovely family. I have three children: one daughter and two sons. My daughter was 19 in March; the middle son is 17 and the youngest is 12 years old.

My husband's name is Daniel. He's living in Ireland for 13 years now. My children and I are living in Ireland for two years and ten months. We come from Ethiopia. I have two brothers and four sisters. They all live in Ethiopia. I miss my family and my country but I miss my mother more. Long live my mother!

Ethiopian proverbs:

A home without a woman is like a barn without cattle.

A good name is better than good perfume.

*By Genet*

## **Sewing makes me happy**

Sewing makes me happy because I can make curtains and cushion covers and that makes me very proud. I get to know more about my sewing machine.

*By Kitty*

## **Unsung hero**

My name is Bernie. I work in Ennis General Hospital. Ten years ago, on Christmas day, I was working on the ward when I noticed a patient hadn't eaten her breakfast. Later, I noticed she hadn't eaten her lunch. When I talked to her, she told me her husband had died. She had no family and she hated Christmas day.

It was very upsetting to think of her and all the other patients in the hospital, some of them with nobody and not even a little something to open on that day. I said to myself, 'There will never be a sad Christmas in this hospital as long as I'm working here.'

So I got a present, a Christmas cracker, a cup of tea and a sandwich for the old lady. She sat up and began to chat and I said to myself, 'I've turned a sad little face into a happy little face.' After that, I started to buy small little gifts. I wrapped them and, on Christmas day every year, I dressed up as Santa Claus, went around the ward with a bell and gave each patient a gift. I started fundraising, running raffles and cake sales so that I could raise enough money to buy gifts for every patient, for every Christmas since then.

This year, I was nominated for an award for doing this work. There was a big celebration in Limerick with hundreds of people. I didn't win but the greatest award for me is the happiness I see on the patients' faces who have nobody on Christmas day.

*By Bernie*

## **Sewing makes me happy**

Sewing makes me happy because I focus on what I'm doing and it clears my head of all other thoughts.

*By Anne*

## **Sewing makes me happy**

Sewing makes me happy because it's the ideal mindfulness exercise.

*By Marion*

## **Easter holidays**

Last Easter, I decided to take my wife on holidays. The weather in Ireland had been so bad, we needed some sun so we headed to Portugal for a week. We got to Faro Airport on a short flight. When we got off the plane, the heat and sun met us. I knew I had made the right decision.

The taxi transfer took us to our hotel, which was located 10 minutes from the beach. We unpacked our luggage and orientated ourselves to the hotel pool and restaurant. We also booked adventures for the week which included hiring a 4x4 buggy for a trip on the mountains, and a safari jeep tour for the countryside where they grow oranges for a living. We also had a beach day and a shopping day for my wife.

*By Pat*

## **My family**

My family is small. I have a mam, sister and three brothers. My sister has four children: two girls and two sons. The big brother has three children: two sons and one girl. The second brother has one daughter. The little brother has two sons. I am very happy for my family, thank God. My dad has been dead for 6 years but I still do not believe it. I think he is still alive, but we have to accept that life can be difficult.

*By Besjana*

## **Happiness**

Happiness is just a word  
That can be found in many things  
The sun, sky and sea  
Pleasant people that we meet along our merry way  
Happiness is there for all  
We have to grab it

*By Tony*

## **A cold game**

Every Saturday, I play volleyball with friends in Newmarket on Fergus. During the winter we were very cold; our hands and feet were freezing. It was difficult for us to play.

Spring came and it was a bit warmer. On the last Saturday in March, the manager of the building came in and asked, 'Why is it so cold in here? Does the heating not work?'

We looked surprised. There's heating? Where? The manager then went into the office and switched on the heating for us. Finally, it got warm.

*By Roman*

## **Sewing makes me happy**

Sewing makes me happy because it gives me a sense of achievement.

*By Carol*

## **Kilfenora snow**

Snow in the morning on windows  
in fields, on roofs.

The snow blows in the door  
but pipes burst are the worst.

No water for donkeys and cows,  
but neighbours help out.

A turf fire at night,  
we watch TV in the sitting room,  
outside, a beautiful full moon.

*By Michael*

## **About me**

My name is Feng. I'm from China. I came to Ireland 10 years ago. I have three children: two daughters and one son. They are very lovely children. My husband is a chef. He is a very good man. He cooks food that is so appetising. My dad and my mammy live in China. I have one sister and one brother. They are in China too. I like my family and I want my parents to come to Ireland on holiday next year.

Ireland is a beautiful country and I like the air here. Here, people are nice. I study English at the Adult Education Centre in Ennis. I have a very good English teacher. Her name is Amanda. We all like her class very much. Although I'm only learning English for a few months, I feel that I have improved a lot. I'll keep trying.

*By Feng*

## **My pastimes**

I play basketball every Wednesday in Gurteen. I also like swimming. I enjoy watching rugby.

*By Declan*

## **Mountain Mick's public house**

There is a lovely place in Mayo called Westport. Every September, a music festival is held in this old town. I really enjoy going down the town every September. There's a great buzz around the place. I love every bit of it.

There is a mighty old pub called Mountain Mick's. The barman there is called Brian. One night he was working till 4:00 a.m. Brian was so tired when he was locking up, he pulled out the door but the keys were locked in the inside.

The following day, Brian came down to open up at 1:00 p.m. No keys were there. The bar manager, John, came because Brian rang him. John then rang the owner, Colm. Colm is also a farmer. He came in his jeep and had everything in it.

'What's wrong with ye?' Colm asked, when he arrived. When John told him what had happened, Colm went to the jeep for a sledge hammer and burst the door open. The pub was open! We often talk about it now. We didn't have a lock in; we had a lock out!

I love the pub. My father loves it and so does my brother. When all three of us are there, it is great to catch up. Nowadays, that doesn't happen too often. Mountain Mick's is the place to go.

*By Colm*

## **Ali from Syria**

I am Ali. I am from Syria. I live in Sixmilebridge. I have 4 children. I am happy in Ireland. I learn English but English is difficult for me. The weather is not good, but here it is safe for my children. Irish people are very friendly. Thank you everybody for helping me.

*By Ali*



## **A mirror image**

When I was about eight or nine years old, I experienced something unusual and incredible. This happened during the winter holidays. I was with my sisters at the camp in the mountains, in the village of Bialy Dunajec. One day, the Roma from the river camp invited us to a bonfire for singing and dancing. Everyone was very happy and excited about the visit.

It was beautiful there. A big bonfire was burning. Roma, dressed in colourful costumes, played trumpets, guitars and violins. They sang and danced. A full moon was looking at us from the sky.

The Roma children asked us to dance. A girl of my age came up to me. We stood and stared and did not speak for a moment because we looked like twin sisters - like a mirror image - doppelgänger!

The girl asked, 'What's your name?' 'Lucyna,' I answered. 'You are the same as me,' she said. Certainly not, I thought, but after a while, maybe, yes. Two very similiar Lucynas. Wow! How cool!

Lucyna (the other Lucyna) taught me to dance and sing. The bonfire shot with sparks. I felt like I was in a fairy tale. It was an amazing and mysterious meeting of two little girls.

Today I am almost 55 years old and I often think about that Lucyna. Would we be as similar today as we were 45 years ago? I would like to know the answer very much, but I know that it is impossible. Maybe I just dreamed about it.

*By Lucyna*

## **Sewing makes me happy**

Sewing makes me happy because I'm in company and learning at the same time.

*By Anne*

## **Lisdoonvarna snow**

White gardens,  
White cars,  
White streets,  
Snowflakes fall in the door.  
Outside in the cold, voices call  
For snowballs.

But inside at night  
It's warm and quiet.

*By Susan*

## **Gardening**

I like gardening. I have lilies and daffodils in my back garden. I have window boxes. I have a yucca tree inside my house. Spring time is the best season for growing flowers. March is a good time for gardening. In summer time, my mother's garden is full of colour and beautiful scents. I steal flowers from her garden!

Gardening is hard work. You have to watch for slugs. They will eat flowers in the blink of an eye!

*By Juliya*

## **Singing**

Voices, keyboards, guitar  
and whistles:  
a choir singing,  
chatting and laughing,  
music making.

There are good sounds  
where good friends are found.

I love it!

*By Martin*

## Blasket

The following is a short extract from a novella that I wrote last summer and which I called *Blasket*. I do hope you like it.

### Prologue

How is it possible to return to somewhere you've never been? He was not just an entire ocean but, from appearances, also fifty years distant from Portland, Maine, and Portland had to be at least another fifty years behind New York. Yet, despite all that time and distance, he was once more looking at an island on the other side of a turbulent sound, just as he'd so often done from his own weather-smeared window on Maiden Cove.

Jack Sullivan didn't notice the girl who was clearing away the breakfast things from his table on a hill, halfway between Dunquin and the lowering cloud layer above it. He was peering intently through the dank drizzle and counting too many years since he'd actually sat behind the helm of a fishing boat.

He was also asking himself how any island could exude such a brooding presence, or maybe that was just Blasket and the weather. It just lay there like a sulking skulking hulk, more like a huge dog left out in the rain. It stank of resignation to an undeserved fate with the added insult of not being recognised, or acknowledged by someone who should know better.

He was in Kerry hoping to join some dots. Ideally, he would stand on the same patch of land his ancestors worked to make his existence possible. That done, he would satisfy his diasporic urge to turn over some of the same sods that they had, just to feel the dirt under his fingernails. That act might, hopefully, quench the otherwise totally illogical compulsion to come full circle.

Jack was a fisherman with an understandable disdain for farming and farmers, and this had injected more than a small measure of insanity into the whole business. It had come to the point of him seriously considering if he wasn't being haunted across the ocean and the years. He'd more or less settled on the notion of some errant agricultural forebear committing an atrocity, which he had to

somehow put right with his physical presence. It was either that or the very early onset of Alzheimer's or Dementia but, either way, it wasn't something he could share with rational people.

He was more fortunate than most Maine fishermen, though some called him lucky while others pinned less generous tags on him. Jack thought he knew who he was and he accepted that, sometimes, he did what he had to do to survive. That wasn't to say that he wasn't acquainted with failure, but that was yesterday.

Today, he could take as much time as he needed and invest as much money as it cost him to discover who he really was. The briefest of smiles creased his face as he remembered his old grandfather, Pat, telling him that only time could tell the whole truth.

However, there is another old Irish saying that says, 'Time waits for no man,' but apparently not this time.

*By Denis*

## **Bruges**

I see bicycles, tiny buses  
and a bendy bus,  
that drives us,  
along a busy street.

We stop to eat  
pizza, and chocolate  
so lovely and sweet,  
strong and smooth as coffee.

Old buildings beside a river,  
red bricks under a blue sky.  
On a boat trip for tourists,

we pass by.

*By John*

## **A crisis of conscience**

My supermarket trolley was full, and I was pretty sure I had remembered everything. I was trying to resist the pull of the confectionery aisle – so many cakes, so little resistance!

‘Please help me,’- a little cracked whispery voice spoke at my left shoulder. I started out of my chocolate daydream, and turned around to see a tiny little woman peering up at me. She didn’t even reach my shoulder. She looked very old and her back was bent. She was bundled into a coat that had definitely seen better days.

‘Isn’t today very wintry?’ she said, giving a little shiver as she tightened the coat around her, and pulled her woolly hat further down on her forehead, so that no hair showed. She smiled at me. It was a very sweet smile, and I thought that she must have been beautiful once. Now she looked as if the wind would blow her away. She reminded me of a robin. I love robins.

‘Very cold,’ I said, even though the perspiration was standing out on my forehead. I took an oath to lose that stubborn stone – again. ‘Is there something I can do for you?’ I said.

‘Would I be an awful nuisance if I rested my shopping bag at the back of your trolley while you check out your groceries? I can’t carry things for long you see. I have arthritis in my hands, and they are really painful today. I can’t manage a trolley or even a basket nowadays. I shouldn’t complain, I know. There are people much worse off than me.’

