

Simply Said 2007

CARL HOLLIDAY



Issue 19

Co. Clare VEC

Clare Adult Basic Education Service

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

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Foreword

Simply Said is the annual publication of writings by adult learners attending classes with the Clare Adult Basic Education Service. Over one thousand learners annually avail of these classes. It is a chance to renew their learning goals, brush up on their skills or simply invest in themselves. This publication gives the learners an opportunity to share their opinions, concerns and experiences.

This selection of stories is only a glimpse of life seen through the eyes of the authors. Their stories of love, life, work, hopes and dreams are open and honest. It is often the most heartfelt emotion, written simply that enables the reader to connect to the story. So congratulations and well done to those of you who took the time to contribute to this 19th publication of Simply Said.

Lastly, a sincere thank you to all the students, volunteer tutors and staff who have helped in the organisation and production of this year's issue. Well done and best wishes to all.

The CABES Team

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What you gave

You gave the core in finding a way,
With all the belief of having your say,
Teachings that cannot always be remembered,
Gave a confidence to never hide,
It's worn as a badge with the pin of pride.

A future now, that holds a long straight road,
You have thought how it's the least I'm owed,
A fine written song to take me to that place,
Of showing how touching holds a heart in grace.

One to one the relationship started in story-telling and life;
They are subconscious dreams of the things that are right.
A frame work now stands to house some fish,
It's an untold snugness of a childhood to miss.
Your showed me the world with all of its waste,
You identified to me the human environmental disgrace.

All you gave was a lot to take,
You have given a new life to make.
Some people will come, more will go,
I hope my love for you, to them, will always show.

By Michael

Trip to Scotland

I am planning to go and visit my sister in Glasgow on the 8th of July. My sister's name is Geraldine and she is married to Bill. They have two children, my niece Sinead and my nephew Kieran. My brother John is going with me.

We will drive to Belfast and stay overnight in a B&B. Next morning we will drive to the ferry and cross over to Glasgow and then on to where my sister lives.

My brother and brother-in-law plan to play golf for the week. My sister has planned a lot of outings and activities for me and also for my niece and nephew.

I am looking forward to the trip and seeing my sister and spending time with my brother and my niece and nephew and seeing what Scotland is like.

By Noel

Walking

Since the weather has got fine I have started walking. We have started a few different routes. It's lovely to look at the trees and shrubs. The cherry blossom is in full bloom. I come back feeling refreshed and relaxed.

By Noreen

Would it be a good thing to get rid of the TV?

I think it would be better if there were no television, computer games, playstations because people wouldn't be stuck indoors all the time and they would have to be outside doing something. People would be more sociable with each other, and they would be healthier because they would get more exercise instead of sitting in front of the telly. Instead of sitting watching the news we could get our information from talking to each other. We would be more sociable with our families, parents, etc.

But there are things that I would miss on the television. I'd miss all the soaps because I like watching *Eastenders* and *Coronation Street*.

By Tracey

My painting

I did a painting for an exhibition in Glór. I used my favourite colours, pink and blue, and covered the page with various designs.

Alan framed this and it looked very well. We all went to Glór last Thursday morning to see the exhibition and, even if I say so myself, it looked very impressive.

By Bridget

Swimming

I have recently taken up swimming again. I go for a swim to the Auburn Hotel pool, once a week.

I find it very relaxing, good for my breathing and also a great exercise. The pool is really nice there. Noleen collects me and swims there as well.

By Jill

The women's group

Every second month on a Friday evening after work at 5.30 p.m. a group of women, Dorothy, Edel, Teresa, Mairead and Angela meet in Ashfield Park at one of the houses. We have two supervisors, Pamela and Noreen, and they come with us on trips and are present at the meeting.

At the meetings we talk about where we will go on trips or what we will do. Then we decide what we will do. Sometimes we go bowling at the Leisure Centre near the Show Grounds. We also play pitch and put on the course at the Half Way. We also go swimming.

We are planning our next outing and hope to go to Coole Park near Gort.

I look forward to the meetings and the outings. It is good fun and we all enjoy them.

By Dorothy

My favourite room in the house

My favourite room in the house is my bedroom because it is a place where I go to relax and spend time on my own and listen to my music. My room is the biggest in the house and I have loads of things in it.

In my room I have got my TV and DVD player on a shelf inside my door. My CD player is in a press. I have a built-in wardrobe for my clothes and accessories for my hair. When I am going out with my friends we go to my room to do our make-up and that.

When in my room if you look out of the window you get a view of the woods and the children playing. Some nights my friends stay over and we watch a DVD or we just listen to music and talk. We sometimes get something from the Chinese and my friends destroy my room and I have to clean it myself!

I really like my room, as it is the only place where I can go if I want to spend time by myself and listen to my music.

By Sarah

Word search

I have started learning how to do word searches. I found them difficult at first, but now I think I have mastered them. They are interesting and a great way of passing the time. You should try one some time.

By Noreen

The West Clare line

I have good memories of the West Clare Railway line. As a child, my mother and I travelled from Kilrush to Miltown Malbay to see my grandmother. The journey took about one and a half hours. Along the way, the train would make short stops at Moyasta, Kilkee, Shragh and Quilty, before finally arriving in Miltown Malbay.

The train ran along the rugged coastline of West Clare. On a clear day, the view was breathtaking. The train also carried freight, letters and parcels in those days. The West Clare line was a vital lifeline to the remote towns and villages.

Farmers working in the fields did not need a watch. They knew the time of day by the passing train. The people working in the fields, making hay or cutting turf, would always wave to the driver and the passengers on the train.

There were normally four trains each weekday and one on Sundays, between Ennis and Kilkee. The journey usually took three hours as the engines were not very powerful and the railway got a bad name for timekeeping. Percy French refers to this in his song,

‘Are you right there Michael, are you right?
Do you think that we’ll be home before its light?
Oh, it’s all depending whether the oul’ engine
holds together, but it might now, Michael, so it might’.

Tourist traffic was always good and the monthly fairs in Miltown Malbay and Ennistymon provided good traffic in cattle. Unfortunately, the future of the line was not secured and it was closed on 31st January 1961. The railcars were bought by Bord na Móna and used on their bog railway system.

I hope that there will be government support for local plans to have the original Sliabh Callan restored and rolling along the fully revived West Clare Railway line in the not too distant future. Jackie Whelan is the man behind the plan and he

believes that in a few years' time, the train will run to Kilrush and Kilkee like the West Clare line did in the old days.

If the plans for restoration become a reality, maybe locals and tourists will have the opportunity to experience the joy of a train trip through beautiful countryside without the pressure of traffic jams and road rage. Then we will need a new song about the West Clare Railway, past and present.

By Tommy

Tupac Shakur

Tupac was one of the greatest rappers in his time with great lyrics and a great movie career. He had a hard life because he was always moving but he had much love for his mother who was one of the founders of the Black Panther group, which was about black rights. He was also a realistic and true man, until the east coast-west coast feud started, when Tupac was attacked a number of times. Then he was shot in L.A. and later died in hospital and is very well respected as one of the greatest rappers of his time. But who shot Tupac? We all have our thoughts. Check out Tupac songs 'Changes' and 'California love'.

By Adam

Queen of the May

This is my favourite hymn and I would like to share the words of it with you all.

'Bring flowers of the rarest; bring blossoms the fairest,
from garden and woodland and hillside and dale. Our
full hearts are swelling, our glad voices telling the praise
of the loveliest flower of them all'.

Chorus

'O Mary we crown thee with blossoms today, Queen of the angles and Queen of the May. Repeat.

Sing gaily in chorus, the bright angels o'er us re-echo the strains we bring upon earth. Their harps are repeating the notes of our greeting, for Mary herself is the cause of our mirth'.

Chorus

By Ann

Looking to the future

I wish I could see into the future. I would like to have a girlfriend who would be a special friend to me. We would plan to see lots of new places and have a good time. We would share many happy times together. We would tell each other our secrets and she would be my best friend.

By Desmond

Short stories

I love reading interesting short stories. This a shortened version of the last one I read. It is about a father and an only daughter.

The father is rich and wants her to marry the son of his friend but she does not like this lad and decides to run away. Her father decides to hire a private detective who found her but when he hears her side of the story and hears about her mother also. It is not a very nice story. Her father is not a nice man and controls and bribes everyone.

The detective finds out something about the man that could get him in serious trouble with the law so he decided to get

him to sign a letter letting the daughter free to marry whoever she wants and to give her a weekly allowance.

There is a moral to this story. Everyone should be able to make their own choice in life.

By Margaret

Housework and me

I like eating lamb and chicken but not chicken curry. I play soccer and am a big fan of Man United. I love playing music in my bedroom, watching TV, playstation 2 and going to the pub.

I don't like cycling, walking or cricket, but most of all I really, really hate doing housework.

By David

My favourite author

My favourite author is Patricia Scanlan and my favourite story is *Francesca's Party*. This book is about a woman who finds out that her husband is cheating on her with another woman. This woman, Nikki, is younger, prettier and has a better job than Francesca. So she decides to take revenge by getting a job, getting thin and getting rid of the husband. He realises, too late, that he has made a mistake.

I like this book because it is quite funny and Patricia Scanlan is a really good writer. She is easy to read and she writes good romantic stories. I like romantic stories because they usually have a happy ending, and they make you feel good. This one is more about revenge than romance but is still good.

