

Simply Said 2005



Issue 17

Co.Clare VEC
Clare Reading & Writing Scheme

*A Collection of Writings
by Students
of the
Co. Clare
Reading & Writing Scheme*

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Foreword

The stories, articles, poems and songs in this seventeenth issue of *Simply Said* reflect once again upon aspects of everyday life, simply told, and always moving in their honesty and openness. Progress in our society is rapid and we all find it so hard to keep up and resist the pressures. *Simply Said* brings you back to basics. It is a reminder not only of the need to hold on to the memories and love of our family and friends, but also of the need that everyone has of loving and being loved.

We would like to thank all the adult learners who have worked so hard during the year, and also the volunteer tutors and staff members who have given their support. Thank you also to those who helped with the organization and production of this edition of *Simply Said*. Finally, and especially, warm congratulations to all the contributors for the clarity of what are really words of encouragement to us all.

Kieran

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Second Chance

It's a Friday night. I'm sitting at home alone and I am watching television. There is a knock at the door and when I open it there is a strange looking man there. He is looking for me and he says, "I am here to give you a second chance. I am the man who gives second chances."

He comes in and he tells me how I would get my second chance. The chance to go to school in primary, to go to school in secondary and maybe go to university, become things that I've dreamed of becoming, a teacher, a doctor, a solicitor or maybe the president.

He tells me all these things I can be with my second chance but there is one condition, I will not be born to my mother I know. I will be born to someone different. I will never know my mother, my father, my brothers, my sisters or all my friends that I've met. I will never meet my wife. I will never see the children that I have now and witness all the things that we have done.

He tells me that I have from now until five to twelve Sunday night to make my decision - to take my second chance or to leave it the way it is. As the time passes, I think about all the things I could be and all the things I might lose.

When he calls back to my house at five to twelve on the Sunday night I tell him that I have made my decision and my decision is ...

By Jacko

Course in U.C.D.

Last October I started an Active Citizenship Advocacy Course in U.C.D.

I had to attend lectures one day a week (Fridays). I took the train from Ennis to Dublin every Thursday. We stayed in a bed and breakfast every Thursday night. I went to U.C.D. every Friday morning. We walked over to U.C.D.

We had different lectures on various topics, e.g. advocacy, what active citizenship means. We did communications, computers and horticulture. We had discussion groups on the above topics after the lectures. We usually had lunch at 12.00 o'clock in the U.C.D. restaurant. We often went for a walk around U.C.D. grounds.

When the lectures were over, we got the bus from U.C.D. to St. Stephen's Green and got the taxi to Heuston station. We got the train at 10 past 5 and arrived in Ennis at 10 past 8.

By Elizabeth

My Memory of Christmas

My memory of Christmas was when I was seven years of age. I was the first one to wake on Christmas morning. I went into the sitting room and opened the corner of each of my presents because the rule in the house was no one was to open the presents until everyone was up. I didn't like the doll that I got so I opened my little sister's to see what she got. One of her presents was a doll I had wanted all year. So I swapped the nametags on the presents. I was delighted when we opened our presents as I got what I wanted! My parents found out and made me swap back.

Anonymous

Dieting

I'm trying to start a diet,
It was supposed to start today
But then I saw a chocolate biscuit
And then I heard it say,
'Please please eat me, don't let me go to waste
You know you want a bite
You know you want a taste.'

I just can't resist fatty food,
It all looks so yummy
I try to stop myself but before I know it,
It's in my tummy.

I see myself getting bigger every day,
I look into my mirror and this is what I say,
'Right you, you're starting that diet
I know you can do it, you just have to try it.'

If I don't stop soon, I won't be able to see my feet,
But for every time I try, I have to have a treat.
Chocolate cake, mmm, yummy chips,
Uncle Ben's crisps with all those yummy dips.
How could low fat food compare to that?
Light and tasteless, it's no wonder I'm so fat!

I've got an idea and I'd like to try it,
I'm gonna eat a bar of chocolate and shove the silly diet.

By Michelle

Pope John Paul II

The Pope ruled for twenty-six years. During that time he visited lots of countries. He came to Ireland in 1979. I watched that on TV. He blessed all the people in Dublin. When he died on the 2nd April 2005, millions of people travelled to Rome. They formed a very long queue. Even his former teenage girlfriend from Poland came. She thinks he is the greatest man in our history. People of all religions came to honour him. It will be very difficult to find a suitable successor.

There is a worldwide campaign to canonise this Pope. But the Vatican insists that he cannot be canonised until at least five years after his death. In people's minds, the Pope is already a saint. They believe he can help grant their prayers. He was the first pope to travel that much.

By Anna

My First Time at the Galway Races

On Tuesday 27th July 2004 and on Friday 30th of the same week my brother Max and I went to the Galway Races. It was my first time ever at the races and my best time ever on holiday. We had a good time and the weather was nice.

We bought tickets to place bets on the horses and we won sometimes. On the 27th of July, I spent thirty-two euro and I came home with only five! On Friday the 30th, I spent forty euro and I came home with twenty-two, which two weeks later I spent on my driving test.

Everyone looked so happy! There were lots of young people and they were very friendly. Their clothes were all different. Some wore dresses, some wore trousers, some were dressed up and some were casual.

Some people came by helicopter. Max said, 'Don't look at the helicopter, look at the horses!' Other people came by car and some came by bus.

The jockeys get weighed before and after the races.

After the races, we got a free copy of the *Evening Herald* and went to get our car which was parked in a green field!

The horses were beautiful and some were very fast.

I would like to go again to the races with my brother next year. I really enjoy them.

By Susanne

A Good Friend

I have a good friend called Mary. She is very good to me and we can talk about everything. When I had no washing machine she told me to take my washing up to her and she'd do it for me. She is interesting and she makes us all laugh. She makes tea for everyone and takes good care of her family and she is very kind to people.

Then I have another good friend who lives next door. When I was sick she offered to do the shopping for me and she told me to come in any time. When I am going anywhere she keeps an eye on the house for me. She came the other evening and asked if I wanted anything done. I was delighted to see her and we had a great chat about everything. She offered to help me do sewing and make things, which I love to do with her. When she went away for Christmas for a short while, she gave me her address and said to make sure that I write to her. I missed her while she was gone but it was nice to see her back.

By Nora

If I Won the Lotto

If I won the Lotto I would go for a holiday to Spain. I would bring my friend Pauline and we would get the train to Dublin and then get an aeroplane to Lanzarote. We would go swimming in the pool every day. It would be very hot and sunny. Then we would sunbathe but we would have to use a lot of sun cream because we don't want to get sunburn.

At night, we would go and have drinks in the pub and maybe go dancing. I would buy presents for everybody and clothes for myself. I would buy some jewellery. I'd like to buy a nice watch and a silver bracelet. I'd buy a car for my mum and dad and lots of things for my brothers and sisters.

It's nice to dream about winning the Lotto!

By Mairead

My Trip to Salthill

During the Easter holidays, I went away with a group of friends to Salthill for two nights.

We stayed in a hotel. We went for walks along the strand. The weather was beautiful. At night, we had music and a sing-song in the hotel. The food was beautiful and we were very sorry to leave Salthill.

On the way home, we stopped in Clarenbridge for tea and sandwiches. We had a lovely break.

By Phillis

Queen of the May

(My favourite hymn)

Bring flowers of the fairest.

Bring blossoms the rarest.

O'er garden and woodland and hillside and dale.

Our fond hearts are swelling.

Our glad voices telling.

The praise of the loveliest flower of the May.

Chorus

Oh Mary we crown thee with blossoms today.

Queen of the angels and queen of the May.

Repeat

Their Lady they named thee.

Their mistress proclaimed thee.

Oh grant that our children on earth be as true.

As long as the bowers are radiant with flowers.

As long as the azure shall keep its bright hue.

Chorus

Sing gaily in chorus the bright angels o'er us.

Re-echo the strains we begin upon the earth.

Their hearts are repeating, the notes of our greetings.

For Mary herself is the cause of our mirth.

Chorus

By Breda

Westlife

I've been a big fan of Westlife for as long as I can remember. I have most of their CDs, a video and a DVD.

I was very lucky this year as my sister and my cousin brought me to see them in Millstreet. It was packed but they walked past me on their way to the stage. The keyboard player stopped and said "hello" to us. His name is Paul, same as mine.

It was the biggest thing I was ever at and I will never forget it. I'd love to meet them some time.

By Paul

Wishing and Waiting

I wished for some things, some have come true, some haven't.

I wish for a very happy future, with love and marriage, good friendship and a beautiful home.

So many things I wish for.

Love and marriage, they make me feel so down,

Waiting, waiting, waiting, for life to begin.

Will I ever find true love?

I would feel so free, so beautiful.

I would have everything in life.

I would be so happy.

By Melissa

Youthreach

I've attended the Youthreach Progression Programme for the past three years and it was the best thing I ever did.

I was twenty-three when I heard about the programme through friends of mine. I had three children and was pregnant with my fourth. On my first day I was nervous as I had low self esteem, but had no cause to be because I was made to feel like one of the team and now, after three years, I feel like I am part of the furniture.

During the summer of 2002, I gave birth to my fourth child and in this time the programme had moved from its Shannon base to Ennis.

I wasn't sure at this time if I was going to be able to cope with the pressure of being a mum, studying and finding time to be with my family.

I expressed my concerns to my tutors and was really taken aback when they said that they would do what they could to help me. They accommodated all my needs from day one. They made arrangements for childcare for three of my children and arranged for a bus to collect me. I expressed my concerns about my eldest child who didn't start school until 9 o'clock and my tutors told me that this wasn't a problem.

My day began at 7.00 am for the three days that I attended. My bus picked me up at 9.05 am and it would take an hour and a half to arrive to the centre and the same length of time to go home. I would arrive home at 5.30pm. My youngest was three months old. With my weekly training allowance I would pay for my childcare. This would mean that I would sometimes be left with no money but I was determined to complete my course. I had never so many people show me this much attention. I didn't want to let them or myself down.

I have always been met with a friendly "Hi" and made to feel comfortable. For the first time in my life, people were saying hello to me and not my stereotype!(Mother of four/homemaker).

Apart from my academic achievement, which can be marked and graded, no one could ever put a grade on my personal achievement. I have grown in confidence and learnt many new skills and talents in myself, which I had buried for years. I now feel, three years on, that I am a person and that my points of view are just as important as anyone else's.

At present, I'm studying for my FETAC level 2 certificate in childcare. I am really proud of myself for my determination. I would never have got this far if it were not for my tutors. They have always shown kindness, support and encouragement. They have always been there for me and really helped me when I have had a crisis in my personal life, from troubles at home to helping me write a speech for my best friend's funeral.

I feel sadness knowing I am approaching the end of the course. I feel as though I am leaving part of my family behind.

At present, my tutors are arranging guidance advice to help with my future career plans. I have learnt that because I have four children it doesn't mean that my life has to stop. Adult Education is lifetime learning; there is always somewhere to go once you have finished a course. You never stop learning, no matter what age you are.