‘Of course you must. No trouble at all. I am just heading for the checkout now,’ I said, as I took her shopping bag and settled it firmly at the back of the trolley. The bag was a faded red, and frayed at the edges. As I settled it securely, I could see that it contained just a few items – a pack of Cherry Bakewells (my mouth watered), a banana, and a small bottle of gin. I wasn’t being nosy – I just couldn’t help seeing. So that was a meal, as far as she was concerned. Could be worse I suppose, but hardly very nourishing. The gin was a bit worrying, but then, maybe it helped with the pain? Who could blame her? It was hardly my business. She held on to the trolley as we walked, so I was conscious of the need to walk slowly.

'Oh good, no queue,' she said. 'We will be through in no time. Isn't God very good to me?' I smiled at her. 'Now, you go through first. You have only a few things, and I am in no hurry,' I said as I reached for her shopping bag.

'Oh no, no. You go ahead. I wouldn't mind just leaning on the trolley here for a bit. I need a little rest, and then I'll be grand. You're very good to me.'

I moved my shopping through as fast as I could, concentrating on packing it in the order that I would be unloading it. When the trolley was nearly empty, I turned to apologise for taking so long. There was no sign of the little woman. I stood with my mouth open, looking around me. There she was, walking smartly out the way we had come in, her shopping bag swinging. Had she forgotten to pay? Should I call out to her? What was going on? As the automatic doors opened, she turned back, looked directly at me and smiled that impish little smile. No, she hadn't forgotten. Her back wasn't bent now either. I felt such a fool. I'd been had! I felt angry for a while but then, well, it wasn't really my business, and maybe she was hungry. In any case, I needed to get my frozen foods home, and the checkout girl had noticed nothing.

I'd completely forgotten about the little thief until I saw her again in Lidl, a few weeks later. She wore the same shabby clothes but, today, the shopping bag was green, faded and worn looking as before. Her back was bent again, and she was speaking to a harassed looking man with two lively children who kept picking things off the shelves.

'Daddy, Daddy, can we have crisps?'

'No, put them back. Mammy will have dinner ready.'

'I need the toilet Daddy.'

'Oh God! We'll be home in five minutes. Hold on!'

'But can we have one bag of crisps to share Daddy? I'll be all right then.'

'Jeez! Take them so.'

'Please, can you help me?' the little woman was at his elbow.

'What? What? Oh, of course,' he said, putting the green shopping bag at the back of his trolley. As I watched, everything happened as before.

I stepped up to the checkout, meaning to say something to the man, but I stopped myself. What was I doing? The woman was eighty if she was a day, and yes, I could see that she *had* arthritis in her hands. The joints were knobbly and swollen. I didn't want to get her into trouble, and it wasn't my business.

The woman hadn't seen me. I followed her as she left the trolley, carrying her bag, and sauntered through a neighbouring checkout. As she got to the door, she saw me, hesitated for a moment, and then winked at me! I couldn't help it. I laughed out loud at the cheek of her and, God forgive me, I winked back. Now, I have become a criminal. I am a shoplifter's assistant! It is something like being an 'accessory to murder.'

I saw my little minx once again, in Tesco. The performance was the same – same clothes, different shopping bag. Do you know, I don't think I will do anything about her. What would you do?

*By Kay*

## **Belgium**

I see no cattle or fields,  
but I see old buildings,  
sweet shops, churches,  
boats and ducks on the water.

We eat chocolate and sip coffee  
in a café,  
watching the buses  
and cars go by.

I sleep on a boat,  
listening to water.  
This is Bruges in Belgium.

*By William*

## **The Glen, Ennistymon**

I see trees and leaves.  
I hear water, branches creaking,  
people talking, twigs and stones.

And I smell a muddy dog – Baggy –  
happy down The Glen  
in Ennistymon.

*By Stefan*

## **The Nikulin Circus**

There is a very big circus in Moscow. It is called the Nikulin Circus and it is in a big building, not a tent. Families work in the circus together. It's open every day and is a big tourist attraction.

It goes all around Europe. It is the number one circus in Europe. There are horses, dogs, giraffes, zebras, elephants, lions and tigers in this circus. There are also very good acrobats who cycle on a tight rope. Yuri Nikulin was a famous Russian actor and clown. He was born in 1921 and died in 1997. The circus goes from one generation to the next. Yuri Nikulin's son is now the director of the circus.

I love the circus. I like country music as well. I like the guitar and I love the accordion. I like Derek Ryan. He played in Lisdoonvarna.

*By Algis*

## **Going abroad**

I enjoy going abroad with my family. Sometimes, we go at Christmas to escape the bad weather! I am going to Portugal with the Brothers of Charity at the end of May.

*By Robbie*



## **Music: my life**

I love music. ABBA is my number one group. My favourite ABBA songs are 'Dancing Queen,' 'Waterloo' and 'Money, Money, Money.' I also like The Cranberries, U2, Bonnie Tyler and Westlife. I don't like heavy metal music. It's not for me. I like disco music. I don't like heavy metal because it is loud.

I listen to music in the afternoon and at night time. I listen to music on the radio and on T.V. Music is great when you're stressed. It helps you to relax.

Every country has its own music. The older people like traditional music, but not young people. There are traditional dances like the Polka. Instruments are similar in the traditional music of different countries. Music can bring people together.

*By Karel*

## **Lahinch in the summer time**

I see water,  
kites in the sky.

I hear sand and stones  
under my feet.

Eat chips with salt and vinegar,  
smell the sea.

I feel fresh air,  
rain and high waves

rushing in, so I begin  
to go back home.

*By Seamus*

## **In the summer ...**

I walk in Clahane,  
stand on the bridge for a while,  
smell mackerel on Liscannor harbour,  
see the fishermen who bring them in.

I go to the Rock Shop,  
have latte and gingerbread men,  
pick blackberries in September,  
smell seaweed left behind by the tide.

*By Margaret*

## **Sports**

Ice hockey is very popular in Slovakia. Košice is the best team for ice hockey. The team from Slovan Bratislava is also very good. Ice hockey is not at all like hurling.

I played football. I played in defence. Košice has a very good football team. The team plays against other clubs in Slovakia. I am a fan of the Košice football team. My favourite football team is Manchester United. Lionel Messi is my favourite player. He is from Argentina.

I like heavy metal music too. Mettalica is my favourite band. Music is popular in Slovakia. People like to listen to pop music, country music and folk music. The guitar, banjo, violin and accordion are popular folk instruments.

*By Feri*

## **Good friends**

I love dogs. I have four dogs. Ella is a big farm dog. Jessy is a Jack Russel. Micky and Jumy are mixed breed dogs. I walk my dogs every day when it is quiet in town.

Ella, the farm dog, is a puppy. She is very friendly. She loves to swim and run. She will swim in the river, even in winter time.

Dogs are loyal. They make good friends.

*By Mariàn*

## **The zip**

Am I a shining iron gate?  
Can I show off my lines of sparkling rails?  
And what do I do to save my fate?  
Am I useful or just on the make?

I try and do the job with ease.  
And I always aim to please.  
I wiggle up and down -  
Like a snake doing rounds.

I tighten all the furrows  
of ladies dresses in various colours.  
And I like to see a smile on all the faces.  
As they head for a day at the races.

*By Angela*

## **Art is important**

The colours and shapes will put the artist and the viewer in a good mood and transport us to a different place.

*By Marie*

## **My favourite holiday**

In December 2017 I booked a ticket to Lanzarote, in Spain. I travelled with my husband. The night before, I was very busy packing swimming clothes, T-shirts, summer clothes and sun cream. I was so excited!

I flew from Shannon. The flight was 4 hours. I took a taxi to my hotel. When I looked out at the street I saw beautiful houses, green trees and the ocean. My room was big and sunny, and it had air-conditioning. It had a fantastic view of the ocean.

The first day, we went swimming in the beautiful blue ocean. The second day, we went to the old town. On the third night, we went to a late bar. Saturday, we visited Lanzarote's market – it was very big and there were a lot of people. Some days, we travelled round the island and we also took a boat trip to Fuerteventura.

That was my beautiful holiday time.

*By Ingrida*

## **Mystic certainties**

I come from a long line of holy women.  
They believed in the Virgin Mary and holy wells,  
Fortune tellers, cutting cards, tea leaves,  
May Eve and Halloween.

They read minds and had premonitions,  
Shared tales of banshees and apparitions,  
Walked miles to holy sites, said novenas, and tied red  
Ribbons to a bush on Bridget's Eve.

I rejected it all;  
Learned about technology,  
Read books and became a realist.

Still, in the quiet evening,  
I long for the comfort  
Of their mystic certainties.

*By Rita*

## **My Irish husband cooks Venezuelan food**

Having a husband cook is a blessing and in Venezuela we say 'When you like to cook your food, you end up falling in love with it.' That's why I always tell my friends with great pride, my Irish man cooks Venezuelan cuisine.

It all started when my birthday approached and he checked on Google to see how Venezuelans celebrated birthdays. He saw that a cake was made, accompanied by a quesillo. When he arrived at the house he asked me what we were having with the cake. I said what I would like, and he told me, 'I'm going to make the quesillo and see how it fits.' Best of all was that he did it for me, and it was delicious.

Then, from there, I started to ask him, 'Why don't you make me a pineapple cake?' One day, to my surprise, I arrived home after work and he had made my pineapple cake, and it was also very tasty.

From there I told him to make me empanadas, tequeños, garlic sauce, and cachapas. He has passed the test. Everything has been very, very good, despite not knowing what the final result would be like, because he never before tasted Venezuelan food.

My baby, as I say, cooks very tasty Irish and Venezuelan food. I do not like to cook and, thank God, I have a very special chef.

Our days in the kitchen are adventures. He is the cook and I am his assistant, and the best part is that he always surprises me with the things that I like to eat.

*By María Teresa*

## **Postman**

Whether it be rain or snow,  
My postman's always on the go.  
Riding his bike in the pouring rain,  
Stopping at houses along the way,  
Ringing bells and knocking at doors,  
My postman is my Santa Claus!

*By Anna*

## **My dog**

Many years ago, when I was a child, a teenager, and then an adult, I was afraid of dogs. It changed when my parents bought a dog for my little sister. I didn't live with my parents anymore, but every time I visited my family home I became convinced that dogs are wonderful animals.

Today, I have a dog myself. It is a wonderful, lovely female named Ama. When she came to my house almost four years ago, she was less than three months old. From the first moment, I loved her with all my heart.

She's a Jack Russell terrier. She is small, but full of energy; is funny, smart and loyal and I think she is a happy dog. We spend every moment together. We go for long walks every day, mostly to the beach. We play with a ball and she loves it. My dog always goes with me on holiday. Ama is not just a dog for me - she is a family member. My dog makes me happy. I love my little 'girl' and I'm grateful she is with me and is a part of my life.

*By Agnieszka*

## **Ireland**

My name is Elaine. I have lived in Ireland since December 2001. I've always liked reading about the history of countries. I knew some things about Ireland's history but, with the encouragement of my teacher, Beatriz, I decided to read a book about the history of Ireland. I discovered that the country not only fought to be free and independent but also to be able to continue with its religion. I think that was very dignified and it made me proud.

*By Elaine*

## **The cold solution**

The air was cold.  
I struggled from my bed  
And met the icy, cutting wind  
That came in from the east.  
'Baltic' was the greeting  
That passed between us as  
We made it into Mass.  
Frozen beneath a few wall heaters  
The priest declared us sinners all  
And in undertones of guile  
Reflected on a day to come  
When we would pass  
And be no more  
And henceforth never feel the cold.

*By Lily*

## **The Beast from the East**

In mid February, 2018, the weather forecast was warning that snow showers were on the way. We were warned 'the Beast from the East' was about to clash with Storm Emma above Ireland. The storm was bringing freezing temperatures, snow and icy winds all the way from Siberia.

Ireland and Britain were battered by icy weather for a couple of days. The weather affected many counties in Ireland. Driving conditions were very dangerous and tricky. No one was prepared for this freezing weather and everyone struggled with it. All schools and shops were closed for two days, on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> of March, to prevent any accidents from happening.

When we woke up on Thursday morning, the 1<sup>st</sup> of March, our garden was covered with fluffy white snow. It blocked all of the driveways and everywhere. We measured the snow. It was about 20 cms high. Our neighbours and the kids were so happy and enjoyed throwing snowballs, making snow angels and building snowmen. It was a very fun day for us. We actually really enjoyed 'the Beast from the East!'