By Maura

— Fruity carrot loaf

Ingredients:

110gms or 4oz wholemeal flour
175gms or 6oz self-raising flour
1 heaped teaspoon of baking powder
2 level teaspoons of nutmeg
2 level teaspoons of cinnamon
100gms or 3oz mixed peel
110gms or 4oz of raisins
50gms or 2oz walnuts
2 large eggs
110gms or 4oz caster/brown sugar
225gms or 8oz grated carrot
110gms or 4oz melted butter
A little milk if needed

A non-stick loaf tin 9x5x3

Line with parchment

Preheat oven to 180°C (350°F or gas 4)

Method:

Put both kinds of flour, spices and baking powder in a bowl and mix well. Stir in the dried fruit and nuts. In a separate bowl, whisk the eggs, stir in sugar and grated carrots. Then stir in the melted butter. (The butter should be warm if too cool it will set as you stir). Add these wet ingredients and the dry ones. Mix well. If hard, add a little milk but not to make it too sloppy. Pour into tin and bake until cooked - about one and a quarter hours.

Allow to cool in tin, and then place on a wire rack.

By Margaret

My training centre

I come to the Dulick Enterprise Centre Monday to Friday. So far I've done the spreadsheet module for my ECDL and at the moment I'm learning to type.

In my spare time I like watching sport. I'm really into music especially *Westlife* and Justin Timberlake. I've already been to a *Westlife* concert in Millstreet and I'm going to see Justin Timberlake in the R.D.S. Dublin in June.

I like the Dulick Centre because I've got good friends there and I've got a lot of work experience.

By Paul

Football in Sudan

When I was a child, I used to play football with friends in our village on the banks of the White Nile.

I remember we used to make the ball from simple pieces of cloth or fill a sock with cotton.

When I was ten years old, my friends and I collected some money and we bought a real football.

In Sudan, we have good teams and clubs. I support Elhilal, one of the best teams in the country.

By Adam

Pretty in pink

My favourite colour is pink, and I have lots of pink clothes. My jacket is pink, I have pink tops and even my mobile phone is pink! I like other colours too, such as red, but I really feel happy when I'm wearing pink and red clothes.

I would like to have a pink bedroom with pink curtains, and a pink bed with a pink duvet cover. It would be lovely when I go to sleep. I don't know why I like pink so very much, but it is a lovely colour and it cheers me up. I wore a pink top to go dancing last weekend and we went set dancing near where I live. It was good fun and we had a great night.

By Ann Marie

Email

Fiona, at the Brothers of Charity Centre, showed me how to write and send emails. I have my own email address and I use this as a way of contacting people. I email my sister and friends and they email me back. I love opening my mail to see what's in it. It is a great way to keep in touch as the email sends immediately.

I am doing a computer course at the moment so that I can feel more comfortable and confident when using the computer.

By Mary

Card games

I know a lot of card games, such as poker, snap, solitaire, fifteens, combes and I play them all. I am a very good player. When I play, I win a lot of times and it is great crack to play cards. You can win money and can also lose money. People cheat in cards a lot and fight over cheating so you would be better off not to cheat. In poker up to ten players can play the one game but in fifteens you can only play with six players. In combes, you can play up to eighteen players and there is more money. If you win, you win a lot of money.

By Darren

Jokes

Q. Who gets the sack as soon as he starts work?

A. A postman

Q. What begins with T, ends with T and has T in it?

A. A teapot

By Martin

A visit to Cork

On Saturday morning, Dad and I went to Cork on the train. We went to visit my brother John. He met us at the train station.

We went up to his flat and he made some tea for us. After that we went to the English Market and looked at all the different stalls there. We then went and had a look around some of the different shops.

My Dad and I stayed in B&B. On Sunday, we went to Lough Hyne for a walk. It was nice. We had lunch in a hotel. The food was good. In the evening, we came back to John's flat. We had tea and I watched some television. My Dad and I went for a drink on the way back to the B&B.

On Monday, we went into the city to have a look around the big shops like M&S. My Dad and I got the 1.30 p.m. train home. We had a good time. It was nice to visit my brother John.

By Helen

My story

In my family, I have three sisters and one brother. I am the oldest. I have a niece and nephew. They are growing up

very fast. My nephew is nearly 10 months and, my niece is two and a half. Their names are Alan and Amanda.

My boyfriend's name is William. He is 22 years old. We like each other very much. He looks after me very well. My friend's name is Pauline. We want to move into a house together soon. Rent costs a lot every month. I am going on holiday to Lanzarote in the summer for a week. I love the sun and getting a tan.

I started working in Carraig Donn 10 months ago. I work five days a week from 9.30 a.m. to 11.30 a.m. The work is not too hard and I like it there very much. The staff there are mad about me and I'm mad about them. I work in the Dulick Centre on Thursdays 12.00 noon to 4.00 p.m. and on Tuesdays. I also work there 12.00 noon to 3.00 p.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. I am looking for work in a crèche because I like working with babies and children.

By Sylvia

Going to the cinema

I like to go to the cinema. My sister brings me to see the movies. We went to see *Spiderman 3* and *Mr Bean's Holiday*. *Mr Bean's Holiday* was very funny and it was my favourite. I would like to bring my girlfriend to see a movie some time.

By Gerard

— Dinah

Dinah is a good friend to me. She is very special. She is very good to my sister Marion. She helps her with the wash-up in the kitchen in the restaurant. We laugh a lot and share happy times. I enjoy working with Dinah.

By Anna

Mart day

I am up early in the morning of mart day. I go out to the field to put the cattle into the yard for loading in the lorry. When we go to Ennis mart, we unload the cattle into a chute and then into a yard. They check the cards of the cattle. They number the cattle in the pen. One has to wait for one's pens to come into the ring and then one has to wait and stand beside the auctioneer whilst he is selling the cattle. If I'm satisfied with the price, the cattle are 'on the market' and the highest bidder is declared the buyer.

After the sale, I go to the restaurant in the mart for my dinner. You can bet your life that at this stage I am very happy and hungry. Having eaten a big lump of steak and washed it down with two cups of tea, it is time for me to collect my price sheet from the office and head for home.

I was very lucky that I met Mick and he gave me a lift home. He dropped me off at the door and, overall it was a good day.

By Tony

A fan letter to Lindsay Lohan

Dear Lindsay Lohan,

You are my favourite actress. You are good at music and dancing. You are a rock chic. I like to play your music. I see you in the movies. You are my favourite star.

You are perfect for me. Will you send me your autograph?

By Brendan

My favourite song

My favourite song is 'How do I live?' by Leanne Rhymes. I like this song because it reminds me of my cousin's wedding and it also reminds me of someone special. The song was released around 1995-1996 and tells the story of a woman who can't live without her boyfriend. It's a very emotional song and it would make you cry.

Main lines in the song:

'How do I get through a night without you?
If I had to live without you,
What kind of life would that be?
I need you in my arms, need you to hold,
You're my world, my heart, and my soul'.

I would listen to this song when I'm feeling a bit down. You would have to be in a sad mood to listen to this song. If you need a good cry, just listen to it and it will make you feel like you're in love!

By Colette

Liverpool

My favourite English soccer team is Liverpool. Their colours are red and white - red jerseys and white togs. The name of their home ground is Anfield. Steven Gerrard is the captain and he is also a very good player. Steven has played for his home country, England.

By Sean

Favourite Song

My favourite song is by *The Frays*, 'How to Save a Life', because if someone died belonging to you it helps you remember them, and it brings back a lot of memories. The

song is about a man's friend who died and he could have saved his life but it was too late.

The main lines are:

‘Where did I go wrong?
I lost a friend,
Somewhere along in the bitterness,
But I stayed up with you all night
And I know how to save a life’.

I like the words and the tune of the song because it helps you to remember a person that has died belonging to you. I also like the tune because at the beginning they are playing a piano and they play the drums and a guitar. I would listen to this song if someone belonging to me was dying.

I would listen to this song in my own room once I am on my own so I could think about things. This song says that you could save a life by saying the right things to a person.

By Susan

High cholesterol

Last year I discovered I had a very high cholesterol level and had to change my lifestyle to lower this.

I started by changing my diet; for example I avoided fries and greasy food and increased my vegetable and fruit intake. I also started taking more exercise; I try at least twice a week. I walk in the Fair Green on Thursdays with friends and I go to the gym on Fridays. I am also taking a tablet every night.

The effort has paid off as I feel good and the cholesterol level is back to normal.

By Teresa

My backbreaking weekend

Recently I was fixing up the back garden with my father and uncle. My uncle was using the digger to root up all the rocks and put them into the trailer. My father brought them to another uncle's house and dumped them there. This went on for two days with a lot of help.

On Sunday me and my cousin put down the grass seeds and trees and watered them well. That was my backbreaking weekend.

By Patrick

The mission

When the missionaries came to our parish they caused havoc. My mother had us attend early mass and a sermon and evening sermon, which was quite frightening. My mother would always march us up to the front seat, I don't know why. We were young and we just followed her. It wasn't that she was over-religious. I wondered later if it was for showing off her new suit. Every two years she bought a suit and two years later she bought a long coat, complete with hats and shoes. She bought good-quality clothes as she felt she would get her four years wear out of them and they wouldn't look shabby.

For occasional wear she bought material and the local dressmaker made up a dress or two. This dressmaker would put our modern dress designers to shame. She just measured you, and then you told her what you would like. You then had maybe one fitting and at your next visit you collected it, finished! It was perfect!

Back to the missionaries, they would jump up and down and bang on the altar to make their point. Everyone was damned and we would all go to hell. There was a special night when they talked about company-keeping.

Everybody, especially the younger people, got a kick out of that.

One night my brother had on his good suit, he had washed and was using aftershave. It was the first time I had seen or smelled aftershave - he had been to England for the winter! The night started as he was going to Kilkee. The Hydro Ballroom was in full swing as it was summer time and Kilkee was packed at that time with visitors from all over Ireland. The visiting girls would stay one week and then new girls would come the following week. So there would be no need for commitment, and it suited my brother, as he wasn't a commitment type of person.