The Youthreach Progression Programme is great for young mums and young people. It is very different from school. You are not patronised and you are spoken to as an equal! Every day-to-day issues are discussed, from social welfare to soaps on television. There are subjects like Maths, English, etc. taught in Youthreach but on a more relaxed level. Everyone helps each other. We've also been on outings and we have a summer programme, which means that we all do a lot of team building activities.

I would highly recommend the Youthreach Progression Programme to any young mother/person because it has changed me as a person and my approach to my life ahead. I've met lots of people since joining the programme, but a lot of thanks has to go to the tutors who have

supported me every step of the way. They are: Emer, Eddie and Marie.

Youthreach Progression Programme makes a difference in someone's life, no matter how big or small. Every young person/young mother needs a stepping-stone and Youthreach is no better place to start!

By Sarah

My Trip to the Hunt Museum

Just before Easter 2005, I went to the Hunt Museum with my work mates. We went by bus with our teachers. We started early in the morning. When we arrived there, our teacher organised a guided tour. The tour guide explained lots of things. She told us about the Hunt family. We saw lots of interesting things. There was jewellery, cups, plates and pottery, etc.

The jewellery was made with pearls and the guide said you cannot put on perfume when you wear it, because it would go dark.

The cups and plates were lovely designs and some came from China. The pottery is very old, nearly one thousand years, but it looks very like the things we make in our pottery workshop in Shannon. I also like the chalices and the rosary beads. It was exhausting and we finished our trip with a visit to the restaurant.

By Marion

Knock

Every year I go to Knock with the Legion of Mary Pilgrimage.

I like to go into the different churches and light candles for people who have asked me to pray for them.

My favourite part is the candlelight procession. It often rains in Knock and we have it indoors.

We say the rosary on the way up and back on the bus. We have Mass there and the Bishop is the principal celebrant. There are a lot of prayers, but I get comfort from them.

By Mary

A New Quad Bike

If I won the Lotto I would buy a new quad bike. It would be a Honda and it would be red and yellow. I have already seen it so I don't need to win the Lotto. My mam and dad came to the garage to pick one out for me. It has to be ordered and will take a few weeks to come. It starts with a kick-start by pulling a chain. My dad will help me to drive it around the fields. You can't drive it on the road without insurance and this is quite dear now. I'm only going to drive it around the farm. It has a hitch on it for pulling the trailer. When I get it, I will sit on it and put on my helmet and gloves and drive it around nice and slowly. To brake, you have to pull up the handlebars. I am very excited about getting a quad bike.

By Adrian

To Buy a Car

If I won the Lotto I would buy a car. I would buy a Volkswagen and it would be light blue and shiny.

I would go around the world. I'd take my family to France and then we could drive it from place to place.

Having a car makes things easy. You can go to work, meet your friends and go to the shops when you like.

I can drive a car, but I have to pass my driving test. That will be hard but I would like to try.

By Pauline

Learning English

My name is Ajmala and I am from Afghanistan. I arrived here in 2004 and I am a part-time English language learner at the Adult Education Centre. When I arrived here, my English was really bad. I was lonely too and I was getting bored all the time. I have been living in Corofin for six months. It is a small town with very little to do. I have never lived in an area like this in my life. However, the people are friendly and kind. When I arrived here, I couldn't speak English but now I can solve my problems in English. My English is getting better day by day. I want to improve my English and I want to thank all my teachers, especially Beatriz and Sheila and I want to thank Karl too. The way they helped me was amazing.

By Ajmal

Will and Grace

Will and Grace is my favourite programme. It's on TV3 on Thursdays. It is about 4 people, Will, Grace, Jack and Karen. They are so funny and they always cheer me up.

Will and Jack are always fighting, but always make up in the end. Karen works with Grace but does more drinking than anything else.

Jack always robs Will's food and Will is always there when he does it. Karen's mother is her slave and she's always telling her to do lots of stuff.

Rosario, Will and Grace have been friends for 15 years. They tell each other everything and always look out for each other.

So ye should watch it on Thursdays at 10.30. That's all about Will and Grace. The end.

By Martin

My Hobbies

It is that time of year again when the lawn needs to be cut and the garden needs to be weeded. There is a great variety of things to do in the garden. The rose bushes need to be sprayed every two weeks and roses need lots of water. The flowers in the hanging baskets need lots of water too. Working in the garden is a great pastime of mine. Another hobby of mine is reading. I like to take time out and read. It is very relaxing. I started to read books about three years ago. It is the greatest thing that ever happened to me in my life.

By Tommy

Learning to Read

I am learning to read in my literacy class. I love reading every day and I think I am getting on good at it. I know it's going to take time and my new glasses are really helping me to see the words. When I have learnt to read, I want to be able to use the computer. I might be able to write a story on the computer, so I will have to really practise to get better.

I feel I am missing out because I can't read. I could work in an office or get a job in a shop or restaurant.

I went to a special school in Cork because the doctor sent me there when I was about 13 and I learnt to recognise letters but I have forgotten all that.

I love coming in every Monday morning and I feel this class has been a great help to me.

By Kathleen

Margaret's Journey

Once upon a time, there was a woman called Margaret. She was born in Ghana. Some years later, she travelled to Holland. She lived there for a few years.

She grew up in Holland. She lived in Holland for 18 years, and then she decided to travel to Ireland. So she went to Ireland and lived there.

By Margaret

A Meal Out

A few of us from the house are going to Mass and Benediction in the Poor Clares next Sunday. Afterwards, we're going to the Temple Gate for lunch. I don't go out for meals very often. They are too dear. I'm a bit worried about what we'll have for lunch. I'd like bacon and cabbage but they might not have that. Sometimes, the dinners out don't be nice at all. I don't like all this modern stuff, spaghetti and the likes and I'm sick to death of chicken. Maybe they might have bacon and cabbage after all.

I like soup. The only trouble is if I have a bowl of that with bread I'm full up. I hope it's not too dear. I'm not paying any more than a tenner for it.

By Bernadette

The Shadow Man

The first time I heard about the shadow man was from my mother. She has seen him about four times now but says it is unusual to see him moving or walking. Most people who see him say he stands and stares but will not walk or move.

One night, my mother was cycling home from bingo. She turned around to see if anything was coming. Suddenly she saw the shadow of a man. He was wearing a long black cloak and an old fashioned tall hat. He was half way down the road when she looked, so she kept cycling fast but when she looked back again he was about five steps away. She said that she got such a fright that she never cycled so hard and fast up a hill in her whole life.

It really freaked her out, but she wanted to find out why she was seeing this shadow of a man and what did he want. Did he need help crossing over to the next world? She wondered how she would find out more about him. So she asked a few people and went to every bookshop in town but found

nothing. One day when my mother was shopping in Limerick, she remembered to look in the bookshops again. She said it took a while, but she found a book and he was in it. She was very glad she found out more about him. In the book it says that this man shows up in time of trouble, such as death in the family or time of illness. He has been seen all around the world.

The first time I saw him, I was with a friend. We were dared by our friends to go up to a graveyard when it was dark. Thank God we didn't go all the way in. We just walked as far as the gate and we both saw him and froze. We slowly turned, walked and then ran as fast as we could. We were terrified. When we went back to tell our friends they just laughed but because we were so frightened and scared, they finally began to believe us. We asked them if they did it for laughs but they said they didn't and told us that we were very brave to go in the first place. It was a scary time!

By Kathrina

Prince Rainier of Monaco

Prince Rainier was married to Princess Grace. They had three children. Prince Rainier died last week. They had seven grandchildren. Princess Grace used to be on television in the earlier years. The prince and princess were very popular years ago. Older people remember a lot about Princess Grace. There was a very big gathering at the funeral. Prince Rainier was very upset when his wife died. Princess Grace has left behind her many memories. A lot of people would have known about Prince Rainier. Prince Albert is the son of Prince Rainier. Children of to-day would be learning about the royal family. Monaco is a very small country. You would have to have a lot of money to live there.

By Josie

Woodwork Class

This year I went to a woodwork class in the Vocational School, in Ennistymon. In class, I made a stool. I enjoyed doing it. Martin, my friend, was also in the class.

I went to Kerry for my holidays with Eddie and some other lads. We stayed in a B&B. We had lunch out and went on a few trips around the Killarney area.

By Michael

The History of Pope John Paul II

It was on Saturday the 2nd of April 2005 that the much admired Pontiff, John Paul II peacefully passed away. Throngs of people gathered outside the Pope's apartment to keep vigil with him during his last hours. Pope John Paul's Pontificate marked him out to be the most travelled Pope in history. In 1979, the Pope travelled to Ireland drawing huge crowds in Phoenix Park, Drogheda, Galway, Limerick and his final departure from Shannon Airport.

John Paul II was born in Poland as Karol Wojtyla on the 18th of May 1920. As an underground seminarian in Nazi occupied Poland, he practised his faith, even at the risk of imprisonment and death. He was ordained in 1946 and became auxiliary bishop of Krakow in 1958, archbishop in 1964 and then cardinal in 1967.

The Pope was a well known athlete. Renowned for his fine physique he excelled at sports such as cross-country skiing, hiking, cycling and kayaking.

In 1978, Karol Wojtyla was elected as Pope and he took the name John Paul II. He was the first non-Italian Pope in more than 450 years. During the Pontiff's 26 years as head of the Roman Catholic Church, he upheld papal infallibility, and condemned artificial methods of birth control and also the ordination of women priests.

Pope John Paul II was the most publicised Pope ever in the history of the Vatican. Seven weeks after his death, the Vatican are considering making him a Saint. It can take up to 5 years to study his life, during which he will have had to perform one miracle while he was alive and one after his death in order to become a saint.

I would have loved to have met Pope John Paul II. Despite the criticism against him, he was considered friendly, kind and a friend to the young people of the world.

By Derek

Traditional Cures

A selection of traditional cures not found in the chemist shops of today, but still very effective remedies. These cures and remedies are supplied to us by the 'Going Strong Club' from Newmarket-on-Fergus.

Recipe for a healthy life:

No drinking, no smoking, one meal a day and two collations. You will live a long and happy life.

By Christine

Cure for a dry tickly cough:

Ingredients

The white of an egg

2 teaspoons of vinegar

Teaspoon of brown sugar

2 teaspoons of whiskey

Method

Whip the egg white until frothy. Add the other ingredients. Take a spoonful of mixture when cough is coming on. Make up batches as needed. This cure never fails.

By Teresa

Cure for sore feet:

Ingredients

Basin of hot water

Tablespoon of Epsom Salts

Method

Pour boiled water into basin and let it cool for a few moments. Add the tablespoon of Epsom salts and stir until dissolved. When cooled, soak feet in the basin for 15 minutes. This helps tired sore feet.

By Phillis

Chest Infections:

A cure for chest infections was using goose grease and brown paper. Goose grease was rubbed onto brown paper. The brown paper was then placed on the bare chest. This procedure was repeated until the infection was cleared up. This cure was widely used for asthma and other chest ailments. It was also rubbed onto sprains and aching joints.

By Mary

Cures for Warts:

1.

Take one snail. Rub the snail onto the wart. Then place the snail on a thorny bush. When snail dies, wart will die.

2.

Take a piece of fresh meat and rub it well onto the wart. Then take the piece of meat and bury it in the garden. Hopefully, the wart will disappear.