*By Cassbie*

## **My heart's desire**

Five years ago, more or less, one of my daughters decided to come to Ireland. After a few years, I came too but my other two children stayed in Brazil. They got married and gave me two beautiful grandchildren.

My heart's desire was to unite my family here in Ireland. Then I began to pray and plant the same feeling in their hearts. On the 24<sup>th</sup> of March 2018 everyone came and we are very happy.

I still have my parents, brothers and sister in Brazil and my heart wants them here too, God willing.

*By Sonia María*

## **Sunset**

How I love the sunset over Kilkee's Horseshoe Bay in mid-summer.

The sun fills the sky like a huge circular hot air balloon.

Then it sinks low and lower, radiating hues of yellow and orange.

The first arc sinks slowly into the sea. Then deeper and deeper until a semicircle is left sitting on the horizon.

Cars stop, walkers stand still and cameras flash to the sounds of, 'Wow! Amazing! So glad I could capture it.'

Twilight begins to settle over Kilkee as the sun sinks further into the horizon, leaving the last surviving arc - my favourite photo shot.

Then it slips away silently, leaving a greying sky, with shades of yellow, orange, red and white reflecting on an inky sea.

*By Finn*



## **The river minnow**

The full moon dreamed across my sleep  
And drew me with her, miles and miles  
Back to that place of Always Summer,  
And I was barely five.

Where water chattered over stones  
I caught a minnow in a jar.  
He was all flash and living silver.  
I thought him magical.

I left him in the sun to rest  
And ran to play the hours away.  
Come eventime I watched him float,  
Die, died, dead.

I poured him in a bed of Pinks,  
Their hot peppered fragrance  
Then, and ever after,  
The smell of death.

*By Catherine*

## **My short story**

My name is Elka. I'm from Plovdiv in Bulgaria. I came to Ireland three years ago. My husband's name is Nezhdet and he has been in Ireland for six years. I have one daughter. Her name's Ivona. My son-in-law's name is Toshko. I have a grandson. His name's Antoan and he is six years old. Their family is very good.

Now I live in Ennis and I go to English class. My desire is to start work.

People in Ireland are very good. The state is very beautiful. I love going to old castles and parks and walking by the ocean. I am happy in this country.

*By Elka*

## **My bottle**

My bottle, my bottle you are my delight,  
I long for you by day, and especially by night.

Even though I'm very small,  
You'd think I wouldn't need much at all.

But my appetite is quite grand,  
I get my bottle on demand.

I am lifted, I am fed,  
After winding and changing I'm put to bed.

There I lie all comfy and snug,  
Until I rouse for another jug.

With all this drinking it won't be long  
'Til I'm much bigger and very strong.

I'll relish now, because quite soon,  
Just like my brother, I'll use a spoon.

My bottle, my bottle I love you so,  
'Twill be a while longer, before I let you go.

*By Theresa*

## **My first holiday**

My first holiday was when I was five years old and my family and I took a trip to England. On this trip we got a public bus from one part of Birmingham to another. While on the bus I started to sing, 'The wheels on the bus...' There was an old lady seated next to me and my dad. She was listening to me singing and when I finished she gave me two pounds for doing such a good job singing. I was so excited with the money that, the following day, I wanted to go on the bus again so I could meet the old lady and sing for her again for another two pounds! That was the best memory of my first holiday to England.

*By Elisabeth*

## **Dream on**

I grew up the eldest of a family in East Clare, in the most difficult of times. Back in those days a lot of families were in a situation of unemployment or low incomes. Choices were limited, either one went abroad and sent money home or, if you were lucky, you got local work but the pay was little. Unlike today, education wasn't the most important issue. If you got a job, you took it and that was a priority. Degrees didn't matter and health and safety didn't exist or was not adhered to. So I finished up with school and learned the 'Education of Survival,' the education of how to read the idiot's guide to all disasters and disappointments.

All because of the era and circumstances I grew up in, I left school the summer holidays before my Inter. Cert. I began working in the local hotel (£35 a week=7 days) and working at weekends to make extra money. Then I went to work in a local shop for £50 pounds a week. Needing a fresh start or different life, I went to Limerick to do bar work and eventually became bar manager and stayed there for 20 years, but always felt empty. From the experience of bar work, I got to recognise the effect alcohol has on people and families.

I always wanted to work with people in some capacity or other. I would spend time with my aunt on my days off, and finding out she had cancer was the experience that changed all. The bottom fell out of my world. All the people that I felt close to seemed to be disappearing and I felt vulnerable because I was now in my thirties with not much to show after all the years working. Anger would grow within; nothing accomplished, no agenda, or plan, didn't want to go back to bar work again.

Time to change and to be constructive; the first challenge was to return to education and I did, after 25 years. I dropped into Scariff FET Centre and met the basic education programme coordinator. We discussed my dreams and the options that might be available. I decided a healthcare course that was coming up might be my route to go if I got a place. Being out of school for so long (and to prepare for this course), I was advised to begin with a basic computer class. I joined a Men's Shed basic computer group run by the CABES programme. I got stuck in and with the help of the coordinator and tutor and staying on after classes on my own initiative, I got to grips with computers. When healthcare started, I was good to go and now

the completion date for that course is looming. In the first week of July coming, I will complete my full Level 5 and qualify as a healthcare assistant. Not only this, but I am also proud to reveal that I have been offered a place in social care with Limerick Institute of Technology, commencing next September.

In Scariff FET Centre, I have never missed a class and I have availed of all challenges and opportunities that were offered to improve and broaden my chances including, heritage, geology and even driver theory lessons. In April, CABES nominated me to represent the programme at the National FET Learner Forum, which took place in Croke Park. Here, I was honoured to meet with the Minister for Education, Richard Bruton, and guest speaker, John Lonergan, former Governor of Mountjoy Prison. AONTAS, the organisers, have also been in touch with me since about participating in another upcoming event they are organising.

All of the above was made possible because of the time and patience of the coordinator, tutors, classmates and guidance counsellor. Never in my wildest dreams, could I believe how far I have come. There may be barriers or walls but excuses prevent one from taking opportunities and the chance of a bright future. Adult Education is about you and making your dreams come true.

*By John*

## **Reflect**

*I remember this quote from my school days, and how it did not mean much to me then. Now that I am much older it seems so relevant.*

When you are old and grey,  
Full of sleep and nodding by the fire,  
Take down this book and slowly read,  
And dream of the soft look your eyes had once  
And of their shadows deep.  
(From 'When You Are Old' by W.B. Yeats)

*By Joe*

## **Salvador Dali**

The Spanish painter, Salvador Dali, was the richest and the most famous artist of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. When I was a small girl, he became my artistic idol on painting. His paintings were a great inspiration for me. Although he died a year before my birth, he has played a huge role in my life and has shaped my life and personality.

Salvador Dali opened my eyes to new, surrealistic worlds I dreamed about and in which I could hide. I wasn't as good as Dali, of course. I was drawing at the start – only for a few years - and he was a master of oil paints. Now I'm painting with oil paints but I will never be like him, so I'm trying to be the best me in my own style.

The second person who is really big in my eyes is Margaret Keane. She is known as the Big Eyes painter. Her paintings are extremely beautiful and her life story is deep, amazing and sad in some ways. It is worth watching the moving story of her life, titled 'Big Eyes.'

I love these two talented, brilliant people and I'm grateful for what they did. In painting, even the sky isn't the limit, only the canvas size.

*By Sylwia*

## **Art is important**

It's a good way of expressing yourself and letting your artistic nature shine through.

*By Charlotte*

## **Walking the dog**

Every Thursday I walk Millie with my support worker, Jim. It took me a while to get used to keeping her under control, but I have got better with practice.

*By Brian*

## **Belarus and Ireland**

My name is Tatyana. I was born in a wonderful country. It is called blue-eyed because of its many blue lakes and rivers. Belarus is very bright and clean.

I work as an interior designer. I like my work.

My husband has lived and worked in Ireland for a long time. Our eldest child, Maxim, has already become independent, working as a doctor in a hospital. His wife, Marina, is also a doctor. They live and work in Belarus. Our youngest child, Nicole, is fourteen years old. She is studying at school in Ennis. She likes to read and draw. After school, she wants to study psychology.

Ireland is a very beautiful country. For us, it has become a second home.

*By Tatyana*

## **A new challenge**

My girlfriend and I have lived in Ireland since October 2017. Our first weeks were difficult. We didn't have any flat or jobs. We wondered, 'Have we made a mistake? Should we stay or should we go back to our country?' We were caught between two stools.

We were lucky to get English lessons at this education centre, so we could quickly improve our English level. We have achieved most of our goals. We're so happy. We're having a good life experience.

*By Anthony & Maëlle*

## **Art is important**

It's fun and uplifting.

*By Teresa*

## Racing my pigeons

I remember the first time I got pigeons I was 10 years old. It was from a neighbour of mine called Paddy, who lived up the road from me. Paddy lived in England for a long time and came back to Ireland when his wife passed away. I used to watch Paddy's pigeons on a Saturday when he was racing his pigeons.

They would fold their wings and glide out of the sky and land onto the pigeon shed in his back garden. We'd sit there waiting and talking about pigeons all day long and he'd tell me about the time he raced pigeons in England.

My dad gave me some room in the coal shed to keep some pigeons. Paddy helped my dad to build the pigeon house in the coal shed. They put up some nest boxes and perches for the pigeons.

One day, I asked Paddy to come and have a look at my pigeons. I went into the pigeon house and chased them out. Paddy said, 'Don't chase them out or they'll think you're trying to chase them away. Would your mother chase you out of the house?' I said sometimes she would.

My mother was standing there hanging out the washing on the clothes line to dry at the time. 'I can't get him into the house. I think he lives in the pigeon house,' she said. Paddy laughed.

I asked Paddy, 'When will I start to train my young pigeons for the racing?' Paddy told me, 'When they are about 12 weeks old you can start to train them,' and he also said, 'You will have to pick a young pigeon for the Breeder Buyer Race.' 'What is that?' I asked Paddy. 'Every year we have an auction for a race called the Breeder Buyer Race. Each club member puts a young pigeon into the auction and you try to buy it back for the Breeder Buyer Race. The money raised helps to run the Pigeon Federation Club. It is the longest inland race in the club for a young pigeon to fly. The race is from Malin Head in Co. Donegal. It is about 200 miles for a pigeon to fly.'

'I'm going to pick the blue pied pigeon for that race.' My mother was still there hanging out the washing. 'Have you got a blue bird?' she asked, looking into the pigeon house. My mother said, 'All I can see

are grey and brown birds.' 'Mum, a grey pigeon is a blue pigeon to us pigeon fanciers.' 'Sounds confusing to me,' my mum said.

Two weeks after, on a Sunday morning, I was waiting for Paddy to call to collect the blue pied for the auction. I had my pocket money saved to buy him back. Paddy called with two other men in a car to the back gate of the house. I handed Paddy a cardboard box with the blue pied in it and my pocket money.

'Are you not coming with us?' Paddy asked. 'I'll have to ask my mother if I can go Paddy,' I said. 'We'll look after him Mrs,' Paddy said to my mother.

When we got to the auction there were lines of pigeons in cages. The auction started and Paddy said, 'Let's get up to the front so we can see what's happening. Our pigeons will be up soon.' My blue pied was next. The bids started and Paddy said, 'Get your hand up for the bids if you want to buy your pigeon back.' My hands were shaking as the bids started. My bid was the highest. I got him back. Now I had him for the race.

Two weeks later and it was time to train the blue pied. All the club members train their pigeons together on the pigeon trailer. They go on the trailer in the evening and get food and water.

The next morning the club members bring them to a distance of 10 miles, release them and let them go to fly home. They get trained at 10 miles once a day for five days. Then they go to 20 miles for five days; then 30 miles.

It was a Friday evening and I went to the pigeon club house for the first time to race my pigeons. Every racing pigeon has a metal ring on its leg, telling you the year it was bred and with a registration number on it. They gave me a racing sheet to fill out for the race. Then they put racing rubber bands on the pigeons' legs. These have numbers on them.

When the pigeon comes back from the race, you take off the rubber band and put it into a pigeon clock to register the time. The first race was Athlone, a distance of 60 miles. Saturday morning, I was up early waiting for the pigeons to come home. I could see pigeons flying over



in the sky, but none of them were mine. Then I got one - it flew into the pigeon shed and I went in to catch him.