When my mother asked my brother to take her to the Missions, he answered, "Those missionaries only put bad thoughts in my head!" He didn't get away with it as she pointed out that she had bought the car for him. So he relented and took her to the Missions, but when it was finished and we came out, the car and driver were both missing! He made it to the Hydro anyway.

Outside the church there were many stalls and sellers who sold religious medals, rosary beads and holy pictures during the Mission. They kept the stalls closed during the service, but about five minutes before the people came out of the church, they opened up. One night, this gentleman was persuaded to attend the Missions by his wife, as he was addicted to alcohol, and one sermon would condemn over-indulgence in alcohol. He came with his wife to the church, and when she went in, he ran out again and straight to the pub, but he made sure he was outside the church when the service was over. While he waited for his wife to come out this night it started pouring with rain, and he moved under the flap of the stall to shelter. A woman who thought she would get her holy objects before the crowd came out, saw your man, and asked him if he had the Life of St Martin? "I haven't," he answered, "nor the life of a dog!" Ha! Ha!

By Maureen

Club leader

I'm more or less a leader in my local youth club. It's a small club so far. We have about twelve members. Because it's fairly new, we don't have many facilities yet. We are in danger of closing down if we don't get more funding soon.

By David

Where I would like to live

If I could live in a different country I would choose to live in Australia or Portugal or Spain. I'd go to Australia because my brother used to live there and he said it was great. There are some fantastic places to visit like Ayers Rock and the beaches are brilliant. The weather is hot and sunny most of the year and you could go swimming and snorkeling and diving.

Portugal was great when I visited it and we went on many trips and saw lots of different things. My favourite footballer is from Portugal and his name is Christian Renaldo. He now plays for Man United. Renaldo has a lot of skill and great speed and I think he helped Man United win the premiership this season.

Spain is also great and I had been there too. It's really hot and sunny and one of my best friends is from Spain, from Madrid. He says it is very nice to live there. There are many art galleries and places to visit.

But I would miss Ireland because I'd leave my family and friends behind. It might be nice to see all these places but maybe living there would be hard without the things that you know, like the language, TV, food and everything, but I wouldn't miss the Irish weather!

By Derek

What I'd do if there was no television

If there was no TV, I would get home from work and then I would have nothing to do for fun and I would get bored, so I'd have to do something else.

The things on TV that I'd miss the most would be the sport, news and the soaps, especially *Coronation Street* and *Fair City*. Instead of watching the TV I could buy a newspaper like *The Clare Champion*, and I would be able to read all the sports news about Clare. But I'd have to get the *RTE Guide* for the soaps to find out what was happening in *Fair City*.

I can't imagine not watching the TV ever again. I would be completely bored, and I'd have nothing to do. But before television, people would have talked to each other and told each other stories. But people don't do that now except on really hot summer nights when they might go into the backyard, and chat with the neighbours without the TV being on.

TV is a good thing because it keeps you entertained and it gives you information about what's happening in the world. I would miss the TV if I didn't have it.

By Eddie

Friendship

I come every day to the centre in Francis Street. Over the years, I've made good friends here. I often meet up with them in Dunnes for a cup of coffee. Dunnes is great that way. It's a good place to pass the time on a wet day. There are always loads of people I know there. In their own way, friends are as important as family.

By Marie

My new puppy

I got a new puppy last Saturday. He is a Jack Russell and he is six weeks old. He has white on his back and brown and black on the rest of him. He is very playful. He was born in Inagh and I paid €100 for him as he is a pure breed dog.

I have to take him to the vet to get injections for him to keep him from getting sick. I have a kennel to put him in at night and a warm blanket.

I feed him every day with puppy food and give him water to drink. I put a lead on him and take him for a walk every day. He is good company and he is very happy when he sees me.

By Noel

Independent living

Enable Ireland has a house on the Quin Road. It helps us to learn new skills and be more independent. It's the first house of its kind in Ireland and is a sort of experiment. It has been open for two years. We cook the dinners with assistants and we pay for our own food and stay there for three nights a week.

It's good to have a certain amount of independence from my family. I'm proud to be part of the house and feel that it's working well. From my experience there, I think there should be more of its kind all over Ireland.

By Patrick

Life

Life is like the four seasons. The spring time is your youth and the summer is your teens and early adolescence. Then comes the autumn of your life, I haven't reached it yet. I could write many stories about my life so far, and they range

from sad to happy. They also bring my Catholic religion into them. I can guarantee that my first happy time was when my parish priest gave me three tickets to go to see the Pope in Galway back in 1979. We travelled by minibus to Galway. My bother and sister travelled with me. It was an occasion to remember. It was for the youth of Ireland and it was a great success. Pope John Paul II is now deceased and canonised. I had many other happy times in my youth.

By Noreen

People of the year award

My mother, Pat, was recently honoured by the Parish of Ennis when she was chosen as a recipient of a People of the Year award for 2007.

She was nominated for this award in recognition of her involvement in the cathedral and as an acknowledgement of her being a good neighbour who helped create a sense of belonging and community spirit.

I am very proud of her and we had a great night at the presentation in the Old Ground Hotel.

By David

Memories of snow

There is presently a huge amount of discussion about climate change and global warming. We have been warned about this for the last 10 years or so, but it is only now that governments and politicians are beginning to take notice and waking up to the fact that we can't carry on using our resources with such abandonment as we have been. We have to change or we will destroy the world we live in and ourselves with it.

All this talk about climate change - where it is forecast that we, in Ireland, will get wetter winters, more flooding and hotter summers - made me wonder if my grandchildren would ever see snow, and the magic that it created for us as children. Where I was born and lived to my early years, we had wonderful snowfalls. We would wake up in the morning and the whole world would have been transformed into a winter wonderland. We would be dying to get out there and feel the crunch of the snow under our feet. The bushes along the road and in the fields looked grotesque, but lovely and their new white clothes. It was so pure and white that it seemed a shame to walk on it and yet we loved to see the trail of our footsteps. Every roof had a new white coat, and the pump had icicles which we sucked on. Across the road from our house there was a wall, and when we looked over that wall the whole valley was laid out before us because we were so high up. Every house, cabin and outhouse was like a white hump and a great white blanket of snow covered every field, garden and bush.

Between our house and the neighbours there was a small incline, hardly a hill. When this was watered a little it became a great skating river. Only we never called it skating, to us it was a 'skete' and we 'sketed' for hours with the odd tumble. I think it was always my brother Paddy, who started the snowball fights. I hated them, especially the ones that you caught in the back of your neck and that trickled down your back!

We made a snowman in the haggard, and this was usually a team effort. We used pieces of turf for the eyes, nose and mouth and a 'dudeen' in his mouth. I have a vague remembrance of putting a hat on his head and my mother going mad because it was her good hat. We always thought he looked wonderful. We put twigs for his arms, and if it snowed again that night then he was a masterpiece because he now had white arms to match! We were so sad when the thaw came and he started to melt, and his pristine white became a dirty grey.

Probably my most vivid memory was of the birds. They sheltered from the cold in the bushes all around us. We made traps from twigs. These were like an upside down basket with a forked twig holding up the front of it. It was set down on the snow in front of the house and we put breadcrumbs into it. We watched from a distance, while the bird went in to pick the bread. If he didn't knock the twig as he went in then it usually dropped as the bird tried to get out. The birds that we trapped were mostly blackbirds or thrushes. With the bird trapped, we lay down in the snow and studied him minutely, intensely. The poor bird must have been terrified at four or five faces and pairs of eyes of those wild children gazing at him. We fed them with bread and of course we always set them free.

By Maura

Working in the shop in Irish Country Pottery in 1990's

I always remember the queues on a Thursday. Mary liked being in the shop putting out the stuff, including sweets and crisps. I also put out pottery and worked in the kitchen. We both priced the goods within the pottery shop and we also ran the store. I also had to have the right tally every evening, and I had to put a float of fifty euros in the till. Mary would come in and collect the money and put it in the bank. Mary used to also empty the coke machine and sort out all the money at the end of the month. I had to do stock-take. This involved counting everything the shop; also I had to count the pottery pieces. We used to fold the invoices and put them in envelopes and stamp them. We remember these times as happy times and also it was a good education.

By Mary & Noreen

My daily routine

I travel by bus from Cooraclare to the centre in Ennis every day. There's a lift in the bus for my wheelchair and a clamp

on the floor for security. I'm here in the centre from 10am until 4pm. In that time I do many activities: painting & crafts, reading, writing and numeracy, computers and Internet, PE, gym and swimming.

The staff are good fun and take great care of us.

I like lunch time best, I bring my own food with me. I like Kit Kats and Hoola Hoops. I guess my favourite thing is food!

By Ross

On the farm

I live on a farm and I help my father with the farm work. I milk cows by hand and I feed cattle. We have a milking machine as well.

We have 50 cows, 8 calves, 17 cattle, 2 bulls and other animals on the farm. I go to the mart with my father on some Tuesdays. We sell calves there and then buy more cattle.

I like living on the farm.

By Paul

My city – Liepaja

Liepaja is the third largest city in Latvia. It has developed from a small fishing village, founded on 3rd April 1253, to a city with a population of 87,000 people.

Liepaja is located on the Baltic Sea. There is a beautiful beach, which has the whitest sand in the Baltic. There is also a seaside park. It is a nice place to go for a romantic walk and to enjoy the wind blowing through the trees.

Liepaja has lots of old churches and old buildings. There are lots of cafés and restaurants. The people are very friendly

and like to sing and dance. The city is famous for its atmosphere, which facilitates the creation of art and music. It is a colourful city with many different nationalities, who keep their respective cultures alive. Welcome to Liepaja!

By Laura

My holiday

I am planning to go to the Connemara Coast on holiday this summer. We go to different places in Ireland every year and we have not been to Connemara before.

Last year we went to Dublin and stayed in a hotel. We visited the Guinness Centre, went shopping and dined out as well.