3.

Take rain water that has lodged in a stone after rain showers. Rub it onto the wart for three mornings. The rain water is supposed to cure warts.

*By Mary M, Christine
& Mary H*

Head Lice:

Heat some paraffin oil and rub it on the children's heads on a Friday night. The smell is terrible, but usually children's hair is washed on a Saturday morning. This both cures and prevents head lice.

By Joan

Nose Bleed:

Take a key, if possible a church door key and place the key down on the back of the neck. This is a well known cure for nose bleeds.

By Frances

Forever Young:

Wash your face on May morning with the dew on the grass. This is guaranteed to keep your complexion looking young.

By Paddy

Mickey Joe Harte

I went to see Mickey Joe Harte in Glór with my sister, Ailish. He won 'You're a Star' in 2003.

Before the concert, he visited Record Rack and he signed an autograph for me.

He is very good looking. He comes from Donegal where my mum was born. He is married and has two children, a boy and a girl. My friend, Helen, took a picture of me with him. I really like him. He is hot!

By Gabrielle

Computer Class

I like going to my computer class. In this class, we are learning to make cards for different occasions. We also made calendars at the start of the year. I can make the cards by myself now and I did a postcard for Mandy when she went to Alaska. The picture on it was of a house and flowers because I thought she might miss being in Clare. I think she liked it.

I would really like to use the computer to do all sorts of things, like making cards for my little niece and writing stories and letters. I would like to get a job where I can use the computer.

By Colette

Missing

It was usual for my best friend Diane and myself to meet for a chat after school or perhaps go to the shop for a treat. One particular winter's evening we decided to change our routine and instead we went for a walk in the countryside. As it was Monday we had a lot of catching up to do in relation to the weekend disco, who was there, who was with who and so on. In fact, we were talking so much we lost track of time. We bumped into Mrs. Costello, a kind elderly widow who invited us into her house. There we had a great time drinking tea and eating goodies. Eventually we decided to go home and she gave us a lift. Just as well, as both our parents were out looking for us and just about to report us missing.

By Teresa

War in Kosovo

Kosovo is a very small country in the Balkans. It has a very interesting history and has been involved in hundreds of battles. Albanians have never stopped fighting for their freedom. But the last war was the worst one. For almost twenty years, from 1981 to 1998, the government of Serbia operated a regime of apartheid. Everything was stopped for Kosovars including school, free movement and every fourth Kosovar was in prison or beaten by Serbian police. In 1998 the war started between the Kosovars, who formed their army called K.L.A. (Kosovar Liberation Army) and the Serbian army helped by the police and paramilitaries. This war will be in memory of all Kosovars. They saw the killing of their relatives in front of them. I saw people killed when my village was attacked by tanks. The paramilitaries burned our houses. After this, we had to leave the country via Macedonia. I lived there for three weeks in a camp called Qegrane. After that, I came to Ireland on the 3rd June 1999. This was nine days before the war finished on 12th June 1999.

By Ismail

Memories of School

I was born in December 1969, the last month of the 60's and I started school at 4 years of age in the convent in Kilkee. In the beginning the boys and girls in the infant classes were mixed and in 1st class the boys went to the Boys' National School. Those first few years were full of singing, laughing, playing and fairytales. I can remember the vivid colours of my first set of crayons. The fairytales always brought me to a different time and place. My favourite fairytale was Cinderella where the little maid lost her rags and was transformed into a beautiful princess, through magic. I remember my Holy Communion dress and that was the day I felt like Cinderella. That time it was a family day. There was a big family meal, usually held in my nana's for all the grandchildren's events. The happy days in school soon came to an end in 2nd class.

The happy days were replaced by being beaten and ridiculed for four years by a little scrap of a woman. She believed in beating everything into the little children. I guess nowadays I could be classed as suffering from ADD. Sometimes, I would just switch off and look out of the window. She was fuelled by hate and class distinction. As an adult I met this lady who made my life a misery and I forgave her. Here was this old lady dying from cancer saying how intelligent I was as a child and all she ever wanted was for me to reach my full potential. I felt that I was a better person for forgiving her. For years, I was being eaten away by the memories and then I let go. I could write a book on the above but I could also write one on the happy days.

Religion played a big part in our young lives and we were always scared of sin. We believed everything and always tried to be good. I must admit I loved the month of May when we were brought outside in the garden to pay homage to 'Our Lady'. We said the Rosary and sang.

At Christmas, we did a lot of crafts and made the most beautiful gifts for our family and friends. We got a different

teacher in 6th class and, at last, my little achievements were rewarded. It's really all the happy things that I want to dwell on – the music, the stories, the learning and the friendships. I feel that if I just dwell on the bad memories then the bad person (at the time) had won.

By Mary

Christmas in My Country

On Christmas day in my country, Nigeria, we always go out to see our friends. We go to church and we cook food. My country has food like amala, cassava, rice, isu, and a yam dish. We dance in my country to music like Sunmy Ade, which is for young people, and Obe, which is for older people. This music is called Yoruba and is a very slow music.

We give our parents something nice for Christmas. My mother used to buy new clothes and shoes for everyone for Christmas, and we changed old things in our house like carpet and chairs.

There are drums made from the wood of the Iroko tree and lion skin. We wear the Andkara costume for Christmas, which may be black and yellow or yellow and blue.

I like to teach people the dancing of my country.

By Funmilola

Moving House

I am really excited because I am moving to a new house soon. I have been to see it and it looks nice. It's near the shops and close to the workshop, so I can walk there. Downstairs there is a living room, kitchen and a small garden outside, but it is not big enough for a dog. There is a shower and toilet downstairs. Upstairs it has two bedrooms, one for me and one for staff. My bedroom is nice and big and I can put some of my pictures on the walls.

I will be able to go to the library and get some books to read. I like looking at the books and I change them every week.

I like the house. It's lovely and I am happy with it. I might get a fish tank with goldfish in it to put on the kitchen counter. I will still visit all my friends in my old house but I think I will be happy in my new house.

By Breda

What Lourdes Means to Me

I love going to Lourdes. I go most years now. I pray to God to make me all right. I pray for that and for my friends.

I get very excited about going on the plane. I love flying and eating on the plane. The buns and salad are lovely.

My friend, Mary, stays with me in the hotel. We share a room, go shopping for medals, holy water bottles and things like that together. We have great freedom there. We can go where we like.

The weather is very hot there. I have to pack my summer clothes. We go down to the Grotto in the evening when it gets cool.

I don't like waiting for the bags going around at the airport. They take too long. Last year, I got sick and dizzy waiting for my bag. We have to be up very early (around 5 a.m.) the morning we're coming home. That's probably why I fainted. I was very tired.

By Celia

My Favourite Place

My favourite place is my country, Darfur. There are a lot of mountains there. It is a very dry country. There is a rainy season in June. People love when the rain comes. Everything starts to grow then. It is very hot, 40 °C. At night, there is a cool breeze. You can even sleep outside. In Mount Mura, there are lovely waterfalls. You must see them when you visit Sudan.

By Adam

Dromoland Castle

A group of us went to Dromoland Castle to take pictures around the castle. It is set in lovely scenery. It is surrounded by a forest. The castle has a lily pond.

Our instructor showed us how to use a digital camera. I had never used a digital before. I took photos of the castle. One of them was very good so I framed it. It's on the wall here in the Dulick Centre. I am very proud of it.

By Joe

One Rainy Friday

One rainy Friday Caitlin, my daughter, had nothing to do. The weather was so bad I couldn't let her play outside. We put a plan together and decided to make a fruit loaf. I knew it would be fun and good learning for her.

We started by reading out the ingredients so she could go to the press and get them out and I could get the fruit loaf tin ready. While naming out all the ingredients, I realised that we

had no egg and said "We cannot make this until I get eggs."
"OK," said Caitlin and ran. I looked around wondering what she was doing. Before I knew it, Caitlin had gone next door and had asked the neighbour for an egg.

All I could do was laugh and asked her what they said, knowing full well she hadn't explained the situation. We made the fruit loaf and I knew the next job I had to do while it was baking, was, go next door and explain the necessity of the egg.

By Catherine

Scrambled Egg

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall
All the King's horses and the King's men
Said scrambled egg for dinner again.

By Mary

My Workplace

My workplace is Shannon Pottery. I make the bases for the nice, fancy lamps, butter dishes and small cups. I made the big lamps one day and then I let them dry. I finished them the next day.

We sell the pottery to Cork, Dublin and England. There is a film being made about the workshop. This tells the story of how the pottery is made and the people who make it.

By Paul

Family

I am from a family of twelve children. Some of them are living in Australia, U.S.A., England and Dublin. We were a very happy family as someone was always coming on holidays. But this year our mother died suddenly and it has been very difficult for all of us. I am the second youngest and I miss her so much. Her month's mind mass is on this Saturday night.

I live on a farm and I like to work with the animals.

By Seamus

My Work Life

My name is Mary. I attend the Brothers of Charity Workshop, Gort Road, Ennis from Monday to Friday. The things I like doing most are sewing, computers, reading & writing class and going on trips with Fiona, my supervisor and my friends.

At the moment, I am making a cot quilt for my Aunty Christina's baby in Waterford. I like writing letters on the computer and printing them out. I am always busy at the workshop.

I live at home with my mother. I celebrated my 33rd birthday recently. I went to the pub and they had a cake for me.

By Mary

My Story

My name is Wang Jun and I come from China. It is a very big country. There are lots of people in China. Chinese food is very nice. It has lots of different things. I live in Ennis. I like cooking in my kitchen and learning English. I like computers.

By Jun

Smoking Ban

I hate going outdoors for a cigarette in the cold weather. I'd run in out of the cold and put half of the cigarette in my coat pocket and burn a hole in my coat. I put a cigarette hole in my new dress and it didn't stop me smoking. God be with the good old days when I could smoke in a restaurant when having a meal.

I was in hospital for a week and I nearly went mad because I couldn't smoke.

By Margaret

Driving for a Living

I like driving for a living. I have different scenery every day. As I drive along, I often talk to other drivers on the CB radio. At the end of the day though, I am glad to get home.

By Thomas

Our New House

We are three sisters who come to the Brothers of Charity house every day. Our names are Marie, Susan and Geraldine.

We are moving into a new house very soon. We each have our own bedroom. Susan's is red, Geraldine's is blue and Marie's is green. We got a new black leather couch and chairs. We also got a new kitchen set. We have a lovely lawn in the back and hope to sit out during the summer.

*By Geraldine, Marie
and Susan*

The Creator – Cecil Francis Alexander (1818-1895)

(I remember this poem/song from my schooldays)

All things bright and beautiful,
All creatures great and small,
All things wise and wonderful,
The Lord God made them all.

Each little flower that opens,
Each little bird that sings,
He made their glowing colours,
He made their little wings,

The rich man in his castle,
The poor man at his gate,
God made them, high or lowly
And ordered their estate.

The purple-headed mountain,
The river running by,
The sunset and the morning
That brightens up the sky.

The cold wind in the winter,
The pleasant summer sun,
The ripe fruit in the garden,
He made them everyone.