I took off the rubber band from its leg and put it into the clock to register the time. That was the start of my love affair for racing pigeons.

*By Mike*

## **Celtic seasons**

New Year's threshold at Samhain  
Increasing darkness calls for rest  
'Til the turning point at Winter Solstice;  
At the darkest moment comes the light.

Slow emergence of new life at Imbolc  
With stirrings of possibilities.  
Spring Equinox brings balance;  
Time for new beginnings.

Bealtaine with flowery blossoms  
Threshold to the brighter half  
'Til the turning point at Summer Solstice;  
At the brightest moment comes the dark.

Lughnasa is harvest time  
Tribe and land in satisfied unison.  
Autumn Equinox completes the task  
With a time for thanksgiving.

*By Maura*

## **Hobbies**

I like swimming and table tennis. I also started yoga last September and I really enjoy it.

*By David*

## My favourite recipe

### Roasted Lamb Shank in Red Wine with Italian Mashed Potatoes

Ingredients: (Serves 4)

- 4 lamb shanks
- 1 carrot, cut into chunks
- 3 sprigs of rosemary
- 3 sprigs fresh thyme (and 4 for garnish)
- 10 whole peppercorns
- 1 bottle of good quality red wine
- 3 red onions, quartered
- 3 tbsp. redcurrant jelly

For the mashed potatoes:

- 5 large floury potatoes (e.g. King Edward) peeled and quartered
- 150ml full-fat milk
- 100g salted butter
- 50gms freshly grated Parmesan cheese
- 100gms sun-dried tomatoes in oil, drained and finely chopped
- Salt and white pepper

Method:

Place the lamb shanks, carrot, onions, herbs and peppercorns in a large casserole dish. Pour over the wine, cover and leave to marinate in a cool place for 5 hours, stirring every hour.

When ready to cook, preheat the oven to 190°C/gas mark 5. Place the casserole on the hob and bring to the boil. Cover with a lid and transfer to the oven, and cook for 2 hours. For the second hour slightly uncover the casserole to allow the sauce to thicken a little.

Remove casserole from the oven and transfer lamb shanks to a roasting tin. Spoon over 4 ladlefuls of the liquid to keep the meat moist and add the red onions to the tin.

Return the lamb to the oven and roast for 25–30 minutes or until the meat starts to fall off the bone, basting occasionally.

Strain the cooking liquid into a small saucepan and reduce to half its volume on a low heat. Add the redcurrant jelly and stir until melted.

Meanwhile, prepare the mash. Cook the potatoes in plenty of salted water until tender. Drain and leave to cool slightly. Mash the potatoes. Add the milk and return to a very low heat. Stir continuously for 3 minutes using a wooden spoon. Add the butter, cheese and sun-dried tomatoes, and continue to stir for another 5 minutes. Season with salt and pepper.

Serve a generous spoonful of mash in the centre of each plate. Place a lamb shank on top and drizzle with the redcurrant sauce.

Garnish with a sprig of fresh thyme and serve immediately.

*By Shirley-Ann*

## **Memory**

I remember my father's  
Topcoat:  
Big, dark-brown  
Crombie style  
The huge buttons,  
Revers too.  
Heavy belt with  
Large buckle  
Always on him  
Going to the horse fair  
In town or  
To meet the Travellers  
For more horse news.

Father not a big man  
Image now of  
A boy lost  
In big brown coat.  
The boy had grey hair  
And a yellow complexion.

I wanted to touch his face.

*By Maura*

## **My learning journey**

I went to a rural national school with 72 kids and then the secondary school. The teacher continually told me I was stupid because spelling was very hard for me. I liked doing projects but I always felt my face didn't fit and there was no expectation of me to do well in school.

After school I went to work in a hotel as a receptionist, barperson and housekeeper. After that, I did childminding as I loved looking after kids. I met my husband, Joe, and after a while his parents needed caring so I left work and looked after them for over ten years. It was whilst caring for my father-in-law that I decided I would like to work looking after elderly people as I found that so rewarding.

When my son started school, I decided I needed to do something for myself. We only had a small farm so what would I do? I realised I needed to have an education to do anything but the thought petrified me. A friend had already done the healthcare course so she prompted me to do one module to see how I got on. I had no computer skills and I was still crippled by fear that I'd be no good and that I wouldn't be able to pick up what was being taught. But I also knew that I would go crazy staring at the four walls if I stayed at home.

Finally, I plucked up the courage to come into the centre in Kilrush. I was terrified but I knew I had to do something. Suddenly, my life changed! I was encouraged and supported to start gently and work through the different levels to where I wanted to be. I started on an ITABE course, learning computer skills, communications and food and nutrition. I was given 100% help and support by the tutors and was made to feel confident about myself. I made great friends who I am still in contact with, and I learned more than I ever thought possible for me. I started to believe in myself and what I could do.

I worked through Level 4 and, finally, Level 5 Healthcare Support full award. I ended up with 10 distinctions! I never thought I would get all those distinctions but once I got one, I tried really hard and focussed completely to make sure I did really well. It meant everything to me. I couldn't believe how much I had achieved after 3 years of study. I now work as a healthcare assistant, looking after elderly patients in a care home and I absolutely love it!

I want my son to go to college and I keep telling him how important it

is to take full advantage of the opportunities that education provides us. I encourage everyone to go back to education. It has certainly changed my life and it has been the best thing for me.

*By Verónica*

## **Take time**

*This is a poem I found in my sister-in-law's house. It was attached to a wall clock. I took a picture of it on my phone and saved it for my computer class. I liked how it put all the simple things in life and gave them so much meaning and value.*

Take time to think,  
It's the source of power.  
Take time to play,  
It's the secret of perpetual youth.  
Take time to read,  
It's the fountain of wisdom.  
Take time to pray,  
It's the greatest power on earth.  
Take time to love and be loved,  
It's God's given privilege.

Take time to be friendly,  
It's the road to happiness.  
Take time to laugh,  
It's the music of the soul.  
Take time to give,  
It's too short a day to be selfish.  
Take time to work,  
It's the price of success.  
Take time to do charity,  
It's the key to heaven.  
(*'Take Time'* by Martin Greyford)

*By Peggy*

## Appreciate

Nothing feels better  
Than that breath of fresh air  
The night time buskers  
The wind in your hair.

Appreciate the good things,  
Try your hardest not to worry.  
Problems come and go,  
There's plenty so don't hurry.

Sit and watch the sun rise,  
Or the stars fill the skies.  
Don't rush what is good  
And enjoy living your lives.

*By Cíara*

## Twenty four hours!

*It was my second trip abroad and the furthest from home I've ever been.*

It was a beautiful but cold mid-December morning. I had just woken from a restless sleep after seven hours of twisting and turning on a couch, worrying about the upcoming trip.

My mom and her partner were driving us to Dublin Airport. Although the journey only took twenty minutes, it felt like a lifetime to me. That last farewell was almost near and I was dreading it with every ounce of my being. I wanted to run away, to go back to Kilrush and forget about the trip. But a part of me wanted to continue on, to challenge myself.

We made our way to the terminal where a chestnut-haired girl greeted us with a happy, 'Good morning,' from behind the check-in desk. The dreaded moment of departure drew closer as we sat around a small table, drinking tea. Mom kept reassuring me, saying how courageous I was for going, and making me promise not look to back as we parted. The time to leave came too quickly.

We made our way towards the departure gate. My heart was racing as my anxiety began to kick in with full force. I took a deep breath and turned to mom. Tears were flowing down her face. I gave her a hug as she kept saying, 'Do not look back.' I fell into the security queue and my anxiety reached new heights as the scanner beeped at my turn. A security guard told me to step aside. He scanned every part of my body looking for the source. He soon found it. My Céline Dion keyring! I had forgotten it was in there. That commotion left me shaken but I followed the queue down to the boarding gates. As soon as the plane took off, I fell asleep as my mind and body were exhausted with the tension of leaving.

Two hours later, I awoke, feeling very groggy to hear the captain saying, 'Ladies and gentlemen, we will begin our descent into Schiphol Airport shortly.' I was relieved that the first part of my journey was over.

I had a long wait till my next flight so I sat down to read my book, *The Lord of the Rings*. Eventually, I headed for my flight and watched as the tickets flashed quickly over the scanner letting people through. But when my turn came, nothing happened! At the check-in desk, I was informed I couldn't use my ticket as it was for the previous flight. Once again I had to step aside and go back to the waiting area. Another member of the KLM staff came and apologised, saying the flight had been overbooked and my seat was given away. She gave me two options, either a flight to China leaving in a half an hour and then to Manila, or a ticket for the next day's flight. I thought for a moment, before deciding on the latter. She handed me a white envelope, with a prepay Visa card reimbursing 700 euros, a ticket for the next day's flight, taxi and food allowance, and a one night stay in a nearby hotel.

My anxiety went into overdrive. Here was I, stuck in Schiphol for the next twenty four hours on my own, without any help. I sat in the waiting area and continued to read my book, trying not to overthink. I decided against ringing my parents, both on opposite sides of the world. For the next six hours, I kept my mind focused solely on the book, my anxiety still high. The terminal emptied as people departed for their flights or to discover Amsterdam. My decision to stay behind was mainly based on fear of missing the plane by over sleeping. At the same time, in the Philippines, my dad rang my mom to inform her that I never arrived. She spent the night worried and upset.

Time passed slowly, and finally, by the next afternoon I was on board the plane. I was like a zombie when we finally landed in Manila. I claimed my baggage, signed a few forms and took a step out onto the land of my father. The first thing that hit me was the heat. I could feel it and smell it. This new world was going to be mine for the next seven weeks and new adventures were waiting to be had. I sat on the kerb outside, waiting for my dad. A few minutes later, a familiar figure made his way towards me. My dad stopped just a few feet ahead. We both couldn't believe it. After so many years, here we were just feet away from each other. I gave him a hug but he was speechless with emotion.

As we drove to Pasig City, I gave myself a pinch just to make sure I wasn't dreaming. I was in awe at the sight of this new world. Clear blue skies overhead, the tropical trees gently swaying back and forth from the breeze coming from the sea. It was a far cry from the grey, dull town in the west of Ireland. This is my second home. This was life.

*By Donal*

## **Friendship**

*This poem was in a birthday booklet from a friend many years ago. It had many poems on friendship in it. I really liked this one as it describes best how we feel when a real friend comes to visit. We don't worry about the house. We're only glad to see them.*

Your knock. Your face at the window.  
No need to rush around,  
Shoving things under cushions!  
No need for guilt that the ironing  
Is teetering on the chair.  
No need for the best cups,  
No need for regrets that there's only broken crackers left.  
Come in.  
I'll put the kettle on.  
Now. What's your news?

*By Mary*



## **Budapest**

I lived in Budapest from 2006-2015. I had a very good time there.

Budapest is a very busy and beautiful city. Budapest has two sides, Buda and Pest. These two sides are separated by a river called Duna. Buda is the spa and hills side. Buda Castle is there on the hill. In the castle district there are museums and lots of restaurants.

Pest is the market side. Parliament and Heroes' Square are there. Next to Heroes' Square, there is a theme park which is really old and broken. The theme park closed a few years ago.

Budapest has lots of districts, actually 23. Every district is slightly different. Buda has 6 districts and Pest has 17 districts. My favourite district is the one in the castle area. District 5 is a party and market area. I have lived in districts 1, 6, 8, 9, 11 and 12. In district 5 there is a market street and this district is closer to the river. The parliament is there.

I love Budapest because it is beautiful at night time and in the day time. There are so many interesting things to do or, if you prefer, just go shopping!

*By Timea*

## **My childhood memories**

Childhood was the best part of my life and, looking back, I have some wonderful memories. Summer time was great. I remember walking back to Brew's Bridge with my cousins, in the scorching hot summer and the tar on the road would stick to our feet as we loved to walk barefoot on it. Many hours would be spent swimming and we wouldn't go home until 9:00 p.m. some nights as it was still bright and warm.

In the evenings, all the neighbourhood kids would get together for a game of rounders. I think it was a bit like American baseball without

the baseball bat because we used a tennis racquet instead. Girls on one team and boys on the other; then we would mix around. The boys could never handle getting beaten by the girls.