The hotel was lovely and had its own car park attached so we were able to park and use our own transport to get around. Dublin was so busy with cars and people everywhere. I'm sure Connemara will be a different type of holiday.

By Nuala

My Granddad

My Granddad's name was Paddy. He was my mam's father. He died just two weeks before last Christmas.

He worked in England and then returned to Ireland where he drove a lorry.

He was always joking and coddling and had a devilish glint in his eyes. He loved to have the craic with everyone. He was 75 when he died.

We will miss him very much.

By Aoife

London

I went to London this year for a short break (Tuesday to Friday). It was my first time in London and it was most enjoyable. We had to convert our money to pounds sterling.

I went to see the London Eye, the Tower of London, St. Paul's Cathedral and I went on the London tour bus. It was an open top bus. The city was really busy with traffic and people. There was a real buzz there. We stayed in the B&B which was very nice. We travelled by train, bus, taxi and underground to make our way around. It was easy to travel from one area to another. I went to Trafalgar Square where there was a great atmosphere. This was one of the best trips away we've had.

By Danny

What I like to do

I go to the mart in Ennis every Thursday. I get a ride to Kilfenora and then take the bus. I meet many friends, have lunch and look at the cattle. I like the cows best. I have some cows at home so I am very interested in them. I take the bus back home in the evenings. I don't go to the marts in Kilfenora or Ennistymon. I prefer Ennis.

I also love to work at the jewellery making in the workshop. I like working on the computer also.

By Thomas

Slovakia

Slovakia is a small country in the middle of Europe. It has a population of 5.5 million people. The capital is Bratislava and it has a population of half a million. Slovakia borders Austria, Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic and the Ukraine. It is a lovely country, filled with nice green meadows and high

mountains. The highest mountain is the Vysoké Tatry, which is also a popular tourist attraction. In winter, it has many sports and is good for travelling in the summer. The winters in Slovakia are very cold and temperatures can often reach minus 30 °c. The summers are very hot with temperatures going to 30°C.

Slovakia joined the European Union in 2004 and will join the Euro currency in 2009. Slovakia has the highest number of cars per person in the world. Volkswagen, Kia, Peugeot and Citroën are all manufactured in Slovakia. I like my country as it is the place where I was born.

By Miloš

Scattery Island

It's July 11th 2006 and the group are looking forward to their trip to Scattery Island. John has taken care of our travel arrangements to get onto the island. There are six of us in the group including the teacher.

The day is good, weather wise at least. It's calm on the Shannon and the group seem to be enjoying themselves. On the island we visited some of the historical sites with the tour guide and took some photographs.

By Paul

Travelling

My name is Raquel and I am Brazilian. I came to Ireland with my children in 2007 as my husband was living and working in Shannon. Brazil is a beautiful country and the people are very receptive. When I arrived in Ireland, I realised that people here are also very kind and helpful.

I attend English classes so that I can communicate better in Europe and in Ireland. I used to work as a travel agent and in

the future, I intend to get a job and to travel. I know that this country has wonderful places to see. I like nature and historical places of interest. I want to get to know many places especially Morocco, Turkey, Egypt, Peru and Mexico. I intend to travel with my family, who I love very much. I think that life is very short and we have to make the best of it.

By Raquel

Work experience

I started work experience in a shop on March 2nd, 2007. The work experience was for four weeks. My job was to clean shelves in the shop and then stack them. I worked from 10 a.m. to 12 noon and I got a coffee break.

I got on well with everyone and they helped me when I needed it. I was very happy working in the shop. It was the best work experience I ever did.

By Martina

My new dog

I have a new dog. He's a little Jack Russell terrier. I got him about two weeks ago, and he is brown and white. He is just a little puppy about eight weeks old and he is a very lively little puppy, into everything and I have to keep a close eye on him. He's too young to go on the lead yet so I can't take him for a walk. But when he's bigger I will be able to train him to walk, sit and lie down. I might take him to someone to train him for me. I'm really happy with my dog. He's great company for me. I used to have another dog, called Sammy, but he died not too long ago and since then, I have thought about getting a new dog. And now I finally have this beautiful dog, called Patch.

By Mary

My favourite sport

My favourite sport is soccer. My favourite team is Liverpool and my favourite player is Steven Gerrard. I like him best because he scores goals. Liverpool beat Chelsea in the Champions League semi-final on May 1st, 2007. The match went to penalties and Liverpool won 4-1.

I play soccer too. Our team is called the Ennis Rovers. Everyone supports us. There is lots of excitement at our matches.

By Stephen

Eilish's holiday in Lourdes

I went to Lourdes with friends on the 8th of April this year. We travelled by plane from Shannon.

Lourdes is a well-known place where people go to pray at Our Lady's grotto. We went to the grotto while we were there and we went to the shops too. We had lots of fun. The best part was going to the shops.

By Eilish

Sport

Sport is a form of better communication. Sport can be a way of unity for a local community, and acceptance of minority ethnic groups.

Sport is a way of getting to know each other in a community, that can open minds of individuals, and groups can promote respect and acceptance to combat discrimination in a local situation, e.g. training centres, work places, community organisations.

With sport we can break barriers, to respect and know each other's different values from different cultures, also to understand and accept other races, and cultures. Sport has become more influential in the political world.

By Joao

Favourite room

My favourite room in my house is my bedroom because it is somewhere I can go and relax. My bedroom is lilac and I have a computer desk with a television on it and my make-up and perfumes on top of it. My bed is really cool. It has lilac covers on top of it. I also have a shower in my room.

The best thing I love about my room is the mirror so I can look at myself – Ha! Ha! Sometimes I bring my friends up to my room and we play music and dance around the room.

I feel safe in my room because nobody can say anything to me. At night, I can look out of the skylight at all the stars – it is really relaxing.

By Mariah

My holiday in Spain

I went to Spain on the 2nd of April this year. I went with my mother and father. We were there for two weeks.

The weather was lovely. There was sunshine every day. I went walking and swimming while I was there. We went out to eat at night time. The food was great.

The best part of my holiday was the plane journey. I'd love to go to Spain again.

By Declan

Shopping

After mass on Sundays we go shopping in Dunnes Stores, Mummy, my sister Margaret and myself. I meet a lot of my friends in Dunnes and we have a chat and catch up on what has been happening in the past week. I also buy my heavy metal books on bands and CDs I listen to.

I also like Irish music and I have been to Glór to listen to this music with my mummy. The group came from Galway.

When we have all our shopping done we go home and have lunch.

By Paul

Do you like Ireland?

As a foreigner, I have been asked this question many times. I came to Ireland six years ago. It was and still is a different country from where I came from, Croatia. My first impression is that towns, villages and cities are smaller.

I was fascinated by the clouds because they were so low, that for a moment I thought I could reach them. In my first year, Irish people were very reserved towards us, because back then there were not many foreign people around. Now, that has changed a lot. Irish people are now friendly and they like to learn about new cultures. One of the many things I have noticed is Irish people would always ask the question, "Do you like Ireland?" And my answer is, yes, I like Ireland very much!

By Nenad

Making new friends

I started coming for training to the workshop in October last year. It is nice and I like doing different things. I liked the

swimming and going bowling, but I didn't like the horse riding. The horse was very big and frightening and I didn't like getting up on it.

I like coming to the Adult Education Centre for reading and writing classes, and I am learning to write my name and address. I like meeting everyone at break-time and the Youthreach lads make us tea and toast sometimes. I'm learning to cook things like scrambled eggs and toast, and I am learning social skills and personal skills with very nice teachers. I have made lots of new friends in the centre, and it's nice to have a chat with everyone.

By Frances

Our visit to Cobh

I'm a member of the Going Strong Club in Newmarket on Fergus and recently we went to Cobh in Cork for a visit.

Cobh is a lovely town and has a beautiful church on top of a steep hill. There are some nice places to visit in Cobh, like the Titanic museum and you can also take a walking tour around Cobh which tells you about some of the people who took the fatal journey back in 1914.

The hotel was very nice and every morning after breakfast we took the train into Cork city for shopping. In the evening, we had dinner and after that we were entertained with very good music. It was a great trip and I really enjoyed it.

By Phyllis

My trip to Killarney

I am going to Killarney in May with my friend Orla and we are going to stay at The Gleneagles Hotel. It is a lovely place to visit for a few days. I love going out in Killarney, usually to the shops and the bar! You can also go on a horse-drawn

carriage, and it will take you by the lake and around the garden. The gardens around the hotel are very beautiful. At night time we usually go to the restaurant to eat and then to the bar for a drink. They usually have music and a band playing and people dancing. I love watching people dancing, and I like to dance myself.

By Colette

A place of my own

My house is very nice and I like living on my own. It has three bedrooms, one for the staff, one for me, and a spare room. I have a lovely dining-kitchen area with a goldfish bowl with one big fish in it. I have just had the garden done. They are putting some decking near the house on the patio, and I'll put lots of plants in pots around it. There are two lovely cats that come into my garden and I feed them. One is black and white and the other one is a brown colour. I love to see them coming into the garden and sometimes into the house. I like staying in my house because I can listen to my music, usually Johnny Cash. There is always a staff member to stay with me at night and we often go out and do things like shopping. But I don't mind staying on my own. It's nice to have your own place.

By Breda

My job

I work in Irish Country Pottery in Shannon and this is what I do at work. To make pottery you would normally need a potter's wheel, but in Irish Country Pottery everything is made through moulds, except plates, which are made on a plate machine.

I work on the plates most of the time. I make side plates, which are a standard size. I also make dinner plates – two different types - one is heavy style and the other is lighter and easier to make.

The skill in making plates is to use the right amount of clay, and also in placing the clay onto the plate-making machine.

By John

What if there was no television or playstation?