The tall trees in the greenwood,
The meadows where we play,
The rushes by the water,
We gather every day.

He gave us eyes to see them,
And lips that we might tell,
How great is God almighty
Who has made all things well.

By Teresa

A Walk in the Evening

I really like going for a walk with my friend down to the shore near my house. My friend, Caroline, is a good friend to me and she lives next door. We meet up in the evening and stroll down the lane. The shore is a good bit down from my house. The Shannon flows past and it is quite rocky here. We like throwing stones into the water and collecting shells if we can find them.

There is a crow's nest up in the trees near the shore. The birds are busy nesting everywhere and you can hear them singing to each other. It will be nice to see the young hatching soon. There are a lot of birds you can see down by the shore like seagulls, curlews and starlings. My favourites are the swans but there are not many of these around by the shore any more.

I love this walk in the evening, especially in the spring and summer.

By Orla

My Life in Ireland

My first day in Ireland was very strange because I knew nothing about English. When I went to the shop to buy some things I had to use my hands to speak! It was very difficult to talk to people. I went to classes at the Adult Education Centre and played music with some Irish people. My tongue began to move freer and I started to speak English. Now I am trying to improve my English. I am very happy for that.

By Richard

Roy Keane from Mayfield in Cork

1. Date of Birth 10th August 1971.
2. One of five children (Johnston, Denis, Roy, Pat and sister Hillary).
3. Roy started playing soccer at the age of nine with Father Rock in Cork.
4. He played with Cobh Ramblers when he was eighteen.
5. He signed as a professional footballer with Nottingham Forest. His first professional soccer manager was named Brian Clough. At the age of nineteen, he was a professional soccer player.
6. He met his wife, Teresa, in a night club in Nottingham. She was a dental assistant.
7. He has four children (Shannon, Cara, Aidan, Leah) and one on the way.
8. He joined Manchester United in 1992-1993.

By Gerard

Chris Doran

I first saw Chris Doran at a concert in Ennis. I met him back stage and he was very nice.

My friend who is his neighbour took me to his house in Waterford and I got a picture with him. My hand was shaking and he called me pet. I was very happy to see him again.

When I saw him first on 'You're a Star' I really liked him a lot. I was delighted to see him in person. It made my summer.

By Aoife

My Cats

I have two cats at home. One is black and the other one is white. The white one is called Suds and the black one is called Socks. Poor Suds is sick at the moment. He has cat flu and we had to take him to the vet. He has to take antibiotics for a week and we have to keep him on his own in a cage so Socks doesn't get it too.

He was very ill and couldn't eat or drink at all. Then he got very weak and couldn't breathe properly. It is very sad to see poor Suds so sick but, thankfully, Socks didn't get sick. The cats usually sleep out in the shed at night but in the day they sleep in the house. Suds likes to sit next to me on the chair while I am watching the telly. I love my cats.

By Anne-Marie

Past, Present, Future

Sometime ago,
I wasn't,
I couldn't,
I wouldn't
Something happened,
From now on,
I am,
I can
And I will.

By Gillian

My Brother

My brother John is 41 years old and he lives in Galway. He started drinking very early in life and it took a hold on him.

The place where he and others drank was called the Power House. They would meet early in the morning there and they would wait until the off-licence would open. When it opened, they would get the drink again. They were characters who would be dancing in the streets and tapping people for money to get the price of another drink.

Pat was a well known character in Galway who would do strange things like putting his false teeth into another man's pint of Guinness so that he would be allowed to drink the pint.

They were all very good people but drink had taken a hold on them.

By James

The Pope's Death

The world turns its eyes to Rome. The Pope died on April 2nd 2005, after a twenty six year reign. As Pontiff, he wondered if he had fulfilled his mission of taking the Roman Catholic Church into the third Millennium. When he first became Pope he visited Mexico, and then came to Ireland in 1979. I went to see him and I enjoyed it very much. The Pope was one of the most popular of all the popes. Since his death, mourners filed past his coffin every day to pay tribute to him. He was buried in Rome. People say that he will be canonised and made a saint. When he was dying he made a plea for peace in the North of Ireland.

By Noreen

My Trip

On the 28th of April five of us went on holidays to Lanzarote for two weeks. The first week was lovely and the second week was very warm. We went to the beach. It was lovely. The night life was good out there. It is a very relaxing place to be.

The apartments were very nice. The food was very tasty. There are some nice shops for shopping. We had a great time there.

There were boat trips that we could have availed of but there was a long queue and we did not want to get sunburned.

I am planning to make a return trip in a year or two.

We came home to a big surprise. My sister-in-law had a baby girl. I was very happy for them. Now I have two nieces.

By Helen

My Game-boy

I have a new game-boy, I got it after Christmas. I've got seven games at home. My favourite game is Super Mario. There are lots of different levels on this game. I play the Game-boy every night for about two hours. My Game-boy is silver.

All the games are expensive. I like to take a break from the Game-boy to watch some television. I also have a charger for the game-boy.

By Kieran

Fame and Fortune

My name is Noel. I couldn't believe my luck last year when I scratched a Fame 'n Fortune card and I had another 3 stars.

I posted the 3 stars and wondered would this be my lucky week. I had posted so many I half-doubted if they ever reached their destination.

Could I believe it when Marty Whelan pulled out my card? There was my name on T.V. We hired Glynn's Bus and 20 of us set off to Dublin to the R.T.É. studios.

After a tour of the studio my brother and I were treated to lunch, after which we had a trial run of the Fame 'n Fortune game. My brother John played on my behalf. The real recording was very exciting with all of the Clare supporters willing John and myself to do well.

We had good luck banners and plenty of cheering. We were delighted with our win. It was a day out I will never forget. So remember, it could be you the next time – so keep scratching.

By Noel

The Christmas Candles

In many parts of Ireland people set candles in their windows on Christmas Eve. The candles burn in the windows all the night through. They shine like stars in the darkness. These Christmas candles welcome the Christ Child to our homes and to our hearts. They remind us that Christ came to save the world and to lighten our darkness. They remind us too of His great love for us, that love which burns like a bright flame not just at Christmas but always and for ever.

By Margaret

My Family

Everybody likes to have a family. I am no different to most people. I was born in Limerick on the 10th of September 1983 and I have four sisters called Margaret, Johanna, Theresa and Anna Marie who stays in a hospital in Roscrea in Co. Tipperary. She has been in the home for a long time.

My other three sisters are married in Sixmilebridge and they all have their own families. I have 4 nephews and 3 nieces and I am very fond of all of them.

I live with my mother, Margaret, at home in the Mills in Co. Clare and I come to Ennis 5 days each week. My father died in 1989.

By James

Going to Prague

I am going to Prague next week for a conference, which is to talk about the problems that people with learning difficulties have in life. Last year, the conference was held in Dublin but this year it's in Prague. I don't know what it will be like but I am going with other service users so I won't be on my own. It can be quite frightening going to a strange country for the first time and I don't know if I would like all the travelling. But I am sure everyone will be nice and I will get on ok. The food will be different and the language will be hard to understand and perhaps people will be dressed differently from me. I have bought a few new clothes to take with me and the staff going with me will help with the language. I have bought a disposable camera to take lots of pictures to show everyone when I get back. It will be very exciting.

By Mary

Women's Group

I am doing a course with the Women's Equality Group based in John Paul's Estate in Kilrush.

The group of girls I trained with are very easy to get on with and we always have a laugh. We make handmade cards with wild flowers freshly picked. We also make book marks, calendars and frame pictures of wild flowers.

We also do computers, reading, writing, sewing, personal development classes, cooking and glass painting. We also went on an outing to Limerick and to the art gallery which was very interesting.

We are on this course for over a year. I was nervous at the start, but the girls got me out of my shell and I feel more confident and more at ease. I used to be bored at home doing housework when the kids went to school. So now I look forward to going to the centre each morning and meeting up with the girls and the tutors. I am looking forward to the future.

By Geraldine

Staying in Ireland

My name is Sandra and I am 16 years old. I am in the Youth Centre three months. I am in this country four years and I want to stay in Ireland.

When I grow up, I would like to get a job and I want to get a nice house. I would like to go to my country in the Czech Republic for a holiday and spend some nice time there. I want to have my first child when I am twenty years old and I want somebody who is going to be caring to my baby and me. After that I want to be married.

Ireland is a nice country. I like it very much. The people in here are very nice. But I hate Ireland for one thing, the weather is very cold and rainy.

By Sandra

In the Workshop

I have been coming to the workshop since September and I have got used to it now. I like it here because the work is easy and no-one forces me to do anything. I do different things everyday - gardening on Mondays and Thursdays and my favourite subject is home management and cookery because I like the cooking. We made pancakes one day and learned how to make a sweet loaf another time. If I ever moved into a house on my own I would know how to look after myself and what to cook. I don't know if I would ever live on my own because I like having my mam and dad with me and I would miss my brother and sisters. I am happy in the workshop because I can have a laugh with my friends and the staff. I don't get bored because there is always something to do.

By Eddie

Car Crash

I was on my way to the airport with my mam and brother. It was raining very badly and the brakes wouldn't work properly. We were at a roundabout when it happened. The car in front of us stopped and we went crashing into the back of it. My mom was screaming at me and my brother. I could see them climbing out of the window. I tried to follow, but couldn't. I was so scared. I was stuck in the back and water was pouring in everywhere, I thought I was going to die. I screamed as loud as I could when suddenly a man came and said, "Its o.k., you are going to be fine, just grab my hand." I stretched as far as I could but couldn't reach. I felt the car slide a little and the man started to panic. Then more people came and tried to hold the car. I shouted for my mam, I could hear her calling me. As the car fell more I just sat up and stretched as far as I could and grabbed the

man's arm as he pulled me out. I collapsed as I saw the car slip off the edge of the road into a ditch just a second after being pulled out. When I saw my mam, I started crying. I thought I'd never see her again. We all got off with cuts and bruises. I was so happy to see my family.

By Laura

Moving Out

I have been coming to the workshop for over nine years now and I really enjoy it. I have a lot of friends here and I love meeting everyone. I do many different things in the workshop and I have also been working in Kelly's Restaurant for a good bit now. I like working in Kelly's but after seven years I have decided it's time for a change, so I will be moving to work in Regina House with the elderly patients. It will be different because I will get to know different people and I will be doing more of the setting tables and serving meals. In Kelly's, I cut the vegetables and put the dishes in the dishwasher.

I have many friends in the workshop and we have a good time. I do many other things like computers. I have been having classes but I would like to do more courses. I love typing up my stories and I read these out on the radio every Tuesday.

I have been thinking about moving out from home to live in Kilrush. It's a big step but I would like to do it because it would be nice to share a house with a friend. I would really miss my family but I will have a staff member staying twice a week until I settle in. It will be a big change from home until I get to know people in Kilrush, but it will be easier for me to get to the workshop every day.

I am looking forward to the future – you never know, I might meet a lovely man and settle down!

By Kathleen

Walled Garden in Kilrush

I am working in the Vandeleur walled garden doing some weeding and planting. I have been working there for a while now. There are a good lot of us working there and they are all good fun. We play cards sometimes in our break and on a wet day when you can't go outside. I like doing the weeding but I don't know if I am pulling up plants too! It's not that busy in the garden at the moment. The visitors will come later in the summer.