Then there was '45 all free.' The whole idea of the game was to count to 45 seconds against a pole with your eyes shut whilst everyone would hide. You had to try and find them and run back to the pole before anyone got there to call out, '45 all free!' If someone made it back to the pole before the person that was searching for them, this meant that everyone else was free to come out from their hiding place. You had to be fast!

Another game was 'elastic' for the girls. I loved playing this one, and now when I think back I was getting loads of exercise from all the jumping around on different levels of the game. Two girls would have the elastic around their ankles and you had to jump in and out of it. The elastic would be raised higher and higher till you couldn't jump anymore.

On winter days, we would have shows like Cinderella and Snow White. Everything would be organised, from who would play the main character, to who would run the sweet shop (which would usually be my cousin who ran off with the money calling it his 'wages!'). There would be an entry charge too, even though it was held outdoors.

That was the innocence of childhood. We all had an imagination, and no matter how big or small, we still knew how to have fun. Childhood comes and goes in the blink of an eye, so make the most of it as a child. Have fun, play outside, and make loads of friends because you will never get to relive it again.

*By Denise*

## **Art is important**

It helps us to relax.

*By Carmel*

## **The place where I grew up**

I was born in Limerick and lived in Shannon for six years and then moved to Kilmihiil, Co. Clare, where I have lived since.

I live 2.5 miles outside Kilmihiil, which is a small village. We have two shops, with one having a petrol station. We have a community centre and we also have a place for elderly people called the Meadows. We have three pubs in the village. Daly's is the biggest one and they have music on every Sunday. I like going to Daly's because it's lively. We also have four graveyards nearby, two in Kilmihiil, one in Shyan and one in Cahermurphy.

There was a community hall but it was knocked down and a new one was built back in 1999-2000. I helped with some of the building of the new hall, like bringing cement from the hardware store right beside us at the time. I also helped with putting down the floorboards and helping to mix the concrete and to pour it into the ground to fill any holes. It was a great honour to be part of building the new community hall. I was only 19 at the time but I remember it well.

The hall in the Meadows was built in 2005 with help from lottery funding to build it. The residents have a bite to eat in the centre and have activities like art and singing to keep them active. On Tuesday nights they have cards and bingo. My mother works at the Meadows and loves meeting the old people.

I like going out for a night out in Kilmihiil with friends. We usually go to Daly's to play pool and have a few drinks. It's a great village and I like living there.

*By Brendan*

## **Family history**

I am interested in learning about my family history. My sister, Ann, is helping me.

*By Jill*

## **Colombia**

My name is Adriana. I was born in Colombia, but I now live in Ireland.

My country was known for drugs, but now we are known for our international singer, Shakira, and soccer players, Falcao and James. There are beautiful beaches, delicious exotic fruit and beautiful women. I love my country, Colombia

*By Adriana*

## **Lost love**

I met my soulmate on a sunny day.  
It was love at first sight when our eyes met.  
We shared everything, the good and the bad.  
I was madly in love  
The joy of true romance  
The beating of our two hearts  
As if we were one.

We had everything but things turned bad.  
It was a part of life,  
A love lost but never forgotten,  
I remember the good times but not the bad.  
I was glad I met her,  
The best love I ever had.

*By Senan*

## **The moon outside the door**

I see the moon outside the door,  
It was the moon my father saw.  
The moon it shone down from above,  
It was the moon my father loved.  
That same old moon I'd seen before,  
The moon I see outside the door.

*By Brian*

## Italia '90

June 25th 1990 ('The nation holds its breath,') was the day the Republic of Ireland soccer team qualified for the World Cup for the first time. It was also the day I got married.

We had tried to change the date but we couldn't. So we went ahead as planned. The church was booked for 2 o'clock, to be at the hotel for 4 o'clock, kick-off time. We were at the church at ten to 2; we had the ceremony and then went to the hotel.

There was nobody out on the street. Everyone was inside watching the television. When we went into the hotel it was packed, everyone glued to the telly. They had put up a large screen for the big match, Republic of Ireland v Romania.

People were saying to me that it was a terrible day to get married. But when the match went to penalties and the Republic of Ireland won, everyone was saying it was a brilliant day to get married! Everyone was in great form and we had an absolutely brilliant day. All I could hear in my ears was, 'Olé! Olé! Olé!'

*By Theresa*

## Confession

I was seven years old and about to make my First Holy Communion. The local priest came to our school and helped us with rehearsals two weeks before the big day. I rehearsed my prayers every night and knew them off by heart, so I thought it would be easy for me on the day.

At last the big day arrived. I got up early, nervous and excited at the same time. My mum dressed me up in my beautiful dress and did up my hair in two lovely plaits with white bows. I felt like a princess. Once outside the door my mood changed when I saw the weather. It was pouring with rain and freezing with the cold and I had a mile to walk to the church. Armed with my umbrella, we set off.

Walking up the hill, a car passed us. It was speeding and splashed muddy water all over the back of my lovely white socks! I could have cried! My mum got her hankie out and tried to clean the mud away (She had a few curse words for the driver.) I knew then that it was not going to be a good day.

Suddenly, it was my turn to enter the confessional box - a big, dark, scary place for a little girl like me. I knelt down, hands joined, ready to get this done. The priest slid back the sliding door and my heart started pounding out of my chest with fright. I couldn't see him and he couldn't see me.

He started the opening prayer and then it was my turn. When it got to the part where I was to tell him my sins, my mind went blank. I kept saying, 'I'm sorry for all my sins,' and he kept asking, 'But what are they?' After about ten minutes, he was getting very annoyed and I was petrified. Then he said, 'Don't come back again until you know your sins!' He still gave me penance though. I left the confessional box thinking, 'That's it, I'm going to hell!' I still made my Communion though, and cheered up a little when I made a lot of money from my family. But I never told anybody about that day.

Many years passed since then and I did go to confession again. I always made sure I had lots of sins to tell the priest. I wasn't going to get caught out like I did back then. I eventually stopped going as I got older because I always thought, 'Why do I need to go if God can hear and see and read my innermost thoughts anyway?' Now had there been technology back then, wouldn't it be so much easier to text God our sins and cut out the middle man like that scary priest who nearly had me on the road to hell!

*By Bridget*

## **Art is important**

I think art is important because art is freedom and imagination.

*By Tracy*

## **Journeying through this child's eyes**

A beautiful, sweet, shiny, new baby girl, so beautiful, pure and bright. Born to two parents who loved her, but one in a different light.

A mother who loved her dearly and tried to protect her with all her might, against a man who clearly won, each and every fight.

Such a sweet little girl, who just wanted to have fun and play like all the rest, but this now to be dampened by her being put through every test.

She grew into a timid young girl with her scars buried deep within. She did her best to hide these scars so no one could get in.

Her journey was bleak and bumpy for sure, until one day she said no more will she endure. She stood her ground, to a man that made her cry, but said no way will this man be the cause of her to die.

As she went along her journey, she suddenly saw a flicker of hope, as now she had found a man that had showed her how to cope.

A man as pure and gentle, as he held her hand in hope that this young girl could see some day, that she now could cope.

They rode a stormy journey, with so many ups and downs, but their love for each other nowhere else could it be found.

This love for the other, she holds extremely close to her heart, as this man is now her lover and kept her from falling apart.

As now her journey is over and peace is what she has found, and to be gifted now with two others, is so amazingly renowned.

*By Ona*

## **A hunger for learning**

I went to school in my early days for just three hours a day. I went in to learn for the Confirmation and the Holy Communion. I never went to secondary school. I came from a family of twelve and, in those times, the Travellers didn't believe in having kids in school. I came from the side of the road, to be honest with you. We lived in a condemned house for about 14 years with no water, no toilets. Then we moved into a council house.

In 2002 I had just moved into the Clare area, when I was approached by Katie and Pat who told me that Family Learning classes were going to take place. My daughter was only six at the time. I wanted to be able to help her with her homework, so I went along to the classes. I didn't know what to expect. The first day was a bit daunting, to be honest.

There were classes for maths, cooking, literacy and numeracy skills, and art. There was no end to the classes that we did after that. They were always a support, to be honest with you.

When I met Katie I explained I had a problem. I had dyslexia; I wanted to go into childcare as a professional but, being a Traveller, I didn't think I'd be able to achieve it.

I never ever thought that I'd go to work, or ever go back to school and learn as much as I've learned, be able to sit and do an exam, or to be able to stand up in a crowd and talk.

But when I had my daughter I wanted so much for her, things that I never had. And when I heard about the classes in family learning, I think that's what gave me a hunger. Embarrassment and everything else went out the door once I put my foot through that door. All I wanted was to achieve so much to prove to my daughter that if I could do it at my age, there was nothing to stop her from doing anything in her life.

I have six sisters and I have six brothers, two deceased. Actually, none of them worked. My father is going through his seventies. My father sat down a few weeks ago, and he said, 'I'm proud of you. You're one out of the lot that made something of yourself. I never got the



chance when I was young. We were reared outdoors, living from house to house, waiting for handouts to survive. I did as much as I could with you,' he said. 'What I had was very little, but you went on.'

Without family learning, I wouldn't have had the courage to go back to education and it was from here that I got the courage to do my driving test.

Some Travellers say to me, 'Aw, you're too big in your boots.' I say, 'No, you are never too big in your boots.' I'll want for my daughter what I never had.

If I wasn't in those classes, I'll tell you what I'd be doing at the moment. I'd be at home scrubbing the tables and putting on the dinner, and I wouldn't be out working and I wouldn't be involved in the community. I'd be half scared to mix with the community.

But, it felt like just walking into part of your family, from stage one. Everyone introduced themselves and there was no pressure on anybody. And you felt that even if you wanted to talk about a personal problem, with a child, it was just like family bonding. You didn't feel like you were alone, and that was a good thing. It was a great step for me, personally, to understand that I wasn't the only girl in the county that was struggling.

You're involved in a whole community. Even at times, myself and my daughter, we actually went and did fundraising for other members of other communities, other parts of this community. There's no way in the world I would think of going back. I just wouldn't. I was on a Board of Management of the Family Resource Centre for four and a half years. I've been involved in meetings with Clare County Council on behalf of Travellers. I spoke up for Travellers. You know, going back to me fifteen years ago, I'd actually cry if you asked me those kind of questions. I never thought that it would ever, ever happen, the experience or having the inspiration or having the self-esteem to do something like that.

Now my daughter is eighteen and she's still in school. She has done her Leaving Certificate and a full time QQI course in tourism and hospitality. She will be doing a childcare course in September. She has done work experience in childcare up where I work. And I want her to go down that road, only if she likes it.

Really and truly I think health is your wealth, but your education is the biggest thing in life. Because without education you know nothing; you can go nowhere.

I didn't think I'd have the confidence to step in and go to work. For me, without my qualification, I wouldn't be able to do anything. I'd be there depending on the husband coming home with the social welfare, and I'd have no independence. So, from this, I have gone on. I've done level 5 and level 6 through the strength and support of family learning.

From being an ordinary parent, to actually teaching kids, now I'm a childcare worker in a crèche. I'm fifty three years of age next February for God's sake. I started late in life to learn. But I tell you I'm not sorry. It still is wonderful to be able to go out, do a day's work, learn and meet your friends.

Financially, I'm able to save a bit more. I appreciate what I'm earning because I know I'm doing it for myself. I can go home and see that my family are looking up to me because I'm going out and doing it.

Without those people encouraging me, it wouldn't have been possible. They actually believed in me. They saw more in me at the time than I saw myself.

*By Margaret*

## **Iraq before 2003**

Iraq was a very beautiful country. It was very safe, and the life was simple and easy. When I was a student in high school, I was working in a supermarket after school. After work I went back home, did my homework and then sat with my family having dinner together. We talked about our day (good things and problems) to help and support each other. Friday was a special day; we visited our relatives or friends, played football, went to the cinema and had dinner in the restaurant. I hope things will get better in the future.

*By Samr*

## **The Irish hare**

The Irish hare is a small mammal found throughout the country, from coastal sand dunes to mountain tops to pasture meadows.

Hares are classified in the same family as rabbits. They are bigger than rabbits and have dark markings on their fur. They have the same diet. Hares are grazers. They eat grass and herbs and tree bark and will often be found sampling vegetables in domestic gardens.