I think that it would be a really bad thing if there was no television because when you are up at night time and you can't sleep, you can go down the stairs and watch something. If you are bored one day when it's raining outside, you can go down home and play a few missions on a playstation game. I like playing the playstation because it gets me going. When I am depressed or feeling low, a film might come on the television to change my mood and cheer me up. If there was no television, I would miss hearing the news and what was happening in different sports. I can't imagine my life without the television or playstation!

By Aaron

My favourite holiday destination

If I could go anywhere I would go to Spain, to Barcelona. I have been there before and I had a wonderful holiday. The buildings are tall and very old with lots of statues. The shops are lovely, selling clothes, perfume, jewellery, shoes, everything you want to buy. There are cheap shops, and there are expensive ones too if you have a lot of money. The walks along the cobbled streets are lovely, and the beach is only about half a mile from where we were staying. The sea is lovely and warm. The beach is pebbled, not sandy like the beaches around here. I had a massage for my neck and back from a lovely girl and then I had a temporary tattoo of the sun on my arm that lasted two weeks after I came back. We went for about a week and we stayed in a nice, clean hostel. I had my own room so it was very nice. We took

loads of photographs. The people spoke Spanish, but they were very friendly.

We went in a cable car up a mountain, and we could see all the lovely buildings, the steeples of the churches and the sea in the distance. The weather was beautiful, hot but not roasting. You could wear light clothes - t-shirts and flip-flops and didn't have to carry coats and jackets. I would love to go to Barcelona again. I would recommend it to anyone.

By Bernadette

What we should do about pollution

People make a lot of pollution these days when they throw rubbish into the water, in the marina, in the roads and fields and on the beach. They should get a bag and put their rubbish into the bins provided. It is bad because the rubbish can harm the fish and birds and other wildlife. Fish can get caught in the plastic. They think polystyrene is food so they eat it and can die. Swans can get caught in the wire. I saw a swan in Gortlost Lake, which had wire wrapped all around him and he died a very painful death. It's important for people not to put rubbish into the water where others may be swimming, because they could get sick. People can get hurt from glass or injured from wire and sharp things.

People should recycle their rubbish. The bottles, cardboard, newspapers, plastic, beer cans and food tins can all be recycled. People should sort out their rubbish and put cardboard in blue bins and the black bags of rubbish should go into black bins. You can also take your waste to the recycling centres. There is one in Kildysart and another one in Lisdeen. It is very important to recycle things to protect the environment and to save our planet.

By Orla

Music

I love listening to music when I'm cleaning the house. My favourite kinds of music are hip-hop and dance. It gets me in the mood to go out and also puts me in a good mood. My favourite singer is J. Lo. I also like listening to country music, e.g. Kenny Rodgers. I find it very relaxing.

By Caroline

Westlife in Concert

I went to see *Westlife* in concert at The Point in Dublin on Monday. We got the train from Ennis and we got to Dublin in the morning. We went straight to the hotel near the Point Depot and left our bags in and got our keys. Then we went shopping. I didn't really buy anything because I wanted to buy things at the concert.

We walked to the concert and I bought a lovely t-shirt with a picture of *Westlife* on it. Anne Marie bought a key ring, and Mary got a mug with a picture of *Westlife* on it. We found our seats, which were near the door at the side. When they first came in, everyone was standing up and shouting. We were all very excited. The first song was 'Mandy', and they were brilliant. We all sang along with them. The whole place was packed full of people. The last song they sang was 'You Raise Me Up' and I felt a bit sad that it was all over. They were really good and I enjoyed every minute.

After the concert, we walked back to the hotel and to bed. The next day we got the train back to Ennis after breakfast, but the train broke down and we had to wait ages for another train to come and get us. We got home quite late, but we had a great time. I really enjoyed *Westlife*.

By Pauline

Soccer

I am going to play a soccer match this Saturday 21st April 2007. I hope we get through to the soccer league this year. Our team name is Ennis Celtic and the players are Adrian, Declan, Sean, David, Joe, Ronan, Sean, Gerard and Brian. We will stay overnight in the Two Mill Inn Hotel in Limerick. The competition will be held in UL.

By Ronan

Child minding fun

I have a new job minding children at the crèche in Kilrush. I go there every Tuesday from half-past ten until one o'clock. There are two children in the crèche. They are only small, about two or three years old. I play with them and we sing songs. Cindy helps me to look after them and we help them to eat their lunch. We have a cup of tea and toast for a break as well. Sometimes we take the children out to the marina, and we take bread to feed the birds and play with the ball. We bring the bikes when it's a nice day and the children can play on these. But sometimes they fight over the bikes.

I love working in the crèche because the children are lovely, but I have to work hard, especially when they throw sand all over the place and I have to clean it up. I don't think that I will work in the crèche when I leave the Brothers of Charity. I might work in a shop, stacking shelves or looking after things. But I like going to work on Tuesdays.

By Máiread

Brendan's life story

Brendan had a sex change and this is what he wanted for many years. He was afraid to tell his wife and the best thing he could do was to leave his wife. It was hard to leave her

and the kids but he couldn't live like this. It was hard but then he was walking along the side of the cliff edge and slipped off.

By John

Living in Ireland

I like living in Ireland because people are very friendly here. But everything is different from Latvia, such as things like Christmas, Easter, food, pubs and so on. Working here is better because people don't discriminate against older people or women with young children and they give you a chance. In Latvia, they don't give you a chance if you have young children, because you might need time off for your family or if your child is sick. Here, my employer is very understanding when my child gets sick and I have to take her to the doctor.

I miss my family very much because it is lonely here and I miss talking to my mother, my brother and my sisters. It is easier to have your family around you to help you. In Latvia, my mother would look after my child while I went shopping. Here I have to get a babysitter, and it is too expensive. But I will stay in Ireland because I have a good job here and I like living here in Kilrush.

By Ineze

My church

My church has been closed for the past six months for major renovations. It is due to be opened in August or September. We have mass in the Community Centre now. It is costing a lot of money. There are many fundraising events going on, including a weekly lotto. I buy a €2 ticket every week. It will be beautiful when it opens. I like to go for a visit to the church when I go for a walk.

By Michael

told me what my rights were as he was arresting me. Then all he did was he grabbed my coat at the shoulder and took me out of the station. I was waiting for my brother and his wife, because I had no idea where they were. All of a sudden, they let them go.

We were out in Dublin without knowing where we were. So we called my dad to get my uncle to pick us up, but it takes 3 hours to get from Ennis to Dublin. We asked them to at least give us the map we bought at the petrol station. The Garda got the map for us, but that was all he gave us from the car. We were walking towards Ennis, so when we saw our uncle with my dad they didn't have to go all the way to Dublin. We walked for about 3 hours and did over 25 kilometres. We had a long drive home, but we had news about the car. Then all of a sudden, the Garda that took our car went on holiday so that was another problem. We contacted the people in England and they took the car back. This whole story is about how badly you can end up when the Gardaí are in a bad mood.

By Radek

My work experience in Tesco

I went on work experience in Tesco's last November 12 months. I was stocking shelves. I liked it very much. I got on very well with all the staff. I like meeting and greeting people. I got on well with the customers. I was told I had very good manners, a good thing when working with customers.

The second week I was working on the checkout. I was very friendly. If a customer left a club card or anything I would bring it up to the office. I had to wear a blue striped blouse and a black skirt. One morning I wore a black and white blouse by mistake. One of the staff said to me, "Sorry, you have the wrong colour blouse on." That was my first mistake. I was working from 10.00 a.m. until 12 noon. I enjoyed every bit of it.

When I finished working in Tesco, I got a bunch of flowers and a box of sweets. I still meet some of the ladies every Monday night at Sixmilebridge bingo.

By Josie

Too much traffic

I may be moving into a new house next year because the road is very dangerous near where I live now. Every morning, the cars go very fast and I have to look up and down before I cross the road. Sometimes the drivers have to slow down for me. I'd like to live on a quiet road where there are no cars passing and I don't have to worry about crossing the road.

I like to go for a walk every morning, usually down the town and then come back and do my reading and writing. I like to do my piece out of my workbooks, copying the letters and reading what it says. I love reading the women's magazines. I watch a bit of telly, usually *Coronation Street* and other soaps. I really like Paul from *Fair City*. He works in the garage, fixing cars.

I like going shopping and I'm going to Tralee for a weekend. We will be doing some shopping there and I might buy some new summer clothes for myself.

By Kathleen

Kosovo

Kosovo is a small country with a population of 2.5 million people. It is near Albania, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. In Kosovo, 99% of the people are Muslim with the remainder being Catholic. People speak Albanian and they are nice and helpful. The weather in summer is over 30 °c and falls to minus 10 in the winter.

By Venera

My new job

I am going to start my new job after Easter. It is cutting the grass at Shanakyle graveyard and tidying up the lawns. I am very excited about my new job because I will be working outside in the fresh air.

I have also planted a lot of seeds in the pots in the polytunnel. These will be ready to plant out in the summer. I have to water the seedlings and young plants twice a day, every day, even at the weekends.

More exciting news is that my sister is going to have another baby and so I will be an uncle again. She already has one little girl called Ava, and maybe this baby will be a little boy. I like going to Weight Watchers, but I haven't lost too much weight yet. They tell us to be careful about what we are eating and to cut down on the sweets and biscuits but it's not easy.

By John

Holidays

It's sunny
It's bright
We are up all night
Drinking and dancing
Having fun
Time flies
The week is done.

By Leone

My working day

I enjoy working at Statoil. I have been working there for a few years now. I start work at 8 a.m. and I finish at 11.30 a.m. or 12 midday, depending on when I have all my jobs done. There is a lot of building work going on at the moment. The shop manager is always saying to be extra careful of trucks, vans and JCBs coming and going at the back of the shop. They might not see me. There could be an accident.