In the workshop, I do lots of jobs in the garden and I am learning to cook as well. I also come down to water the plants at the weekend because I live near the workshop.

By John

Holiday to Spain

It was July. My family and I were going on holiday to Spain for two weeks. I was looking forward to it because I was never outside Ireland before. We got to the airport and we had to check in before we went on the airplane. The minute we got off the plane you could feel the heat. The first day we went to the water park and there were loads of people there. Then we went back to where we were staying to get something to eat. The two weeks we were there felt like one day. The day we were leaving it was raining, so it wasn't too bad. We got back to Dublin airport at night-time. We had to drive back from Dublin to Ennistymon that night.

By Brad

Last Summer

My name is Jeananne. Last summer, I saw an advertisement in a shop window for a FETAC level 2 Childcare course which was going to be held in Scariff in Co. Clare. Scariff is only a few miles from my house so it works out very well. This FETAC level 2 childcare course covers nine modules in the course. The course is only a one-year course and I have two tutors. I have 7 modules finished now and by mid May I will have the other 2 modules done. I'm really looking forward to finishing this course.

The next thing that I have to do is to go and find a job in the childcare industry!

By Jeananne

On the Farm

It is a busy time on the farm this time of the year. We have many cows calving and I help my Dad with them. This means I might have to get up in the night, so sometimes I get little sleep. It's nice to see the calves when they are young. We also have to spread the slurry and do the silage. It all seems to happen together. I like the spring and summer because there is a lot to do and you don't get so bored.

By Brian

The Christening

During November, my baby niece, Amanda Carol was christened. She was eight weeks old.

The christening was on in Clarecastle in a lovely little church. All of the family went to it and after the christening was over we went to Power's pub for a party. All our family and our friends were there. We really enjoyed ourselves.

Denise's mother-in-law made the christening dress. It was a beautiful dress. There was a long white dress with a crocheted cardigan over it and matching shoes.

We went to a different pub and we stayed there for the rest of the night. My sister's boyfriend's stepfather was playing the guitar and I was singing. We were also dancing. Carol and her friend went home but we stayed there until after one o'clock. Then we got a taxi to Ennis and went to the Queens. Then we went home when that was over. I really enjoyed myself and so did my family. We had a great day.

By Susan

Pen-Pal

I am going to get a pen-pal soon. I would like to have someone to write to and receive letters from. I don't mind where the pen-pal is from but I would like to get in contact with a woman the same age as myself or near in age. I will be sending a photograph of myself and look forward to seeing what my new pen-pal will look like.

By Desmond

A Visit to the Hunt Museum

I visited the Hunt Museum at Easter with my friends and teachers from Irish Country Pottery. When we got there, we got a guided tour of the place. We saw several pieces of pottery, including a lovely bowl with the plumage of a pheasant. We also saw lots of bronze and lots of old jewellery. We saw a big statue of a warrior in a glass case and lots of medieval swords. The Hunt Museum was originally part of the docklands of Limerick, known as the Custom House. After we had finished the tour, we had a meal in the restaurant and we then returned to Shannon to Irish Country Pottery.

By Noreen

My Memories of School

I had three teachers in my school – one of the teachers was very nice because she never shouted at us. The other two teachers were a bit rough because they were always shouting at us if we did something wrong. It was a country school near Kilmurry McMahon and there were about 45 children in it. The headmaster was a very cross man and an alcoholic. If he had been drinking the night before, he would fall asleep in the chair and wake up like a tiger. He had a problem with drink and also he smoked heavily in the classroom. He had a big wooden compass and if you didn't have the right answer to a question he would belt you with the compass. I didn't like him at school. I used to wear wellingtons on a wet day. The teacher would have us standing on a stool looking out the windows in case an inspector would call. The other teacher would slap us across the face if we hadn't our homework done or if we had done anything wrong. I used to be glad to see three o' clock come every day to get out of school and get home!

By Margaret

Skiing Holiday in Austria

On Saturday 12th of March, my friends and I flew from Dublin Airport to Salzburg in Austria. From there for one hour we travelled by coach to St. Johann. This is a beautiful Austrian Village where we did our skiing every day to the following Friday.

Sunday was our first day skiing and it took a while to get used to it. We started on the beginners' slope, but by Friday we were experts on the steepest slope.

We had great fun in the Sport Hotel, especially on St. Patrick's Day. On the day, we held a race on the middle slope and I'm proud to say I won a gold medal.

2FM came too and broadcast live from our hotel. On Saturday 19th of March we said goodbye to St. Johann but I hope to return soon.

By Cathal

The Difference Between Nigerian and Irish Cultures

There is so much difference between Nigeria and Ireland and the ways we all do things are different.

While Nigeria is a warm country almost all year round, Ireland is a cold country and very green with its rain.

The opportunities for everyone in Ireland are immense for education, business, or work, as I have come to realise.

The unemployment rate in Ireland is amongst the lowest in Europe, but those that are unemployed are still provided for by the social services. Even the migrants coming into the country are not left in a limbo, which is different in Nigeria. There is no social service in Nigeria and you have to take care of yourself, even if you are unemployed.

For most migrants, if not all, the life in Ireland is safe and peaceful and the Irish should try to give migrants the chance to settle into the society as it doesn't happen overnight.

The Irish culture does not permit smacking of children, shouting and speaking loud or noise because you don't want to draw attention to yourself which might be strange to a lot of migrants, including Nigerians.

If everyone could take turns in the queue, speak gently, be polite and show some manners and appreciation which is how the Irish life is, what a lot of people count to be racism will be a thing of the past.

If you are in Rome, you behave like the Romans. No one wants you to forget your culture, but try to adapt to other people's to be able to live a more peaceful and friendly life.

If everyone can stand together, irrespective of what/who, colour, race, culture or religion, like a rainbow side by side, to help build a better Ireland, I think that is all the people of Ireland are asking for, to make the country a beautiful, strong, peaceful and safe place for both the present and future generations.

By Margaret

My Sister's 50th Birthday Party

We had a surprise party for my sister Aoife's birthday recently. We had a great night. My niece, Geraldine, organised it in the local Golf Club. We all arrived at eight o'clock, before Aoife came. The hall was decorated with streamers, balloons and banners. The place looked beautiful.

At 8.30 p.m. there was silence in the hall. Then, when my sister came in, we all sang "Happy Birthday". Aoife looked in a daze. We had a drink while we waited for the meal to be served. We had a choice between vegetable soup and paté for the starter. This was followed by roast chicken or

roast beef for the main course. We had potatoes and a variety of vegetables. Aoife cut the birthday cake and we had it with either tea or coffee. The meal was delicious and I enjoyed it very much.

There was a disco and dancing until 2 a.m. Aoife got a lot of presents for her birthday. She was very pleased with the night and we all enjoyed it.

By Eileen

A Change of Scenery

I moved from the workshop to the Training Centre in the Brothers of Charity, Gort Road, Ennis on September 6th 2004.

I am very happy in the Training Centre. I have learned to do different things like cooking every Thursday, woodwork every Tuesday and pottery on a Wednesday.

I also work in the garden from time to time. We have recently started going to the Adult Education Centre to study computers. We all enjoy taking our classes in Clonroad. My days are very full but I love being busy.

By Martina

The Hunt Museum

Before Easter 2005, me and my Shannon Pottery work mates went to the Hunt Museum in Limerick.

There we saw lots of interesting things, for example, coins, pottery, plates and cups, statues and pictures. One picture was painted by Picasso.

I liked most of the pictures because they are very colourful.

A lady showed us around. She was very nice. We got lost in the lift. The security man showed us where to find the rest of the group. We had lunch downstairs in the restaurant. We couldn't find the ladies' bathroom. We went home on the bus.

By Philomena

The Graveyard

Once upon a time going back a few years, my sister and a few of her friends went to the graveyard late at night. The two girls were dared to go into an empty tomb for ten minutes. They didn't want to at first but eventually they did. The boys went off looking at the graves, and forgot about the two girls. They were in the tomb for one hour. They got scared because the wind started to howl and the trees started rattling in the wind. They saw shadows floating around. There was a nearby house and a man heard the girls shouting and he went out to see what was happening. He got nearer to the tomb and the screaming got louder. He opened the door. My sister and her friend were in tears. When they got to the boys, they nearly killed them for leaving them in the tomb so long.

By Patricia

Memories of School

I remember when I was about six years old going to school and all the children getting a mug of milk every school morning and at lunch time we would get a mug of cocoa and a currant bun. I remember when every Christmas came, all of us - the poor children - got a jumper, and when I made my first Holy Communion we had a big party with lemonade, biscuits and jelly and ice-cream.

My best friend was my cousin. Her name was Alice and we used to go off together. I remember going down town when I was about 8 years old. I found a shampoo bottle. I squeezed it and it went into Alice's eyes and I remember her running down to the beach to the sea and she was throwing the seawater into her eyes. All I could do was to laugh and laugh – I couldn't stop laughing. We were the best of friends!

By Maura

Clare Hurling

Anthony Daly is the team manager. His selectors are Fr. Harry Bohan and Alan Cunningham.

Clare played nine hurling games in the National Hurling League this year.

Stage 1:

Game 1: Laois against Clare played in Cusack Park, Ennis on the 20th February. Clare won that game on a score line of Clare 1-16, Laois 2-11.

Game 2: Clare played Dublin in Parnell Park, Dublin on 26th of February. Clare won that game on a score line of Clare 2-19, Dublin 0-14.

Game 3: Clare played Galway in Cusack Park, Ennis on the 13th of March. Clare was unfortunately beaten in this game on a score line of Clare 1-13, Galway 3-11. Clare didn't give up hope there, they went on to play their 4th game which was against Kilkenny in Nolan Park on the 20th of March where Clare won on a score line of Clare 2-13, Kilkenny 1-8.

Game 5: Clare played Waterford in Dungarvan on the 27th of March. Clare won on a score line of Clare 3-14, Waterford 2-10, where Clare needed to win or draw if they wanted to progress to the second stage.

Stage 2:

Game 6: Clare played Tipperary in Semple Stadium, Thurles on the 10th of April. Clare won on a score line of Clare 1-16, Tipperary 0-15.

Game 7: Clare played Cork in Cusack Park on the 17th of April. Clare won on a score line of Clare 2-15, Cork 3-9.

Game 8: Clare played Wexford in Wexford Park on the 24th of April. Clare won on a score line of Clare 5-16, Wexford 1-15.

Game 9 League Final: Clare played Kilkenny in Semple Stadium, Thurles on the 2nd of May. Clare, unfortunately, got beaten on a score line of Clare 0-15, Kilkenny 3-20.

The championship will begin in June where we hope for the best. Hopefully, we will be in Croke Park in Dublin for an All Ireland Final in September.

By James

Special Olympics

My name is William. I'm a Special Olympian Athlete. On June the 16th in 2003, I was away in Dublin preparing for the gymnastics. At the opening ceremony it was a dream come true, because there was a lot of people looking down at my team. I always wanted to show myself to the whole world and then I realised that my dream came true.