Unlike rabbits, who live in burrows underground, hares make nests on top of the ground. This makes their young vulnerable to predators after birth, but young hares are born fully formed with their eyes open so they are up and running about within a couple of hours after being born.

Hares and rabbits are plentiful throughout Ireland and breed every couple of months, so there is no regulation regarding hunting. In years gone by they were hunted extensively and were prized for their meat.

Hares breed all year round but peak breeding time is springtime, and hares can be seen performing elaborate dance routines in the early mornings in spring. This has given rise to the saying, 'As mad as a March hare,' which is a term used to describe someone considered a bit wild.

*By Michael*

## **My holiday in Albania**

I went on holiday last year with my cousin in Albania. Our country has many beautiful beaches, so we decided to go to the southern beaches. We decided to go to Saranda. The road was long but we had fun together. We visited some old places there. We took some beautiful photos together. We enjoyed the beautiful views of the sea. When we were travelling in a small boat, we saw some dolphins. It was wonderful. This was a very nice holiday. I want to go again.

*By Sevi*

## A day in Cádiz

- Why Cádiz?

The city of Cádiz is one of the oldest towns in Europe. You can find a variety of places like beaches, mountains and there are many special events during the year.

- How we can get there?

There are different options for getting there: we can go by plane, boat and train as well.

- What can a visitor do and see?

We have a lot of festivals during the year; for example, the carnival in February, Easter week, 'The Ferias,' where families and young people can have fun with a variety of activities. Also, the summertime is unbelievable. Visiting the Roman theatre is a good option too. It is the second oldest in Europe with a very interesting history.

By the way, you will fall in love with the Mediterranean food. It is also very good to walk around the city enjoying the gorgeous food. There are delicious dishes in plenty of places, like Gazpacho (tomato soup with vegetables), gorgeous sea food, and special desserts which come from Africa.

You will feel very welcome because, as the people say in Spain, the 'Gaditanos' are very welcoming and funny people.

*By Ricardo*

## What I enjoy doing

I enjoy music. One of my favourite singers is Mike Denver and I went to see him in Glór. I also go to the gym. On Wednesdays, I do a computer course which I really like.

*By Martina*

## **My visit to Shanghai**

I come from Shanghai in China. Last year I visited Shanghai after a long time living away, and I was surprised.

In Shanghai subway, you can go anywhere and it is very convenient.

The city of Shanghai has a high-speed-rail that is very fast (350km/h), a subway and motorways, a national road network and subway systems to the airports, trains, anywhere.

I really like Shanghai transport. It's amazing!

*By Hong*

## **A day trip to Lahinch**

Yesterday, we travelled to Lahinch with our friends. It was beautiful, sunny weather. We were walking on the beach close to the ocean when we decided to go to a restaurant, but the kids wouldn't let us go for a long time. They were enjoying their time on the beach. We were hungry. Fortunately, I had brought some food for us: biscuits and cheesecake. We were walking for 4 hours before going to the restaurant. It was good because when we finally arrived, we were all very hungry. At the restaurant there was a really good atmosphere. We asked for fish, salad and potatoes. We were sitting for a long time before we realised that we didn't have any cash to pay. Someone had to go and take money out of the ATM.

At the end, we repeated our walk by the ocean. We saw the sunset. We took a lot of beautiful pictures and videos on the beach. We started our trip back after 5:00 p.m. A lot of cars began their trips back from the car park at the same time. Actually, it was a really good day.

*By Tatiana*

## **An opportunity for Quixote**

Sometimes I think, 'What am I doing in Ireland?' My English isn't good. My family is in Spain. I left my job.

I don't understand myself. I always think about my parents, my brothers and my great friends. I miss them. There are so many things that I remember, like the famous Cervantes story of Don Quixote de la Mancha. I feel I am tipping at windmills here.

But at night when I go to sleep, I think: this is a wonderful time to enjoy, with my daughters, a new experience in life. They can learn English, but I don't know if I will ever get it!!

We are getting to meet new people in a wonderful country. Every time I go to Spain, I will bring back a piece of sun!! Thanks Ireland for welcoming us.

*By Rocio*

## **Communication problems**

Twenty years ago I had a meeting with an important client. He was a French businessman and I was a Spanish tax advisor. He spoke fluent English, but he didn't speak Spanish. I didn't speak French and my English wasn't good.

We hadn't met each other before this meeting. All of our conversations had been online. I used a translation program so the client thought that I spoke good English.

I had asked my partner Michael, who also attended the meetings, to translate and help me with the languages but, when the time came, he was sick and couldn't come.

The meeting point was at a famous restaurant in Madrid. When I arrived, my client was having a glass of wine and typing slowly on his laptop.

He began to speak to me in English, quickly. I didn't understand anything. I froze.

After a few minutes I said, 'I'm sorry, I can't understand you,' and he answered, 'Then, we have a serious problem because we have to speak about an important issue.'

I didn't know what to do!

He asked me, 'Have you got your laptop there?' 'Yes,' I answered. We had to send emails to each other (translated by a translation program) while we were sitting across the table from each other in the restaurant.

*By David*

## **Polish food and drink**

Hi, I'm Damian and I'm from Poland. I was born and lived in north-western Poland. The most important food and drink in my country is dinner. In some parts of my country there are different dishes but, of course, we have main courses that are everywhere.

The most popular dishes are beetroot soup, which we call 'borscht;' also chicken soup or broth, and another is sour rye soup. Soup is the first dish because dinner in Poland should consist of two dishes. For the second dish we have a really big selection of dishes. First, I will talk about the dish that tastes the best to me, and that is dumplings with cottage cheese. Also, I like Hunter's stew. Another very tasty dish is stuffed cabbage rolls. Of course, we have many other dishes but I chose the most popular.

In Poland people drink tea, usually with lemon juice, but mulled wine and mead are also very popular.

*By Damian*

## **Food and drink in Galicia**

Hi, my name is Brais and I come from Galicia. It's a small autonomous region in the north of Spain. Galician people usually eat and drink a lot, so it is very common to cook for twenty people when there are only four.

The typical Galician food is seafood. We have the best seafood in all of Spain. We also have good wines. People traditionally eat seafood at Christmas so, as you can imagine, the price goes up; for example, 1kg of barnacles, could be about €200! Getting them is very dangerous because they are on the rocks where strong waves break so that is why the price is so high.

I said before that we have good wines and one of them is the Albariño. It's a kind of white wine which is very common in the low estuaries.

Every Sunday, a lot of families go to bars and the adults drink wine and eat traditional 'tapas.'

*By Brais*

## **Gardening – be close to nature**

I first got interested in gardening on one summer holiday when I was a child. My siblings and I were spending a few weeks in our grandparents' house in the countryside. My grandmother showed me how to plant vegetables – it was so interesting.

I remember that it was a very hot summer, around 30 degrees. I took watermelon seeds and a 5 litre bottle. I cut the bottle and made a small greenhouse for my watermelon. Every day, I watered it and watched how it grew. My fruit didn't grow that big, but it was my own success. It was not sweet, but delicious. Nobody in Poland grows watermelons because it is not the right climate, but I did it!

When I came to Ireland I was impressed by the beauty and colour of Irish nature. I love travelling around and seeing the beautiful scenery. I



have started looking after my garden also. I grow my own herbs and a few vegetables every year. Here, it is more difficult to plant vegetables because there is not much sun. Last year, we had tasty raspberries and strawberries in our small garden. My baby daughter was very happy.

Gardening is so relaxing and satisfying. Many people think that it is an activity for old people, but that is not true. Gardening helps us to reduce stress and appreciate the beauty of the surrounding world. It is also an excellent way of spending free time with your family.

I would recommend gardening as a hobby because, for me, it is one of the most relaxing free-time activities that anyone can do.

*By Agnieszka*

## **Guinea food and drink**

I am going to talk about food from Guinea. Our favourite foods are rice, bread, cassava, potatoes and bananas. We eat rice with different sauces, for example, tomato sauce. We cook meat and chicken soup. My favourite meal is rice and fish.

Many foods are imported from other countries; for example, China, France, Senegal and Mali. My country has rich soil but the people don't work hard, and they prefer exporting to other countries to get more money.

In addition we drink imported juice, and we make a drink from ginger, with sugar and lemon. Some people drink beer, but they are not Muslim. I liked my country's food a lot before, but now I also like Irish food.

*By Fatoumata*

## About me

My name is Ricky. I come from China. I live in Ennis with my wife. I study English twice a week at the education centre in Ennis.

Sometimes, I like to go shopping with my wife. In the summer we always go to the seaside to watch people fishing and swimming.

I like cooking vegetables because my wife likes vegetables.

*By Ricky*

## Leaving Pakistan

My name is Iram. I was born in Pakistan in 1991. I went to university in Pakistan. My qualification is Master of Electrical Engineering. When I completed my education, I got married in 2015. My husband lives in Ireland and he wanted me to join him here. Due to immigration problems, I had many problems getting my visa. At last, my visa was issued, and I came to Ireland on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2017.

Now I am living in Ennis, and I feel everything is different here. The weather is much too cold. In Pakistan, my mother language is Urdu. The main problem I am facing is the language problem, so I decided to improve my English. One day, I called to the education centre for adults. They gave me a good response and a very comfortable environment. I have been attending classes since last month. I feel my English is going to improve and when I feel that I can communicate easily, I will apply for a job in my profession.

I miss my family but my aim is that when I meet my family again, I will be doing well and they will feel proud of me. I know I will face many problems because I also have no experience, but I will do my best. I hope I will achieve my goals.

*By Iram*

## **My first day in Ireland**

When I came to Ireland for the first time, it was November 2011. I was very excited to see a new country, and when I arrived I found everything was different for me: the language, the weather, the people. At the beginning I couldn't adapt to it but, after a while, I liked everything here. I have been living here for five years. The weather is normal for me now, and I like the people especially. They are very nice and very friendly, and they like helping everyone who needs help. They were very helpful to me. I try to learn English to communicate with the people, and to help my children. I'm grateful for my teachers; because of them, I have learned a lot. Really, Ireland is the best country. Ireland helped us with everything. I couldn't live in another country, other than Ireland.

*By Assia*

## **My husband's fishing story**

Last Sunday morning, my husband drove with his brother to Kilkee. They wanted to catch some fish. They got up at 5:00 a.m., packed their equipment and started their adventure. When they arrived on the cliffs it was still dark, and the weather was bad. Despite these difficult conditions, they decided to go fishing. At 6:30 a.m., my husband had a bite on his rod. His fishing rod was bending massively. He knew that he had caught the biggest fish of his life. For another half an hour, my husband fought with the fish. He could not bring her ashore, so he decided to break the fishing line. It was a huge disappointment for him. After this incident he returned home very sad, but he said to me that this adventure was the most amazing of his life.

Fishing in Ireland is the most exciting thing we do. If the weather is good, we always drive to the seaside. So far, we have caught a lot of different types of fish: pollock, cod, squid, ray, cuckoo wrasse, flounder, bog fish, conger, brown trout, mackerel, crab and bass. So if you like fishing, come to Ireland.

*By Magda*

## **My story of a special friend**

My name is Fatoumata, and I'm from Guinea. When I came to Ireland in January 2013, I was living in Dublin. Everything was very different for me. Ireland is a nicer country than Guinea, although it's very cold. I was very sad because I don't have any members of my family here, but the Irish people are very friendly.

I made a friend from Angola. Her name's Janine, and we're very close but now she lives in Cork. She has four children. We talk every week, and sometimes she comes to visit me with her kids. Every year, I go to visit her too.

We are from different countries but now she's my best friend. She is a good friend, and I like her.

*By Fatoumata*

## **My time in school in Ireland**

My name is Adam and I am twenty years old. I come from Sudan. When I left my country, I was seven years old. I moved to a different country, and I lived there for about ten years until I came to Ireland.

When I came here, I could not speak or understand English. Then I went to school in Ennis Community College. One day they said to me, 'You're going to be an adult next month and we don't accept adults.' They transferred me to the Adult Education Centre. One year later, I started going to Ennis Youthreach. Since then, my English has got much better.