The staff and manager are really nice people. We get on very well together. I do a lot of different jobs around the shop. I clean the bathrooms and wash down the petrol pumps. I bale cardboard and load all the rubbish into the skip. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, I help Tom with the minerals. We unload them and put them in the red store. I have coffee and cakes when I finish work and if it is raining I get a lift out to the Brothers of Charity from John. If the weather is fine, I walk instead.

At the centre I do computers, art and cookery classes. Last Wednesday, I made scones. I enjoy the cookery classes. I meet all my friends there. I also meet my girlfriend. It is great to chat and joke and find out what everyone is doing. We have lunch at 1 p.m. a tea break at 3.30 p.m. and finish at 4.45 p.m. My boss at the centre is Tim. He sometimes visits me at work to make sure everything is O.K. If there is a problem, he fixes it.

In June, I am competing in the Special Olympics. I train on Thursday and Friday afternoon. My events are the 400m and 800m track. I hope to do well in Cork where the event is being held this year.

By Kevin

My experience as a parent

I was nearly 17 when I had my first baby. He was a little boy and I named him Taigh. I got a shock when I found out I was pregnant and I didn't know what to do. I kept it to myself for ages and then I finally told my mum. She was shocked when I told her but what could she do?

When I was eight months pregnant, I started getting pains and went to the doctor. They sent me straight to the hospital because I was in labour. It was a bit scary but nothing that I wasn't expecting! He was 6lb 3oz and he was tiny. I coped well because I was still with my boyfriend and my mum helped me out loads. I was in Youthreach and I found it a bit hard to attend because I was always tired.

Recently, I had another baby boy and I called him Tyson. He is four months old now and he is a really good and quiet baby. But so was Taigh.

I would have loved to wait till I was a bit older to have children but that's not the way things went. We are getting on great now and I have my own place and I'm back at Youthreach. My mum minds the boys for me and everything is going well.

By Natasha

A change of job

After twenty seven years working in Irish Country Pottery, I have a change of job. I now do two hours in another factory every afternoon, five days a week cleaning. The work is very hard. I clean the kitchen, the showers, and the tiles. I also do the hoovering. When I am finished working I am very tired. I feed my cat and have a rest. I enjoy working there.

By Phil

What is the worst thing that parents can do to their children?

The worst thing that parents can do to their children is to leave them on their own because anything can happen to them. They could get badly hurt or somebody could kidnap them and bring them anywhere.

I think that parents do sometimes leave their children on their own because they might have to go out for a minute. I have known people leave their children on their own at the age of three years and older. I think that parents should have rules for their children because children should not be allowed out to wander the streets on their own late at night. The legal age for children to be left on their own is 13 years, I think.

Sometimes, parents leave children on their own if there was an emergency or if they had to go somewhere in a hurry, like the hospital or something. Otherwise, they should never leave children on their own because young children could have a fall, break a window and cut themselves or a fire might break out and they might get trapped. A child might drink something dangerous or have an asthma attack. You never know with children. Parents should always be careful not to leave children on their own.

By Elizabeth

A little bit about me

I come to the Brothers of Charity centre every day, Monday to Friday. I live at home with my family. I love the new Relaxation Room. It has lights, music, water and a great chair. I love music and singing and I also play games on the computer. I go swimming and bowling.

By Siobhan

The biography of an architect

Algimantas Nasvytis is one of the most famous architects in Lithuania. He was born in Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania before the Second World War, and all his life has been living there.

After secondary school he entered Vilnius Gediminas Technical University, the Faculty of Architecture, as his older brother Mindaugas did. He graduated when he was twenty three years and started an amazing career as an architect. He had been working together with his brother for a long time, but he is working alone since his brother died. Algimantas has been happily married and has raised three children.

His studies weren't over after his bachelor's degree. He continued his studies at the same university and finally reached a professor's degree.

Algimantas and his brother Mindaugas became the most famous brother architects in the country. They created a lot of well-known buildings in Lithuania. The Government and National Defence Ministry buildings are amongst their works.

A legitimate drama building is Gediminas Avenue, the most prestigious place in Vilnius Old Town. He was very brave to create it a couple of levels higher than the Old Town's buildings were. He raised up the height level of buildings in this area. It was very suitable for me as it let me do my diploma work with less restriction in this area and gave me more space for creativity.

One of the most successful of his works is the complex of hotel buildings. This ensemble was set on the bank of the Neris River in Vilnius. This building complex has a great urban and architectural composition value. By the way, the present architects office is right opposite to his wonderful creation.

A. Nasvytis now is nearly seventy. He worked in the biggest architectural company and lectures in Vilnius Gediminas Technical University. I am proud to have had him as my diploma work manager. I enjoyed working with him. I have respect for his finesse, calmness, intelligence, and grace. I have met a lot of well-known architects during my study period but no one left as deep an impression as he.

By Neringa

Learning work skills

Monument Hair and Beauty

Yums

Banner House, Brothers of Charity (office)

Hollies Chemist

Glór

Templegate Hotel (chambermaid)

Over the last 4 years these are the places I went on work experience. I did different jobs in each of the placements. I had good fun with the staff in each place.

I loved working in Yums. The food there is lovely and I made good friends with the staff. The owners are Owen and Karen and they deliver the food in a van. The placements are usually one day a week for four weeks but I was eight weeks in Yum.

I was very nervous when I started off for the first time, but because everyone is so nice I soon settled in.

My four years with the Brothers of Charity finish next September. I'm going to have to look for a job then. I'd really like to work in an office because I love computers and I am learning office skills.

By Kate

Moving on

In the last few weeks I moved to a new job. I was very nervous the day I went for the interview but it was worth it as I was delighted with the news that I got the job. It was time to move on and I was looking forward to working in a different place. All the people that I work with are very helpful. My job coach is always a great support to me.

Locals and tourists visit the shop and the restaurant. The gift shop is downstairs. I work in the restaurant and there is a wide range of food from salads, sandwiches, filled rolls and hot lunches.

I look forward to work every day and I am delighted with the new job. Moving on was good for me.

By Ann

Independence

Last September I came from St. Anne's school to the Dulick Centre. It was a big change for me and I was excited and nervous at the same time. I'm taught practical subjects to help me be independent. I do cooking. I love cooking pizzas; the ones we make are much nicer than the frozen ones in the supermarket.

To help me gain employment in the future, I do office procedures. It's quite difficult but I do my best. Horticulture is another subject. If I ever have a garden of my own it will help me keep it nice.

I love being here and I'll learn a lot more over the next four years.

By Cáitríona

My story

My Name is Mary. I was born on 27th October 1956. I went to the Holy Family School in Ennis. I was a slow learner. I went to a special school in Dublin for 3 years. Then I came back to Ennis and went to St Clare's for a couple of years. I suffered from epilepsy so I spent some time in a Dublin hospital and then in Galway Regional Hospital. Presently my health is very good T.G.

I started working in Shannon Community Workshop in 1974 and I am still there after 32 years. I am very happy here and enjoy my work. Through the years I went on many trips abroad. I visited Rome. I had the privilege of meeting Pope John Paul II and got his blessing. I also had a couple of trips to Lourdes. I saw the house where Bernadette was born. I went to America to my brother's wedding. I did a lot of sightseeing and of course, shopping.

In 2002 Mum, Dad and I went to New York for Christmas and the New Year. Last year was to Biarritz in France with my Mum, sister and sister-in-law, which was my 50th birthday present. We also went back to Lourdes. I really enjoyed that trip it was very special. I am very happy with my mum and dad who are happily married for 50 years. I think this is part of my life story.

By Mary

Girly day out

I sometimes go shopping in Ennis with my cousin Jacqui. We go round all the shops looking at clothes, shoes and handbags - sometimes we even buy something! When we get tired of shopping we go to a pub for lunch. It's a nice 'girly' day out.

By Anita

Special Olympic games

Last year, before Christmas, I got great news. I was picked to go to the next World Games in China. I was over the moon with joy all over Christmas and the New Year.

I am now training hard in my sport, gymnastics. I train four days a week in St. Claire's school. I'm competing in six events, they are, parallel bars, rings, vault, floor exercises, high bar and the pommel horse.

Once every month I get a weekend away to Dublin with the Irish Special Olympics team. We get to stay in a nice hotel called the Red Cow Inn. The room, food and discos are great.

I so can't wait until the 27th of September to fly off on a plane to the city of Shanghai in China.

By William

My best friend

I have a best friend in Irish Country Pottery, her name is Philomena. She is very kind to me. She went to the same school as me.

She sticks up for me and comforts me when I am sad and depressed. She has been my best friend since I came here. I gave her a present for Christmas and her birthday.

I've only had one disagreement with her since I came here. She is very considerate and helpful to me.

By Máiread

Memories of Mary Ann

I visit my 2nd cousin in hospital every week. I have lovely memories of visiting her in her home when I was young. I stayed there during my summer holidays. I still go and visit her in the hospital. We arrived at the hospital at 3 p.m. on the 20th April '07 for a party. Her sister had her sitting in her chair waiting for her friends to come. The party began. We had a birthday cake and some food. Then we had some music and dancing to celebrate Mary Ann's 87th birthday.

By Tom

My good taxi driver

I was walking in town and the taxi driver said to me "Hello!" The next time he said to me, "How are you?" I told him, "I'm fine thank you," and I smiled at him. I saw him a few days later and he asked me, "Where are you going?" I told him, "To the shop". Later I saw him again and I asked him, "How much will it be to the injury clinic in Limerick?" He charged me sixty euros.

The last time I was with him in the graveyard in Kildysart, I was disappointed by what I saw there. Behind the headstone it was very dirty, and on the top of the grave there was a lot of grass. The taxi driver told me to calm down. Now I often go with my taxi driver to the grave and kill the grass and take out all the rubbish from behind the headstone. The next time, I hope it will be sunny and dry.