When the competition started, I was pumped up to get ready to do my best. After doing the high bar, vault, pommel horse, parallel bars, floor exercise and the rings I knew myself that I did my best.

By William

Simon Casey

I went to see Simon Casey in concert in The West County in Ennis and I really enjoyed it. Simon Casey was in concert for 2 hours. He came to Record Rack to do some signing and when it came to my turn I was shaking. He asked me my name and I said Tara.

When he came back to do more signing at a different record store called Roxy Records, Simon surprised us all by singing his latest new song called 'Let Me Be the One'. He also sang 'Come Back to My Heart'.

When I went up to Simon to get his autograph he remembered my name from the last time he came here to do some signing. When he came out of the record store I begged for a photo of him and me together and when he said yes for the photo I went as red as anything. I was shaking with excitement when he took the photo. You can call me crazy because I took a photo of the number plate of his car. That's how much I love Simon Casey.

By Tara

The Last Five Years I've Been in Irish Country Pottery

When I started at this company, on my first day in fact, I can remember the time I had to be in for, 8 o'clock. It nearly killed me. My friend Paul walked me to work. The first person I met was the Operations Manager, Mr. Goode.

I was brought into the packing store. Just before coming into the factory when I saw the place it shocked me. I didn't expect it to be so real! A real pottery factory for disabled people. The other places I worked in, in Cork City, were training centres. We did work for other companies, but this was so real I didn't know whether I could make it work.

Now about my job. Mr. Goode taught me how to do the transfers (lithographs). It was quite easy. There were only three things I had to remember; to heat the pottery, to soak the transfers in water and put them on straight in the middle of the pottery and make sure that they were smooth without any water bubbles. That was my job done.

One of the first friends I made was Philomena. She was also my room mate. The first thing I noticed was that she was kind and helpful. Another friend I'd like to mention is Ann-Marie. She was full of fun, always joking and laughing (Bridie, Bridie Quill and pushing her son Tommy in the wheelchair down the road at 90 miles an hour). It was one of Ann-Marie's famous jokes. You could write a book about Ann-Marie. If somebody does, I wouldn't be surprised. It will be a best seller. She's so amazing.

I've done a variety of classes, so many I can't mention them all. So I'll just mention one or two. Just before I start, I have got certification for most of them.

First of all, I want to talk about the music class with Austin. He was a DJ on Clare FM. He taught us to write songs. We wrote several of them. One about the Pottery and how this place works, was called the Pottery song. Others about Ann-Marie and the phrases she would come out with, was called Ann-Marie's song.

Also a song called Dreams, which I am very proud of. I thought it up straight out of my head to start off with and the

class helped me finish it. He also brought us to a recording studio and we made a CD. The music class was done just for fun. I am not certified for it.

The other class I'd like to talk about is the cookery class. We did it from two o'clock until four on Thursdays. I liked that because I got a break from work before I went home.

By Desirée

The New Arrival

On the last day of March 2004, I found out that I was pregnant. My partner and I were only back together since mid February 2004. We had been together from June to September 2003, then split up and only just got back together.

During the nine months of the pregnancy, I had to have scans and blood tests done. On one of my scans, they told me I was having a girl but I didn't rush off and buy any pink outfits as I know too many people who have bought pink for girls and when they had their babies they were boys. So I just bought neutral colours - white, yellow and green.

I spent most of the month of October in hospital with low blood pressure. Then on Monday 29th of November '04 at 19.01, I had a baby girl by a caesarean section. She weighed 9 lbs. I called her Carmel Anne after my mam who died on 1st July 1999 of leukaemia, which is cancer of the blood and my partner had a sister Carmel who died in a cot death 55 years ago.

By Tracey

My Many Pastimes

Here in the Friary Daycare Centre we have many pastimes. On Mondays, we have reading and writing class. This year we are studying for an I.A.S. certificate. It was hard work, but I enjoyed it anyway.

On Tuesdays, we have a free day. A few of us go up town and have tea. The rest of the day is taken up with kitchen duties and chatting with friends.

On Wednesdays, there is art class and another reading and writing class. That's a very busy day.

On Thursdays, we have cookery class which I love and a G.R.O.W. meeting in the afternoon.

Friday is music and singing. Most of us can't sing but we're encouraged to join in anyway. It is good fun. We have different musical instruments which we all try to play. I'm sure the noise is terrible at times.

By Marie

Special Friends

No one else in all the world knows me like you do, because I don't tell everybody the things that I tell to you. You know my deepest secrets. You know me through and through. This friendship is a special thing, that we have me and you. We both have other friends as well and that's how it should be, but no one can hold a candle to what we have, you and me.

By Deirdre

My Niece's Christening

My niece Rebecca was born on the 27th of October 2004. She is a beautiful baby with blue eyes and brown hair.

The christening was arranged for November and I was really looking forward to that day because I was asked to be the baby's godmother.

I wanted to look nice on that special day. So I bought a new outfit and I had my hair done. I enjoyed shopping for a baby gift and card. I liked wrapping the gift in special paper.

Rebecca was christened in Ballyea church. She was very good on the day and she did not cry when the holy water was poured on her head. We took photographs in the church and afterwards at the family meal. Everyone enjoyed the food and it was a lovely celebration.

I love my godchild very much and I hope that she has a very happy and healthy life.

By Joan

My Work

I start work at 9.30am in the Brothers of Charity workshop in Ennis. I work in the kitchen five days a week. The work can be hard as we are very busy but the staff are great to work with. Nora, Noeleen, Edel, Angela, Teresa and myself work well together. We all have our own jobs. My responsibility is filling the jugs. I set the tables for the tea-breaks and the dinner. We have great fun and laugh a lot while we work.

By Jill

Being Tall

I'm 6' 3" tall. You'd think that would be a good thing but it's kind of annoying. Take for example if I'm walking through the supermarket, I keep hitting my head off the signs hanging from the ceiling. Doorways in older houses can be a problem, too. They're usually low.

On the other hand, I've no problem getting things from the high shelves in the supermarket. Tall people can have problems when driving. Even with the seat all the way back, my knees hit off the steering wheel. Girls like tall fellows, or so they tell me. I haven't had much personal experience of this yet.

I'm the tallest in my family. My father is quite tall also, so I presume I got my height from his side of the family. I started getting taller than my friends when I was 14. I'm 18 now so there's a good chance I'm still growing. I hope I don't grow too much more. If I do, even my bed will be too short.

By Patrick

My Christmas

My name is Mike. I was born in Manila City in the Philippines in 1986. At that time, I was only a baby and I did not know anything about Christmas because I was not mature enough. As I grew up and got bigger, I still did not know about Christmas, but then I got a Christmas present. My grandmother took care of me and raised me. I was staying in my grandmother's house. My mother was not able to raise me because she was working in Ireland and she was very busy. She did not have any chance to spend Christmas with me. I certainly did not care, because I did not see her for a long time. The last time I saw her was when she left the Philippines and I was only a baby at that time. As a consequence, I decided to live on there and was

determined to be happy with my grandmother. I love my grandmother because she was the only one who cared for me and because she used to tell me stories about Christmas or anything at all she could think of. She was a great grandmother, very caring. I would accept her to be my mother.

Since I was a boy, I always wanted to know about things and what was going on in the world, but the one thing that would make me very excited was Christmas. I love Christmas and everyone I knew loved Christmas because it was the greatest day. We all get something we want. The thing that makes me very happy is my grandmother telling me stories about Christmas. I loved to hear her talk about Santa. It was very exciting and I always listened very carefully because it was so interesting. She used to tell me that Santa was real and that he would come on Christmas Eve and give presents to the kids and I used to believe it. Now I am grown up and I would say that Santa is rubbish, but if I had children I would say exactly what my grandmother said to me about Santa.

There are a lot of things to do in my home country at Christmas. One thing we do is to go to every house in the village to do carolling for the homeless, to give them something for Christmas. The only thing about carolling is that it is embarrassing for me because I am very shy to sing in front of folks and I always think they are laughing at me. When we finished carolling, we would carefully count the money and give it to the church so they could give it to the people who are not able to buy anything for Christmas. After the work, all the family would gather, go to Church to pray to God for better days in the rest of the year. There are lots of masses to go to, like midnight mass and nativity mass. The outing for Christmas is when we all gather outside and the adults come out with their guns and start firing up in the air. There is so much excitement and a great atmosphere. I loved it.

By Michael

A Day Out

One day I was on the bus. My brother rings me everyday when he comes from work. He rings to say he will pick me up at the bus stop and take me home.

When Saturday arrived my brother suggested to me, we should go somewhere for the day, maybe to the beach.

We said to each other we will go to Galway. So we went in the car.

First we decided to go to a restaurant to get something to eat. We delayed a while there and we enjoyed the meal.

My brother decided to go to a few casinos. He won a few euros and I won some money myself.

We went to the beach for a while. Then we decided to go home and, on the way, took a detour for a small time. It was time to go home by then.

By Phil

The Ireland and China Match

On the 29th of March I went to Dublin. We went up on a bus. Eddie and Louise drove up and down to watch the Ireland versus China match in Lansdowne Road. We stopped on the way up for something to eat.

We stayed in the Mount Herbert Hotel in Dublin. I moved into my own bedroom. We all unpacked our bags. Then Willie, Marie, Geraldine, Eddie and Louise went to the bar in the hotel for a drink. We met some other people that were going to the match. We had great fun.

We walked to Lansdowne Road at 7 o'clock. There were 22 thousand people at the match. They were shouting for Ireland. Ireland scored one goal. It was my first time to go to a match.

After the match we went to meet the team. I met Damien Duff. I got my photograph taken with him. I met the manager and lots of the other players. They talked to us and we did not have to pay for our drinks.

We went back to the hotel and had to order pizza. Then we all went to bed.

The next day we had breakfast in the hotel. I enjoyed the breakfast. We left Dublin. Then we stopped to go shopping and eat lunch. Then we went home.

It is much better to go and watch a match than to watch a match on T.V. I enjoyed my holiday in Dublin.

By Martin

Christmas

Christmas is a happy time of year but can also be a lonesome time for someone that is not with you for Christmas. You may have lost this person in your life that can't be with you any more, which is really sad or a member of your family could be far away and not be able to come home for Christmas.

Christmas is a very exciting time for children. It is a wonderful feeling. I remember when I was young, I was so excited for Christmas. It was the best time of my life when Santa came to me. I loved writing off my letters to Santa. In my letter, I always said how good I was and wrote what I was asking for. On Christmas Eve I was so excited. We go to Christmas Eve mass every year in our house. I loved that, going to mass with all my family. I would rush down home after mass, get ready for bed and leave out something to eat for Santa. Then I would be ready to go to bed but I was so excited I could hardly sleep. My mother used to say if you're not sleeping that Santa wouldn't come, so I wasn't long going to sleep. Then in the morning I would get up so early and go round to call all my family to get up, so that I could go down to see had he come and what had I got. When I went into the sitting room I would be so excited to open all my presents and was so happy with what I got. I also enjoy spending time with family and friends for Christmas.