At first, I felt nervous and left out. I sat in the foyer feeling lonely and shy. A few people helped me. When I started chatting with them, I began to make friends. I have good friends now in school. I've been there since 2016 and it's been great. I have good memories and good friends as well.

Before I started in Youthreach, people told me it was one of the worst schools in Ennis. What a load of rubbish! I found out that this is a great

school and the students are really nice. When I started Youthreach I didn't really know what to expect from the teachers but, straight away, they were very supportive.

It's meant a lot to me working with them, and I will really miss them when I leave. It's not always easy but it is worth it in the end. I wouldn't change a thing. When I first came to this school, I was shy and nervous. I was really scared of the older students but, over time, I realised that they were nice and they were the same as me really, only taller.

I was 17 when I came to Ireland from a different country. It was so different from my country. Here, there is always green grass and cold weather. My friends have helped me to speak English like them. I will miss them when I leave but we're still together now.

*By Adam*

## **My town, Baja**

I was born in Baja many years ago. This town is by the Duna River, in the south of Hungary. The area is the same size as Ennis, but more people live in Baja.

This town gets a lot of sunshine; the weather is very good all the time. In summer, you can swim in the river. Everybody goes to the riverside and sunbathes every day.

Many people have boats. In the morning people travel by boat to Duna, and come back in the evening time. Some people stay on the beach; they sleep in tents. I have spent a lot of time doing that. Those days were beautiful for me.

*By Ildiko*

## **Making people happy**

Oh howdy, how r ye? My name is MC J and I am from Clare. I live somewhere. I changed my name to Jamcy. Everyone in the world knows me. One day, I went to the sea to see the letter C.

I went back home and then I felt so tired, I lay on my bed for three hours. I started thinking about songs to rap. But I didn't know how to start rapping. I just began listening to rap songs. I started mixing the words. Then my neighbours heard my voice. They shouted, 'Who the hell are you singing that song and making all that noise? Shut your mouth.'

I said nothing. I just kept rapping over and over. Then they got very angry. They came to my house and knocked on the door. 'Who is it?' I said. 'It's your neighbours. Why are you making so much noise?' they asked. 'I'm not making noise. I am just trying to make songs and make people happy,' I said.

*By Jamcy*

## **Raki**

The most important drink in Albania is raki. It is really a part of Albanian culture. This is the traditional Albanian drink and is also the alcoholic drink consumed most in Albania.

Raki can be produced from almost every fruit, but it is most commonly made from grapes in mild climate regions. This drink can be consumed before or after meals and, sometimes, even in the morning, while having a coffee. It is delicious and strong.

*By Sevi*

## **Russian cuisine**

I'm from Russia and we have special cuisine there; for example, we don't put a lot of spices in our dishes and our cuisine seems to me, very simple. You often find just boiled potatoes and salted cucumbers on the table with some meat. As we have a long, cold winter, there is a lot of salted food: salted tomatoes, cucumbers, fish and even meat and apples. You can also find many Asian dishes in Russian cuisine, but without so many spices as in Asia.

We like to eat porridge for breakfast and soup for lunch. Traditionally, the biggest meal is lunch when we have soup and salad, and meat with garnish and something to drink. And another thing we like is drinking a lot of tea during the day. It is often black tea without milk but with sugar or lemon.

*By Tatiana*

## **Sharing housework**

Although the idea of sharing housework equally between partners sounds tempting; in the real world, women do most of it. However, I believe both partners should do their fair share.

In most cases, men do not want to do housework for two simple reasons – they think if they make money at work, they are entitled to be couch potatoes at home. And the second reason is that men fallaciously think women are born for washing, cooking, ironing and other 'women's business.' I agree that, sometimes, women have more time for housework due to their work choices but, in my personal opinion, the house should be cleaned by all family members because they make it dirty together.

There are rumours that women do the cooking and ironing better. It is obvious that it is men's gossip, because they can't explain why they can't cook like Jamie Oliver and why the shirt still has wrinkles.

Finally, housework is boring if you do it alone, whereas when partners do it together, it gives them a chance to get closer. This greatly

improves relationships and teaches us to value each other's work. In summary, I believe that men and women should endeavour to share the housework equally.

*By Aleksandra*

## **Chinese food**

My name is Simei and I come from China. I make special Chinese dishes for my family.

My favourite recipe is fried tofu and steamed fish. Sea bass is best. The tofu is cooked with pork, salt, peanut oil and a little garlic in a frying pan. The steamed fish is cooked with ginger, shallots, soy sauce and peanut oil.

My children love this dish. I hope to try more dishes for them.

*By Simei*

## **Sustainable fishing**

I first got interested in fishing when I was 14 years old. My father took me along fishing with him. He was a keen fisherman and wanted me to learn. He started by teaching me the basics like casting, baiting the hook and tying the hooks, etc.

I really enjoyed the experience and have been hooked on fishing ever since. I enjoy the adrenaline you get when you get a fish bite. I like catching only what I need, and not depleting the fish population, as people who use nets do.

I now bring my own kids fishing and teach them how to fish responsibly. I also enjoy the fact you get to spend quality time with them while they learn how to fish. I also know it's a valuable skill to have and one that they will treasure for the rest of their lives, especially if they are in a situation where they might need to fish to survive.



I really believe fishing, if done in a sustainable manner, will not diminish the fish population. However, using nets and big trawlers will end up making certain species of fish extinct and future generations will not have the experience I had when I was fourteen years old.

*By Jamil*

## **The best hobby is a well-paid hobby**

When I was a child, my dad had an old-fashioned camera. I often took it to play with, and imagined myself as a photographer who takes pictures of celebrities.

On my thirteenth birthday, my parents gave me an amateur camera that made me incredibly happy. It took me a long time to understand how lighting and other factors affect the quality of photos. I took a long time to choose the most interesting pictures, because there was a film of only thirty-six frames at my disposal.

The most emotive for me (then and now) is the opportunity to capture a fragment of nature, the expressions on human faces, and save these moments for ages. When I look at the pictures I took, the details of that day return to my mind. In fact, each of the photos is a puzzle of my life.

Today I have my own professional photo school, where I teach other people to look at this world through the camera lens. What once started as a way to kill long empty hours, now has become a job that is both enjoyable and lucrative.

*By Ramílya*

## **Day trips**

I like going to Galway with my sister, Geraldine. We go by bus.

*By Kevin*

## Grand Slam 2018

### Match 1 - On our way - France v Ireland

Johnny Sexton's late show delivered a victory from the jaws of defeat. The celebrations were wild at the full-time whistle.

Previous to the final whistle, our boys in green built up a 6 point lead through Sexton's boot. Our boys were slow to start for the second half, France working their way back into a leading position. Terry Thomas's try had France believing they were on course for a home win. Anthony Belleau missed a chance to cement the win and lived to regret it. Sexton's drop goal after 41 phases secured Ireland's victory. The score was 15-13.

### Match 2 - Ireland v Italy

Ireland ran in 8 tries but the satisfaction was compromised by an injury to centre, Robbie Henshaw, who suffered a freak accident in going down for the second time. This led to a tournament ending shoulder injury. Jacob Stockdale also grabbed a couple of tries. The final score was 56-19.

### Match 3 - Ireland v Wales

This was Ireland's game. We had possession of the ball, many tries, and Wales never got to have the lead but nearly caught us as Sexton left his kicking boots at the team hotel. The visitors were pushing us hard for a late win and Ireland were beginning to creak when Stockdale stepped out of the line and intercepted a Gareth Anscombe's pass and scored a try. The score was 37-27.

### Match 4 - Ireland v Scotland

For the third game in succession, Stockdale scored 2 tries to break the record for an Irish player (6 in the tournament). Conor Murray and replacement, Sean Cronin, added 2 more tries and Ireland secured a third bonus point win, securing the Six Nations title. The score was 28-8.

### Match 5 - A Grand Slam win on St. Patrick's Day - Ireland v England

On the field of sport only, our arch enemy, England (otherwise, our next door neighbour and great friend) was next.

London provided the perfect venue for the final. A memorable tournament that had started with a nerve-shredding match in Paris ended on St. Patrick's Day in London. On the way Ireland collected

the Six Nations title as well as many injuries, some so serious that they ended many players' tournament.

Ireland deserved their victory with an occasional rub of the green. The score in the last match was 24-15. Well done to our boys and looking forward to the 2019 season.

*By Tony*

## **Refugee**

If I want or not,  
If you want or not,  
Whether I like it or not,  
Whether you like it or not

I am here in your country, on your land, in your city. Maybe I am your neighbour, your friend or your colleague, or maybe someone in the way.

I did not decide that; neither did you. It is my destiny; it brought me here to see you, for you to see me, to learn your language and perhaps, if you like, for you to learn my language.

You hear my story and I hear your story. Maybe we will drink coffee together some day. So smile, and I have to smile, for we live together in peace. Believe me this is why I came.

Really, I thank you for your smile. It gives me hope.

*By Fatima*

## **Tidy towns**

I help keep Ennis tidy. I pick up rubbish once a week around my area. I do this with two other people.

*By John*

## **Happiness**

Listening to the birds singing is happiness,  
Seeing the butterflies fly from here to there is happiness.

The feel of the first raindrop is happiness,  
Walking barefoot on the wet grass is happiness.

Holding a new book in my hand is happiness,  
The smell of coffee is happiness.

Listening to my favourite song is happiness,  
Singing along with it is happiness.

Helping others is happiness,  
Making them smile is happiness.

Choosing to be happy is happiness,  
The absence of sadness is happiness.

*By Mahanaz*

## **Hector the rooster**

Hector was a beloved pet rooster to Jim and Frances who loved and took fantastic care of him. Hector was a Polish bantam. He had a distinctive top knot which was very long and covered his eyes. He was vulnerable to predators as his plume obstructed his vision. He would often flip it back so that he could see where he was going. Unfortunately, Hector was bullied by the other chickens and roosters which, ultimately, caused him to suffer a stroke. This caused his head to flop to one side. He still managed to travel well when he was out but he always looked like he was walking sideways. It was very funny to watch him in action.

Frances's best friend, Netta, had a phobia about feathers, especially if they were attached to anything that moved. On one particular visit, Netta rang Frances to tell her that she was on her way. She asked if she could kindly put all the cocks and birds to bed and, to her delight, when Netta arrived there wasn't a bird in sight. Unbeknownst to Netta,

however, Hector had escaped through a hole at the bottom of the shed door. He was waiting patiently out of sight looking at Netta, wanting to know who this new visitor to his yard was. Netta had parked her car and was walking towards the house when, all of a sudden, she saw Hector moving very fast towards her. Netta ran back into the car and Hector ran back into the shed. After a few minutes, all seemed quiet so Netta got out of her car again and this time started making her way quickly towards the house. Out of nowhere, Hector arrived again to greet her. Netta again ran back to her car and watched Hector walk back into the shed. Hector looked like he was walking sideways because of his head droop. Hector would stop after every few steps to look around sideways to see where he was going. This happened every time Netta got out of her car and, in the end, Hector was inadvertently holding Netta hostage in her own car.

Netta rang her friend, Frances, who came out and took Hector up in her arms and told him what a lovely boy he was and how bad Netta was to go running away from him. Frances comforted Hector as if Hector was the one who had been traumatised by what Netta had done, instead of the other way around.

Hector lived a long and happy life on the farm and passed away peacefully many years later. Netta and Frances are still good friends to this day. RIP Hector.

*By Geraldine*

### **My son's Communion party**

I had a Communion party last week for my son, James, at our house. We had lots of games and lots of sweets and drinks and cakes. It started at two and went on till five. All the children had a lot of fun and all went home happy. I was exhausted when it was all over but I was happy that everyone had fun.

*By Patricia*

## **My family is happy**

I am twenty-two years old. I'm married and I have a son; he is two years old. I am from Brazil. I came to Ireland two months ago. The reason for coming is because my husband has got citizenship now, and we are happy.

*By Alessandra*

## **What I have mastered so far in my life**

I was born on a farm in County Clare and on the farm horses were always present as far back as I can remember. My family are keen horse folk and we bought and sold many horses over the years for racing, equestrian and pleasure. So I have always had contact with horses. My earliest recollection would have been my father teaching me how to ride a pony when I was eight years old. This is where my love and affection for horses began and continues to this day.