On Sunday, May 14th, 2006, he brought my mother and me to the Bellbridge House Hotel for the family meal. My mother and myself go to all kinds of doctors with my good taxi driver, because we don't have to look for parking places and have not to pay. My good taxi driver has a brother and he too, drives a taxi. Between 2005 and 2006, he drove behind me to say, "Hello," and I gave him an answer. He was quite happy. My good taxi driver talks a lot to me and I give him an

answer. We have good conversations all the time about God and the world. We have a good laugh sometimes when we sit together. He is a good person. He teaches me more and good English.

At Christmas, I had a surprise for my good friend. I didn't see him before Christmas, so Santa rang back to me and said to me, "I can't see where your friend lives. He is not on my list." So I saw him in the New Year. I gave him the surprise. He was quite happy with it. It was a key ring holder. Now he has all his keys on it and thinks all the time of Suzanne! It was an idea from my mother and myself. I also gave one to his brother, but his brother didn't use it for his keys, because he said all his kids would want one just like it!

By Suzanne

My story of moving on

I lived at home until I was a good age, then when my parents passed away, I moved into a flat just outside the town of Ennis. It was near enough to walk to work and I could walk into town in 20 minutes. I was happy enough for a while, but it didn't work out in the end.

I was lucky enough to have a good friend who asked me to share a house with him. This arrangement is working very well as we are both independent people who enjoy our own space, but yet like knowing there is someone there when we want company.

At work, my circumstances also changed. I had worked in the alter bread area with the Brothers of Charity for 9 years. I was very upset when I heard this section was closing down, and I felt nervous about looking for a new line of work.

I started by doing a computer course and I now type up the minutes of the Advocacy and Supported Employment meetings. I also clean the offices of the Banner House, Ard na Gréine and Carr Mór.

I am busy in my new life and I love spending time doing my own housework. We are very proud of our house and love to keep it clean and tidy. My housemate and I share the chores, the cooking and the shopping. We split the bills and share the responsibility of running the home. We are all afraid of change, but for me it has had a positive outcome. I love my new life.

By Máiread

Working in Irish Country Pottery

I have been working in this factory for almost twenty-two years. In the beginning I used to come to work from Saint Joseph's hospital in Limerick. The money we earn here is not very much. The work is fairly easy. When I came here years ago I used to work on the floor. Sean Brody was in charge of the floor then. We used to do sub-contract work. First of all there were cones and we used to put the cones in a box. Also we used to put screws in a little bag. Now it's all pottery.

There have been many changes in the factory over the years. I am now working in an area in the factory called 'fettling'. We use knives to do the work. We also use green sandpaper to do our work. When the pottery pieces are taken from the moulds there is a mark in the middle of each piece of pottery. When these pieces are dry we remove the marks at the centre of each piece. We use sponges to sponge the cups, mugs and saucers.

By Oliver

My first visit to the R.D.S.

I liked the fashion show. A year ago in November 2005 my friends invited my family to watch the fashion show in Dublin. My husband, daughter, son and myself went to Dublin by car. For a very long time we couldn't find the R.D.S. because we didn't know the town that well. When we got to the R.D.S. we were very happy. That show was one of the best that year.

We were amazed by the opening of the show. Men came out in underwear and Russian greatcoats, they were carrying flags and the music started. The first music on the fashion show was the Russian National Anthem, the 2nd Kalinka Halinka and the 3rd was Madonna. Then the ladies started to walk out in beautiful clothes. There were lots of lights in different colours when the show started. We liked the fashion show. We were very surprised to hear the Russian music.

After the show we were invited to an Italian restaurant. Everyone talked in English and so did I. We stayed over at our friend's house.

The next day we went to the shopping centre in Dundrum. Late in the evening we returned home to Ennis. We were very happy. At home our cat Thomas was very happy to see us.

By Julia

Mountjoy visit

On the 16th November 2006 we went to Mountjoy prison in Dublin. We were on the justice programme. This is to keep you out of trouble with the guards and my youth worker helps with it.

When we got to Mountjoy prison it was a rough looking place. Myself, Seamus, Cathal, Marie, Pat and Brian all went

to Dublin together. We saw some of the prisoners in their cells. We went to the girls' side of the prison and they had bedrooms for themselves. On the girls' side drugs were thrown over the wall in front of us, inside an orange.

The impression it made on me was to think I never want to go to jail, or to live inside walls with drug addicts, to wake up to the same thing everyday and one phone call for six minutes a day. One visit a week and when they visit there is glass separating them.

In the end it was worth it. The experience was great. I would like to visit another prison. Our guard gave us a great tour; he had only one arm. The trustees were prisoners who were on good behaviour. They clean up and they were allowed in the kitchen and get two visits a week.

By Eddie

Memories

My Dad had sheep on our farm. We had brown sheep, and before they were sheared we drove them to the river to be washed. My mother always kept the brown wool. She'd wash it to get the oil out and when it was dry, she'd card it and spin it into balls. She used to knit dresses out of the wool for me. They were much admired.

By Mary

My grandfather, a biography

My grandfather Tadeusz was born in 1917 in a small village between Lodz and Warsaw. He was the eldest of six children. As an eleven year old boy, young Tadeusz escaped from his home with Polish Gypsies and lived with them for the next two years, travelling through bordering countries. He came back to the family to earn money for their living when his father became very sick, suffering from cancer. After an

adventure with the Gypsies, he wrote three or four fiction books about their life which were published, and he wrote a lot of poems. We still have some of his handwritings at home.

During the Second World War, the majority of them were lost I've never read any of his books, only my family told me about them. However, I know his poems.

After graduating from the secondary economical school my grandfather was dreaming of becoming a surgeon, and when he was seventeen or eighteen he passed all the preliminary exams to start medical school. However, he never started the studies and never became a surgeon because the World War II broke out just before the school term.

During the war he was an officer in the regular guerrilla army named the AK- the Home Army, which was hidden and struggling in the Polish forests and was secretly supported by the Polish Government in London. That is why, after the war, Tadeusz was heavily restricted in free communistic Poland until the beginning of the sixties. My grandfather avoided speaking about those war years. I know from him only two stories; the first about and execution of a mother of a three-year-old girl because the mother was collaborating with the Germans, and the second about my grandparents ten-minute wedding.

My granny was a really beautiful girl (we still have her photos) and one German officer was interested in her as a future wife. He even planned to take her to Germany and get married there. When my grandfather learnt about the officer's plans, the very next day, without any announcements, my grandparents got married in secret in the small village church. The whole ceremony took about ten minutes. The day after, the German officer came to my granny with flowers to propose to her, but she told him that she was already married. He was very disappointed, as predicted, but not aggressive to her and finally left granny in peace and moved from the town to another place.

My grandparents were, for me, the best example of a happy married couple through all their lifetime. Their house was full of life, happiness, joy and understanding for other people's problems. The war years were extremely tough for them. Granny used never know where her husband was hidden and whether he was still alive or not during the long five years of the war. My mum was born in the middle of the war and her brother four years after the war.

Grandfather had a lot of difficulties and dangers in life, and used to suffer lots of serious illness since he was a 30-year old man, such as the Burger illness (he could have had two legs completely amputated, but happily avoided it). Problems with stomach (three-quarters of it removed), problems with the heart, asthma, blood circulation, veins and even survived four heart attacks, but never used to complain about his sufferings. He gave all my family a huge package of love and for eighteen years of my life I enjoyed having such a wonderful grandfather. He was, for me, a role-model of a man, husband, grandfather, father, best friend and worker. As a person he was a very sober, strict, reasonable and demanding grandfather, but on the other hand totally friendly, open hearted and warm-hearted to everybody, understanding and loyal. A small negative notice; both of my grandparents were the biggest smokers who I've ever seen! Grandfather, from one side, was still interested in medical science but from the other side had a sensitive, poem-writer's soul (I inherited this talent from him). He was a great dancer, (and granny as well), a very active, energetic, jolly person, always smiling, making friends, telling jokes and his own sayings which are still alive in the family. He had lots of friends and lots of people regarded him highly as a person.

He never, ever became a surgeon. For the rest of his life in free Poland he worked as a bank official, then as one of the main supervisors in the bank. I lost him when he was 67 years old, absolutely sick and suffering from nearly every body dysfunction. He was dying through two long years, staying

all that time in hospital. I was 18 and started my university studies in mourning, dressed all the first year in black clothes.

However, my grandfather is still alive to his family, and his influence on my life, on my sister's and on my mother's lives is still visible and obvious. He used to have an absolutely optimistic attitude to everything he was doing, all his life, his saying was: 'As every problem has its solution, you just have to find it!' I still remember his smile, his hugs, his advice, jokes, sayings, and his belief in me, "You are a smart girl, and you deserve to be happy". Half of my soul is his soul. He really never died for me and the family, the most important person in my life, the wisest guide in my life so far!

By Ewelina

Work experience

My name is Adrian. I have lived in Ennis all my life. I went to Saint Claire's school until I was 17 years old. After that I went to the Brothers of Charity on the Gort Road. We did lots of work there, cooking, woodwork, computers and pottery.

We go on work experience to prepare us to get a job when we leave the centre. I went to Eircom on my work experience. I helped with the cleaning and I got my own area to clean after a while. That was a great thing as all the staff there know me now.

I'm finished work experience now and am back full time with the Brothers of Charity. I would like to work in a shop when I leave.

By Adrian

Robbing an orchard

A man by the name of Dennis decided to raid his neighbour's orchard while his neighbour was at a funeral.

When the neighbour, a farmer, missed his apples he made some enquiries about who the thief was and discovered it was Dennis. He thought to himself, 'I'll bide my time and get back at him in my own way.'