For old people, Christmas can be very lonesome because they might be on their own. It would be lovely for us young people to call to see the old people living on their own. It would make them so happy even if you only called for a short while. Maybe they don't want to go out into the cold. They might want a bit of shopping done for them, so if you have anyone old living beside you why don't you call to them. It would help them a lot to show that someone is always there for them.

By Delores

How I Learned the Guitar

When I was seven years old, a music teacher came to my school. Whoever wanted to learn music was allowed to. I started to learn the tin whistle. I hated it. Then I wanted to learn the keyboard. After a while, I didn't like that. So I gave up music altogether.

At the age of nineteen, I fell in love with the guitar. I asked my parents if I could get a guitar and learn it. My mother said not until my 21st birthday and if I still wanted to learn when I was 21 I could. A few weeks before my birthday, I got a number of a guitar school in Ennis. So I rang up to find out about it, how much did it cost and how long was a lesson. It was fifteen euro for half an hour. He asked me if I would like to book a lesson and I asked him if I could ring him back. So I rang my cousin and asked her if I could borrow her guitar for a lesson. She said ok. So I rang back the guitar school and booked a lesson for Friday at half past six until seven o'clock. It was very good. I really enjoyed it.

The next day, I got a new guitar. It was an early birthday present. I have been learning the guitar since October 2004 and I really enjoy it. I have learned a lot of songs and I learned the scale. The guitar teacher's name is Mike.

By Leona

My Memories of School in Cross

I went to school in Cross in West Clare. I loved my school friends and we used to have great old fun. I loved my schoolteacher and didn't get many slaps. But on Monday morning, he was in a bad old mood and every Friday evening he would be in a great mood. We used to share with one another and we used to love sharing everything. We used to walk to school – we loved walking, picking the flowers and the blackberries when we walked home. We used to love it.

I just got slapped three times in school. I didn't like my sewing teacher and she slapped me when I answered her back and gave her cheek. But it hasn't spoilt my memories of school.

By Maureen

Things I Like to Do

There are lots of things I like doing, for example, I like feeding the cows at home with silage and giving water to the cows and calves. Farm work is healthy and as I only help at home I don't find it too tiring.

Sometimes I go to football and hurling matches. I also enjoy these days out. I support both Clare and Galway.

Another pastime I enjoy is watching T.V. I really enjoy The Simpsons and Home and Away especially.

At the Brothers of Charity Workshop, I enjoy working in the pottery area as I love making shapes with the clay. I also like doing sums using a calculator.

By David

T.V.

I like watching television at home. I don't watch everything on the T.V. but choose to watch the programmes I like, for example, Fair City, Coronation Street, Eastenders, the News and the Weather.

I like the soaps because I feel I know the characters and I'm following what is going on in their lives. I find these programmes entertaining and would consider this an enjoyable pastime.

By Kenneth

From El Salvador to Ireland

I am from El Salvador. The capital, San Salvador, is very big. All my friends are from primary school and university but my father sent me to Ireland to learn English. I didn't like Ireland at the start but now I like the people. They are very friendly. Sometimes I feel alone but my intention is to learn English. Then I want to continue my career in administrative business and help my parents. Now I feel bad because my parents are very angry. Why? I finished my engagement with my boyfriend.

By Candy

Evan

My nephew Evan is making his confirmation on Saturday, May 7th 2005. We will have a very happy day. We will go to the church in Newmarket-on-Fergus at 11.00 a.m. We are having dinner at Evan's house after.

I will be going shopping with my family for something new to wear.

Evan is now twelve and will be leaving school this year. He has no brothers or sisters.

By Helena

Our Trip to Bray

Four of us from Avonree went on a weekend trip to Bray, Co. Wicklow. We stayed at the Royal Hotel. Two nurses came with us, Nuala and Carmel. We travelled to Limerick by mini bus. From there, we took a train. We had a mini bus and a taxi to meet us at the station to take us to our hotel. We had an evening meal on Saturday and a beautiful breakfast. On Saturday, we had lunch in a restaurant. From there, we went to Mass. Afterwards, we went to the cinema. After breakfast on Sunday, we checked out of the hotel and started on our journey home. It was a wonderful break and we would like to thank the staff of Avonree who arranged our trip to Bray.

By Ann

False Alarm

It was such a beautiful summer, my sisters, Catherine and Arlyn and myself decided to book a weekend away. After much discussion, we chose to go to the seaside at Kilkee and booked the Ocean Cove Hotel. Catherine and Arlyn decided to bring their children, so my nieces Nicola, Cora and Kate accompanied us.

On arriving in Kilkee, we decided that the day was so beautiful, we would go straight to the beach, instead of booking in. The sky was sea blue, the beach full of people and the atmosphere warm and comforting.

My first thought was on getting into the water and I began to change into my swimming gear. The others were more interested in having something to eat and went in search of a café.

I got into the water, lay down on my back and floated away. When the others returned and saw my feet in the air, they called the lifeguard. The next thing I knew, I was being pulled aboard a small motorboat. Just imagine the embarrassment of it all, for my family, who thought I was the wrong way up and more so for myself.

We expressed our thanks for the swift life-saving action, were it needed and hoped I hadn't cried wolf too soon. There was still a whole weekend to go.

By Tina

Dogs can be Dangerous

I really don't like other people's dogs because sometimes they are dangerous and they come after you. There are a few really mean looking dogs on the estate and they follow you around. One has a muzzle on him because he is vicious with everyone and he has bitten a few people. His owner put the muzzle on him, but his young daughter keeps taking it off and the dog then chases people all over the streets. He even chased the guards and he goes after the postman. No-one is safe with that dog.

We were walking in the woods the other day and a horrible dog nearby took the legs from us. His owner, a young boy, said he was friendly but the dog was vicious. I don't hate dogs because I had a dog myself but some of them would eat you!

People should look after their dogs and train them not to follow people. They should be on a lead and not left to wander around all day when their owners are at work. Our dog would not wander around like that, even though he won't let strangers in through the back gate. My niece has a lovely dog called Seamus and my mother loves him. He is a spaniel and he is well trained. When they go away for a holiday, he stays in the kennels and he is very excited to see them again.

People should look after their dogs because they are really one of the family. If they treat their dogs properly, they wouldn't frighten other people.

By Patricia

Learning English

My name is Qian and I'm from China. I live in Ennis town. I speak Chinese and I am learning English. I go to classes at the Adult Education Centre in Ennis. There are lots of people from different countries. After classes I go home. I like to watch TV, especially the Learning English Channel.

By Qian

U.C.D.

Last year was a great year for me as I got the opportunity to attend a N.U.I. certificate course in U.C.D. This course was offered to people with learning disabilities and it was fantastic to share experiences and exchange ideas every week. The course mainly explored and outlined our rights as citizens.

I enjoyed getting dressed up and going to Dublin every week. I will miss the excitement of travelling now that the course has ended.

The lecturers were very nice, especially Ann who lectured us on our rights as citizens.

I hope to attend similar courses in the future and encourage other people with disabilities to do likewise.

By Ger

My House

I live in a house in Ennis. In my house there are four bedrooms, three bathrooms, a living room, a kitchen and a hall. Outside there are two gardens, one in front of the house and one behind the house. I like my pets. My favourite animals are cats and goldfish. I enjoy working in the garden at the weekends and in the evenings with my family.

By Anastasia

Sport is Fun

I work in the Brothers of Charity Workshop five days a week (Monday–Friday). I love sport and every year Dereck introduces us to a new sport.

There is a great range of sporting activities to choose from, including, soccer, swimming, bowling, hockey, tennis, table-tennis, pool, snooker, pitch & putt, golf, walking and P.E.

We travel to different places to participate in competitions. We have great fun and it's great to be keeping fit.

By Patrick

Cats

I have one cat, she is brown and white. She is a year old. I call her Becky. My father got Becky in the Animal Rescue Shelter after the other cat died. She was four months old when she came to us. She is very playful and rambles from house to house. Sometimes she goes into our next door neighbours for food, so she is very well fed. She is very fat.

Last August a little Persian cat came to see me. I fed it the first day. She came every second day until the end of September. Then she started staying with us full time. Becky did not get on with this new cat at the beginning, but they get on very well now. I call him Doodles.

Another cat came to see me. He's a male cat. He's a big fat cat. His body is like a slipper. He has a fat stomach, long head and he is very friendly. He likes to sit on my lap or on my shoulder and, sometimes, he likes to sit on my head. I call him Jack.

Where I live there are many other cats. They follow each other around except for the new arrival who is black and has white paws. He does not stay very long.

I got a new camera mobile phone and I take pictures of the cats so I can show my friends.

By Adrienne

The Miracle of Friendship

There's a miracle called friendship that dwells within the heart and you don't know how it happens or when it starts, but the happiness it brings you always gives a special lift and you realise that friendship is God's most precious gift. Thank God for friends who share friendship with me.

By Margaret

Family in Lithuania and Ennis

My name is Eglé and I'm from Kounas in Lithuania. It is a very small country. Three and a half million people live in Lithuania and 450,000 in Kounas. I have a husband and two daughters. My husband is working in Ennis. He is a tiler. My oldest daughter lives in Lithuania with my mother. She is thirteen years old. Inga is going to school. She is a very good student. My younger daughter Agna lives with me in Ennis. She is five years old. She will go to school in September. I don't work but I am learning English at the Adult Education Centre.

By Eglé

My 40th Birthday Party

I'd like to invite my friends, trainers and staff to my 40th birthday party on the 17th May. It will be on a Tuesday night. I am going to have food organized on the table. It will be sandwiches, crisps, Pringles, sausage rolls, celebration sweets, birthday cake and fizzy drinks.

By Danny

A Pen-Portrait

I was born in London in 1978 and came to Ireland in 1998. I lived in Scariff at first and moved to Ennis after four years.

I like living in Ennis but the town is getting bigger and busier. Perhaps the new by-pass will improve matters.

I have attended several training courses in the town and I am currently on a VTOS course and one-to-one tuition at the Clare Reading & Writing Scheme.

I enjoy TV, reading and football. I am also very interested in environmental matters. We must start looking after our planet.

My best friend is Hobbit. He is a one-year-old Jack Russell/Pomeranian cross-breed dog. I very much like taking him on walks for fresh air and exercise.

By Carl

My Nephew's Wedding

My nephew Cormac is getting married in Kerry in July. My sisters, Helen and Deirdre, took me to Galway on a shopping trip for the occasion. We had a great day out and I love my outfit. It is cream and white.

This is the first nephew to get married so we are looking forward to the day. I hope the weather will be in our favour.

By Marie

Ireland Embraces Multiculturalism

The 14th of November 2004 is a day of joy for mothers of Irish born children in Ireland. The Minister of Justice, Michael McDowell, announced residence based on Irish born children and, since the announcement, it has turned Ireland from an emigrating to an immigrating country.

This has made us live in a diverse and multicultural society. He's good to embrace and know the different cultures and religions in this country. These will even make us know more about other countries of the world just in case we will find ourselves anywhere any time, especially those people that normally travel on holiday to other parts of the world.

Hence this has made Ireland a place for all, despite the differences in culture and religion. It will boost the economy of this country in all areas.