After I learned to ride a pony, I then moved on to learning to ride a horse. This time on a horse, I found to be a completely different experience from being on a pony. I was somewhat nervous and apprehensive even though a friend of the family, who was a very good horse man, was with me and telling me what to do and we were in an indoor arena. I first started to walk slowly while on the horse and then began turning him while he was walking. I did this several times and I found that my confidence was really growing and I felt very comfortable.

Over the coming months, I was now able to saddle up horses and ride on my own without supervision. This was a huge step for me but I still had a long way to go, as my goal at that time was to hunt. Over the coming years I was able to take horses out for gallops, both cross-country and indoor. I was now able to look and see and distinguish good horses from average horses by just looking at their appearance, walk and temperament. I was now buying saddles and other equine equipment for the horses on the farm, and giving advice to other people who were also interested in horses.

When I was fourteen, I decided that the time was right for me to hunt. My first hunt was with Ruan hunt. I knew that all the skills and

techniques that I had learnt would now be put to the test. Hunting is one of the most dangerous and challenging disciplines for both rider and horse. When the day did come and I set off on the hunt, every ounce of energy in me and my horse was used up by the end of the day. All my skills and horsemanship were truly tested and stretched.

I have ridden in many hunts since that day and hope to continue to do so in the future, and also pass on my knowledge of horses to my young nieces and nephews.

*By Joe*

## **The Mayo team**

My name is Michael and I was born in Castlebar Hospital in County Mayo. I lived in Achill Island in County Mayo up to two years ago when I moved to Clarecastle in County Clare. I am very fond of GAA, especially football, hurling and the ladies football team of Mayo. I also love the Clare teams. I'm a big fan of the Mayo senior football teams and I like going to the Mayo games. I am going to see the senior football team on the 13<sup>th</sup> of May in Castlebar, County Mayo.

I am so happy for the Mayo ladies football team because they are in the All-Ireland ladies football final on the 6<sup>th</sup> of May 2018. They are playing the All-Ireland champions, Dublin, in the final. The Mayo ladies will win the final. The Mayo ladies will be bringing the cup home to the best place in the world, Castlebar. They will be having a big party on the 6<sup>th</sup> of May and they will be very happy. The Mayo ladies football team has not won the All-Ireland football before now. The Dublin ladies football team won the All-Ireland final last year.

The Mayo senior football team will beat Galway on the 13<sup>th</sup> of May in the quarter-final in Castlebar and they will win the All-Ireland football final in 2018. They will get the Sam Maguire Cup. They will also win the Connacht football final in 2018. The Mayo team will bring home the Sam Maguire and the Connacht Cup to the best place in the world. We will have a big party with the cups in the Breaffy House Hotel. Mayo has not won the All-Ireland football final since 1951, but we will win it in 2018.

*By Michael*

## Ramadan

Ramadan is the ninth and the holiest month of the Islamic calendar. Fasting during Ramadan is one of the pillars of Islam. It's believed the first verses of the holy Quran were revealed during the month of Ramadan.

The month of Ramadan starts when you can see the new moon. Because the Islamic calendar is a lunar calendar, Ramadan moves backwards and starts 11 days earlier every year. Ramadan lasts 29 or 30 days, depending on when the new moon is sighted.

All healthy adults have to fast. Teenagers fast too, but not young children, and not elderly or sick people. We fast during the daylight hours; we can't even drink water.

Ramadan is a very special month. It's a time to reflect. It's a chance to learn to be patient and to have self-control. We remember to do good deeds and to give charity to the less fortunate. It helps us get rid of negative thoughts and bad habits. For us, Ramadan is an opportunity to be a better person.

Actually, scientific studies show that fasting is good for you. It helps detoxify your body and, apparently, fasting can make you live longer and give you a healthier life.

We break our fast at sunset with a meal called Iftar. Before we fast the next day, we get up very early in the morning and have a pre-dawn meal called Souhour.

Ramadan is a month of worship. In addition to our five daily prayers, we recite special prayers and read the Quran. It is a chance to be closer to God, and to be closer to our family and friends. We spend a lot of time together, especially after we break the fast. It's wonderful when everyone has Iftar and Souhour together.

We say 'Ramadan Kareem' or 'Ramadan Mubarak,' but you can say 'Happy Ramadan' if you like; people will be grateful to receive well-wishes in any language.



When the month of Ramadan finishes, we celebrate Eid Ul-Fitr. This is the feast of the breaking of the fast and it lasts for three days. We dress up in our nicest clothes, visit our family and friends and eat lots of sweets. It's a very happy holiday. In this celebration you can say, 'Eid Mubarak' or simply 'Happy Eid.'

*By Heba*

### **From Poland to Kilrush**

I am 49 years old. I am married and I have got a wife. She is very pretty. I come from central Poland. I live in Kilrush. I'm a kitchen porter, but in my free time I like swimming. I go to the pool in Tralee once a week.

*By Tomasz*

### **A runaway from war**

I'm from Syria, but now I live in Ireland. I came to Ireland one and a half years ago. I have been to Limerick, Galway, Cork, Waterford, Dublin and Dungarvan. I would like to visit the world.

I am married and I have three children. Youssef is six years old. Haider is three and a half, and Yazan is six months. Youssef is in Junior Infants, and he likes school. Haider and Yazan go to crèche.

I'm a carpenter but I'd like to be a barber because I think it's an easy job, and I like cutting hair. Now I'm studying English in Ennistymon and Ennis. I walk to class in Ennistymon and go to Ennis by car. In my free time, I like swimming and I like cooking sweets.

I like going to markets in Limerick and Dublin; for example, two weeks ago I went to Limerick, and I bought forty-five armchairs for me and my friends because we like sitting in our gardens on sunny days.

*By Omar*

## **I'm happy**

I am 39 years old. I am married and I have got two children. I'm from Syria, but I live in Ennistymon. I'm studying English.

In my free time, I like fishing. I go to Doolin and sometimes I catch mackerel and pollock.

I had 30 sheep and a dog and 7 canaries and 20 pigeons in Syria. Now I have 2 canaries. I bought them yesterday. My children love the canaries.

*By Ahmad*

## **My new life in Ennistymon**

My name is Moharrab and I come from Syria. I live in Ennistymon with my wife and my children. I have two sons and two daughters. Wafaa is 11 years old, Mataz is 9, Hatem is 6 and Layan is 4 weeks old.

I like playing football and swimming in the sea. I go to school because I want to speak English.

*By Moharrab*

## **My love for music**

I'm a hairdresser. I like my job very much because it is my hobby. I am married and I have got three children. I'm from Poland, but I live in Kilrush. My husband is a car mechanic here. Two of my children live in Poland but one lives in Ireland.

I am around 48 years old. I like playing piano in my free time. I play many different kinds of music. My favourite composer is Fryderyk Chopin. Music is very important in my life.

*By Bernadette*

## **My long holiday**

I'm from Poland. I am a widow and I have one child. I am 63 years old, and I'm learning English. In my free time, I like playing table tennis.

I live in Kilrush, County Clare, with my son. He moved to Ireland in 2006. I came to visit him for Christmas that year for one week. I came again on 3<sup>rd</sup> of May 2007, for one month. My son said, 'Don't go back. Please stay.' I said, 'OK.' I'm still here.

*By Irena*

## **My new life in Ireland**

I am married and I have got one child. I'm from Poland. I was a carer for old people in Poland and in Germany. I liked my job very much. Now I am an office cleaner in Kilrush and I am learning English. I am 58 years old. In my free time, I like playing football with my grandson.

*By Ela*

## **Something about me**

I was born in Poland, but I live in Kilkee. In Poland, I worked in a court. I was a court recorder there. Now, I'm a baker. My work in the bakery is much harder than my job in Poland.

I am married and I have got a fish. I have a big tank. It is 140 litres. I have 18 fish, with a few plants in black and orange sand. It is very colourful.

In my free time, I like doing crochet. My grandma taught me crochet. I have made many different things; for example, I've made jewellery, shawls, hats, gloves, scarves and stars for the Christmas tree. I love handmade crafts.

*By Mariola*

## Shishparak

Shishparak is a very delicious dish that is known in Syria. It is made from meat, flour, onions, yogurt, salt and spices. It's like ravioli cooked in a yogurt sauce. It is easy to make; it's not difficult, but you need a long time.

First, we make a dough with flour, water and salt. Knead it until it holds together and it's not too soft and it's not too hard. You must cover the dough so it doesn't dry out, and let it rest for a while.

Then cook the minced meat (beef or lamb) with onions and spices. I like to use a lot of black pepper. It is important to cool the meat after cooking it.

Now, roll the dough and cut it into small circles. Then, put some meat onto each piece and close them. You need a lot of time for this.

Next, we mix the yogurt with a little bit of flour and salt, and then add water. Mix together in a big pan over heat and stir it until it boils and then add a handful of rice. It is important to stir the mixture continuously until it boils.

In the end, put the shishparak into the pan of yogurt mixture and simmer until it is cooked. Taste it after half an hour. (When the pan is big it needs a longer time.)

When I was a child and my mother made shishparak, I used to help her. I always enjoyed that, and now my children like helping me.

*By Dalal*

## What's next?

The year 2014 started off as an ordinary year - work, family life, holidays and hobbies, a continuation from previous years. One Saturday evening in May, I went for a spin on the bike. Nothing out of the ordinary in this I thought, but this was going to be different. Suddenly, I was on the ground, disorientated, bleeding and in pain. Tough guys don't complain; maybe I'm not as tough as I thought...

Four operations followed, and another still pending 4 years later. I was also diagnosed with MS in the interim.

Little did I realise when I left the house that Saturday evening what destiny had in store. The road to recovery has been winding and bumpy but, hopefully, it will straighten and flatten a little bit more as time passes.

Appreciate every moment and live for now, because nobody knows what destiny has in store. What's next?

*By T*

## **My journey**

*Transcript of a talk given to CABES 1-1 tutors on International Volunteer Day 5<sup>th</sup> of December 2017*

I'd like to thank you for having me here this evening and the rest of the staff who have helped me through the years and made it all possible for me to continue on my journey in education. I started out late in life and never thought I would succeed, let alone achieve what I have done in the past few years.

I left school at 13 and was made to feel useless most times, when I was in school anyway. I hated it back then and it didn't help being the eldest of 11 children. I'm surprised I even got by all these years in my adult life. All I knew was to work hard in catering for my family and try to give them what I didn't have - a decent education. I worked as a carer in Shannon the last 15 years and still work part-time. New regulations came in around 2011, and I had to contact CABES to find out my options. It was scary at the time but, with the tutor's help and confidence in me, it soon became within reach to achieve my goal to become a healthcare assistant. So my journey began in adult learning to study to gain a FETAC Level 5 in Healthcare (now called QQI) certificate. It took 2 years to get it but it was well worth it. On my way through the 2 years, I learned a lot more. I gained so much confidence and learned how to feel good about myself. I must say the tutors were amazing. They made it so easy and comfortable in a learning environment. The skills and patience they brought into the

class, making it stress free, believing in us as a group and helping each individual without making it too obvious, really helped. Because of this, I decided to try and give something back to adult learning and I hope to help adults to continue in education and give advice whenever I can.

I have big plans to help others, as I have just been elected to be a learner representative on the Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board. I have also spoken on Clare FM with Margot and shared my story. Máire, Joe and myself were invited to Áras an Uachtaráin to meet President Higgins by NALA, as part of Literacy Awareness Week in September 2017. For me it was such an honour to be there, to listen to a great man speaking about adult education and how involved he is in it. He is the patron of NALA. He spoke of different qualities, strengths, and attributes and said that some of the most impressive people he has met are those who experienced inequality, marginalisation and social injustice and have retained or found the vision and sense of possibility that took them on a journey of enlightenment and empowerment. He said we can all gain goals in literacy and achieve equality and social justice working towards a fair, ethical and equal society where there is no information or conversation we cannot access or doors that remain closed to us. He said how heartening it is to see the development of adult literacy in the last few decades but there is still a lot of work to do, so keep up the good work.

I am also a member on the board of directors with NALA, for which I hope to fulfil more in 2018 by being the voice for the Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board at the meetings I attend every six weeks in Dublin. As I said, I never thought it was possible for me to achieve so much; so, to all the tutors, a big thank you and happy Christmas to everybody.

*By Ann*