By Funice

My Dog, Bubbles

I have a lovely dog called Bubbles. He is six years old. He eats Pal dog food and dog biscuits. He is a very quiet dog. He loves sleeping in his kennel.

My sister drives me to the Clare Inn and I bring the dog with me for a walk. From this summer on, I won't be able to bring Bubbles for a walk on the beach during the day because the Co. Council have banned it. It's a pity because if I go to the beach I'll have to leave him at home on his own. He won't like that.

By Breeda

An Accident

Instead of catching my father out, my twin sister Martina and myself got caught out. We intended putting on a show but instead set up an accident. My father was a birth registrar and a barber. On sunny days it was usual for him to sit out on the windowsill outside the shop, when he had a moment to spare.

One particular day, Martina and myself observed him in that position. We had a plan. We got a loan of a bicycle from a friend. It had no carrier. I sat on the handle-bars and Martina sat on the saddle. We took off from the top of the hill on the main street of Killaloe, down the hill screaming, "Daddy look at us." Suddenly, we realised there were no brakes and we screamed at the top of our voices, "We can't stop, help." Both of us ended up at the bottom of the street bashed into a wall.

The bike was in pieces and I got a nasty cut on my head, which needed a few stitches. My sister Martina was taken to hospital with a broken leg.

We spent some time recovering but our greatest pain came from my father's tongue lashing. We cancelled all future shows in the interest of safety.

By Ann

Things I Like

My name is Gisele. I am from Congo. Congo is a big country. It is very hot. My favourite food is fish. My favourite drink is Coca-cola. My church is Catholic. In Ennis, I go to church every week.

By Gisele

Trip of a Lifetime

The best trip of my life was to Old Trafford to see Manchester United play. I was sitting with the Man. United supporters wearing a supporter's scarf.

The result was a draw. It was very exciting to see the teams play in real life.

Afterwards, I went to the Man. United museum and saw the many trophies they have won. There is a statue of Sir Matt Busby outside Old Trafford. He was one of the first managers of Manchester United.

By Ger

E.C.A.T.

I travel in the East Clare bus four days a week – Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday. I get on the bus about 9 a.m. and get off at the Brothers of Charity Workshop around 10 a.m. Some of the passengers travel as far as Dunnes Stores, others get off at the Dulick Centre on the Gort Road.

The bus also offers a return service from Ennis on Saturdays. It is very comfortable, clean and warm. I am picked up from the workshop at 5 p.m. and arrive back in Kilbarron between 6 and 7 p.m. (depending on the route the driver takes).

I am delighted with this service as it is dependable and regular. I can now plan the weeks ahead.

By Dorothy

Saint Patrick

In the story of Saint Patrick, we see the hand of God. He came to us first as a slave but he came back of his own free will. He came because the poor pagans of Ireland were ever on his mind. He might have stayed in his own country. He might have stayed with his own people, but his heart was with the people of Ireland. Ireland was in darkness and Patrick brought her light. He came back to the people that he loved and to the country that he loved and he brought with him the light of Faith.

By Margaret

A Memorable Experience

The best trip of my life was to Anfield to see Liverpool play. I went with a group of people from the Brothers of Charity in County Clare. For the Liverpool group, the city had more to offer than football.

For example, I took a trip to the Cavern Club which is about five flights below ground level. This is where the Beatles started their singing careers. In the shop next door, I saw a guitar costing 45 thousand pounds (needless to say I didn't buy it). I got a picture taken with a statue of John Lennon.

Saturday afternoon, I headed off to the match at Anfield where I saw all the trophies they won and a statue of their most famous manager, Bill Shankly.

One of the high points for me was when all the fans stood up and sang 'You'll Never Walk Alone', and when the goal was scored a few minutes from the end. There was friendly banter on the way back and everybody agreed it was the trip of a lifetime. I will look back on it with fond memories.

By Joan

Going to School

In my country there are 7 million people. It is very expensive to go to school in Guinea. Because of that, there are lots of people that have no education. This is very bad for the people. Myself, I started to go to school in Ireland in June 2003. My first class was at the Irish Refugee Council. It was very difficult for me. I am very happy to go to school. It is very important. Now I am at the Education Centre learning English. I would like to thank all the people there for helping and supporting me.

By Mamadou

The Bridge

'The Bridge' is a magazine produced by Marian at the Brothers of Charity Workshop, Gort Road, Ennis.

It is produced every two months and each issue differs as a variety of topics are covered each time, e.g. book/film reviews, interviews, pictures, information on recent outings and details on any upcoming events, sports updates, etc.

There are meetings held beforehand to discuss and decide what should be included in the next issue.

It is a joint venture, as we all contribute articles at one stage or another. All the articles are from personal experiences.

By David

Keeping Fit

I go to the gym at the Ennis Leisure Centre once a week. I do weight lifting and the treadmill. I also spend some time on the exercise bike. I usually spend an hour there and really enjoy it.

The other form of exercise I love is attending the Marie Bourke Riding School. I take lessons there once a week, usually on a Tuesday.

The lessons are indoors at the moment, but we will be taking them outdoors now that the weather is better.

The first horse I rode was called Half-Pint and I will never forget that horse, as he gave me the confidence to continue. He was very calm.

My next horse was called Ebony and he is also very calm and patient. I hope to continue horse riding.

By Nuala

The Garden Centre

I am busy in the Garden Centre at the Brothers of Charity Workshop, Ennis. We are filling hanging baskets, window boxes and getting the bedding plants ready.

The bulbs are now planted in trays and will be ready for transplanting soon. We are also doing wishing wells this year. The weather doesn't really affect our progress any more as we have the all-weather tunnels to control conditions.

By David

Single Mothers

The life of being a single mother here in Limerick, Ireland is pleasing, satisfying and loving, just name it. Just for a start, when you discover you are pregnant. You are sad and happy in the sense that you are happy that you are bringing a child of yours into the world and sad in the sense that you are not sure if the person that got you pregnant is going to accept it as part of his responsibility, leaving you to be all alone with the child.

Back home where I come from in Nigeria, all you will think about when you discover you are pregnant is abortion if you are not married. Even if you marry, the man might tell you to go for abortion because there is no money or you both have two or three kids already, so there is not enough money to care for another one. Even the people around you will insult you, disregard you and the kids and look on you with pity. You wouldn't even want to get pregnant or think of having kids outside of wedlock because there is no government support or even love around for you and your baby.

Why I said being a single mother here in Ireland is pleasing, satisfying and loving is:

Pleasing – you are being pampered, supported and helped.

Satisfying – you are satisfied if the man responsible says no to accepting the baby because if he says no the government will say yes, in the sense of helping you take care of the baby financially. God Bless them.

Loving – you and your baby are being loved in the sense that from the first day you discovered you are pregnant and you tell the people around you, they are happy for you and loving especially when the baby comes to the world. You will be respected more than before and cherished with love, affection and support.

By Joy

My Donegal Shore

(A song I love to sing)

Oh I know its not right reminiscing tonight,
Of days that are gone by and returning no more.
For the girl I dream of has another man's love,
Far, far away on my Donegal shore.

But why should I care, for she's happy o'er there,
She may have children she, she may be wealthy or poor.
But I can't help my dreams of what might have been
If I'd stayed at home at my Donegal shore.

Now it's winter time there, all the trees will be bare
And the rain clouds will darken my native Gweedore.
But if that girl I could hold every raindrop would be gold
It would fall all around us on my Donegal shore.

Now there's no one to blame, but before she took his name
When she told me she loves him it hurt to the core.
But I could never descend to be only a friend
So I left her there on my Donegal shore.

Now its wintertime there, all the trees will be bare
And the rain clouds will darken my native Gweedore.
But if that girl I could hold every raindrop would be gold
It would fall all around us on my Donegal shore.

But if that I could hold every raindrop would be gold
It would fall all around us on my Donegal shore.

By Breda

A Painful Journey - Escaping the Hell of Reading and Writing Problems

I was born in a West Clare Hospital in September of 1947 into a family of two older sisters and one older brother. My father died when I was six months old. As a result, my mother had to work six days a week and we were reared by our grandparents in the family home.

I started in the local primary school at age four. In those days, the classes were very large and if you could not keep up with the rest of the class you were left behind.

I can still remember the pain and sadness I felt when I could not grasp what the teacher was telling us about reading and writing. Every day in school was filled with fear – fear that I was going to be severely punished because I could not keep up with the teacher or the ‘bright’ pupils in the class. I endured constant corporal punishment and I sometimes wondered if this had anything to do with my working-class background, as the rich children appeared to be treated differently.

At age twelve, I left school and started work in the local wood factory. This factory made wooden fish boxes and my job was to help with this work. I knew that the work would be very difficult for someone who could not read, write or measure. At that stage, I realized that my only hope of learning the trade was to observe and listen to the man I was helping. As he measured and cut the different lengths of wood, he called out the measurements and from that ‘look and say’ method, I learned how to do my own measurements. By a funny coincidence, the same workman also taught me how to read the clock.

The only clock in the building where I worked was visible from the factory floor through an open door. My work friend constantly checked the time to make sure he did not miss his tea-breaks! As he repeated the time for all to hear, I observed and remembered the position of the hands on the clock and soon I could read the clock myself.

In the past, I have been offered many good jobs but I could never accept them due to my 'secret' problem. Nowadays, I work on a building site. I often have to attend safety courses as part of my work. As I find the written tests very difficult to complete, I usually resort to wearing a plaster on my writing-hand and pretending I have an injury to cover up my reading and writing problems. I have always had to live on my wits to survive and this is how I have learned to cope in a world where reading and writing skills are so important.

Recently, I decided to attend one-to-one literacy classes with the support and encouragement of my family. This was a second chance for basic education and it took a lot of courage in middle age to take that first step with the Clare Reading & Writing Scheme. I was nervous and did not know what to expect. With the help of my tutor, I began to get the confidence to start from the beginning with reading and writing. I started slowly, looking at words, learning the skill of how to approach and recognise words and also looking at ways of using words to make sense. Gradually, I progressed to form-filling, reading and responding to local and national advertisements, preparing a CV, reading and enjoying paperwork about hobbies and interests such as fishing, shooting, machinery and travel.

In my work, I continue to meet people of different ages who have similar problems with reading and writing. I know that people with reading and writing difficulties have to be motivated to take that first step, but I also feel that it is very important that there is ongoing publicity to let people know about the local literacy service.

If I won the lotto, I would pay for literacy advertisements on local radio, in local papers and in community notices. Local radio is important for adults who cannot read a notice and I would arrange for publicity broadcasts twice a week at peak listening times, featuring people involved with the delivery of the service, such as tutors. My wish for people struggling to survive without reading and writing is that they would know that there is help available and that they would seek that help.

It is very difficult to explain to people who take reading and writing for granted, what it means to be able to fill a basic form in the Credit Union, to do private business in the bank without involving someone else, to apply for a passport or to renew a driving licence. Literacy can turn a person's life around to gain confidence and self-respect and to begin to feel at ease with the written word.

I am committed to my literacy classes and value what I have learned since I first came to the Education Centre. With the help of my tutor at the Clare Reading & Writing Scheme, I am looking forward to learning more and to finally realizing my full potential to live a more fulfilling and rewarding life.

By Thomas