Later on he asked Dennis to give him a day putting in the hay. At the end of the day Dennis, expecting to be paid, said "God spare you the health, what pocket did you put the money in?" His neighbour replied, "The same pocket you put my apples in."

By John

Writer's block

I have nothing to say this time. I'm racking my brains trying to think of something interesting to write for Simply Said but I can't come up with anything.

I could write about a club I've joined but there's not a lot going on there. All we do is play pool and dance. There's not a lot more to say about it.

Last year I wrote about being a DJ at night in the pubs so I can't write about that again even though it's what I like doing best. That's all I have to say this time.

By Michael

Bats and cats

I go to the library very often to get books. I'm going back every day with books because they keep giving me ones with pictures of bats in them. I don't like bats. I only like the books with pictures of cats. Cats don't look anything like bats!

On my way to the library I saw baby ducks. They were tiny and all fluffy.

I like the ladies in the library. They help me when I visit. I wish I was better at reading; it's hard for me to read some of the books I get.

By Mary

Kiss me Kate 2007

This year I did a show with Ennis musical society called *Kiss Me Kate*. I joined the musical society in October 2006. I always liked singing and dancing so I said I'd give it a go. It was fun meeting new people and learning new songs. We had rehearsals most days and it was hard work learning new songs and dances but it was fun also. We practiced for three or four hours at a time. We only had five months to learn everything so we had to get as much rehearsals done as we could.

We used to sing first, we had a good few songs to learn. I found it hard to do the dancing at first. We used to trip up and we had great fun learning the new steps.

The show was on for five nights in Glór. I felt nervous the first night. There were so many people at the show every night the place was packed. We got great cheers and claps on all the nights.

By Martin

My trip to the USA with Pope John Paul II in 1979

I joined the ground staff of Aer Lingus at Shannon Airport in the mid 40s and worked there until I retired in the eighties. I availed of a lot of concessions to travel abroad which I enjoyed very much, but the highlight of my travels was to go in the 747 aircraft to USA to make a gift to Pope John Paul II on board.

Senior Staff at Dublin Airport decided to arrange that all staff would contribute £1 each to give a special present to the Pope on leaving Ireland. All departments of Aer Lingus in Dublin sent a representative to a special meeting in Head Office Block. The out-stations of Shannon, Cork, Belfast, London, Manchester, Bristol and others were asked to send a representative to this meeting also. The Shannon manager called me one day and told me I had been chosen as the Shannon representative for the meeting and I went on the next flight to Dublin. This was four weeks before the Pope's departure. I arranged collectors in all shifts of Aer Lingus staff and put up notices all over notice boards etc. Two days later I went to Dublin to another meeting, where they decided on the type of gift to give the Pope. It was a replica of the shrine of St Patrick's Bell, a famous art treasure in Dublin. It was to cost £3,500. We had another meeting later in September 1979 and the chairperson of our collection committee said that two people from the Committee would be chosen to go on the flight to Boston to make the presentation. The chairperson was selected. She was Breeda Dunlea of Head Office. A vote was taken to select the other candidate and I was selected to go with her.

I came back to Shannon and told Mr Maher the story, and he was delighted that the Shannon representative was selected to go. I had to go to Limerick the following day to purchase a new suit and a coat, and all with only two days left to go. J. Tucker, who was a Limerick foreman with us, knew a tailor who would make a suit fast, which I got. Friends and neighbours gave me religious objects etc. to get blessed by the Pope for them. On departure day I went with family to the Airport and checked in for the flight. I was the only person joining the flight at Shannon and the duty free was closed. I met a manager, told him I was joining the flight, and he got me a bottle of brandy, a bottle gin, and a bottle Paddy which he said were on the house. I put them into my hand luggage and boarded the aircraft half an hour before the Pope said his last goodbyes on the ramp.

I was seated in the first class luxury compartment up front on the jumbo jet in the company of top brass of church and state and also Aer Lingus. I felt like a V.I.P. for the first time in my life. The Pope was last to come on board and he saluted and blessed us all on his way past us to the upstairs lounge. He went to bed immediately in preparation for another busy day in the USA.

We had our dinner on board and I passed my menu card around and got a lot of VIP signatures in it. About half an hour out from Boston, over Maine in America, Breeda Dunlea and I were summoned upstairs to make the presentation to the Pope. It was now 7.30 p.m. Irish time. We first went all around the aeroplane aisles among the press people, photographers and so on to take photos of the present I was carrying. Then we went upstairs to the Pope's lounge. Breeda had a few words of Polish and explained all to them. He gave beads and a medallion to me and spoke to us for a few minutes. We went back down stairs and heard the intercom stating that the Holy Father would now bless any religious objects we could hold up. My ones were in my hand luggage with the liquor that I got at Shannon, so I only had time to hold up the whole bag.

It was raining when we touched down at Logan Airport in Boston. A smallish crowd of people welcomed him to Boston. He kissed the ground, met the top politicians and Cardinals of the day, and was taken to Boston Common (the Phoenix Park of Boston) where all was ready for his first ceremonies and mass. We went to Boston Common also and there was a very large crowd there. All accompanying Aer Lingus staff was accommodated in the Kennedy Suite in the Parker House Hotel. We had a party there the first night and I stayed two days with them. Then I phoned Bill's house, my wife's uncle in Boston. They invited me over, sent their son to collect me and I stayed a week. Bill was in hospital and we visited him. I gave him the bottle of brandy and I'm told it is still in Boston, not opened to this day.

A young friend of Mrs O'Grady in Boston was staying with them for the Pope's visit. She was looking for stories about the visit for the magazine she worked for in Maine. Betty O'Connor was her name. She heard me tell the story of holding up my hand luggage with the religious objects and the liquor for the blessing, and she had it put in her little magazine as top news in her locality. She also had me tape recorded.

By John Joe

A day in Cork City

Last April my parents and I travelled by bus to Cork city. We went in the morning and returned in the evening. The road was very busy to Cork, there was a lot of traffic that day.

There were a lot of people in Cork city. We went shopping for the day. There are a lot of shops in Cork. We had a lovely lunch in the carvery of a small hotel and we had minerals in the bar.

The weather was sunny and warm. The people of Cork were very nice.

By Kieran

Lourdes in June

On Saturday morning I stayed in bed 'till 10.30 then I had my breakfast and cleaned up. On Saturday evening I went to mass with my friend Mary. Before I went to mass I made some raspberry jelly. I don't cook on a Saturday, Mary does.

On Sunday I cooked dinner and made stewed apple for dessert. I like to cook on a Sunday.

In June I'm going to Lourdes with all my friends from the day centre. I love getting off the plane to get the bus to our

There are many nice people who do everything to help with that disaster. That's why S.O.S exists for animals tame or wild. The gorilla is the most important animal after the leopard in my country. There are two kinds of Gorillas in D.R. Congo. The first is the one I'm talking about while the second is the one which lives in the plain or basin of the Equatorial Forest. They aren't disappearing and this sort of Gorilla isn't only in the D.R. Congo, but it's also in Congo-Brazzaville in the north east of Gabon and in the south of Cameroon too.

There is a movie which was shot in U.S.A about the gorillas. It's called Congo.

By François

My trip to Dublin

Last year I went to Dublin with my art class. We left about eight o'clock in the morning. We arrived at one o'clock, and then went to see the National Gallery. It was very interesting. We also saw many landmarks that I hadn't seen before like the Dáil and the Four Courts. We had lunch, and then went to the Gallery of Modern Art in Kilmainham. Some artists can rent out rooms to work in. We headed home about five o'clock as it was getting dark by then and the traffic was heavy. We stopped on the way back for something to eat. We got home at half past ten at night. We all had a good time and enjoyed it very much.

By Jamie

Sports day

In my youth, Kilmaley annual sports day consisted of racing, cycling, dancing, and sheaving all held in McInerney's field. They had two platforms for the dancing; you had O'Neill's School of Dancing competing against Mrs. White's School of Dancing.

You had the Hawkers there from the town. It was a big day for them. They had skittles and pellet guns and ice cream for sale.

There was a committee set up in Kilmaley to run the sports which was held every year.

By Thomas

My friend's wedding

In March I went to my friend's wedding with my two teenage daughters. We were all very excited getting ready for the big day. Rose and Marie put on fake tan and they looked lovely in their blue skirts and white tops. I wore a pair of black pants and a red top.

I drove to Galway in my own car and got to the church in good time.

The bride looked beautiful in her long white dress. She had six bridesmaids all dressed in pink. We had a four course meal in the Galway Bay Hotel after the wedding. We had a very good day and we enjoyed ourselves.

By Teresa

About me

I have just started baking and I like it very much. I started with cream buns. I made plain buns and then put cream and jam on. They were very good. My favourite foods are bananas and Weetabix with tea.

I love to go to the gym. I ride the bike and do P.E. I live near the sea and I walk on the beach.

I am going to France on my holidays this year. It will be my first time on a plane and my first time outside the country.

I make jewellery in the workshop and also do painting and art classes. I do reading and writing classes with Mary. I love the new relaxation room in the house. It has lovely lights.

By Brid

Saint Patrick's Day

My little son, John, aged four years and my daughter Tracey woke up feeling very excited. It was St. Patrick's Day and they were looking forward to going to the parade to see the marching bands and the colourful floats.

John's eyes looked very excited when he saw a man eating fire and how he then blew the fire out of his mouth. He told me that he would like to be able to do karate like the children in the parade. He asked me why the men were so tall and was it because they ate all their dinner!

He enjoyed looking at the parade and when it was all over we went to Supermacs where he was 'showing off' his St. Patrick's badges.

By Kathleen

Westlife

Westlife started in 1999. There were five boys in the band then – Shane, Cian, Mark, Nicky and Brian. Brian quit the band in 2004. Nicky now has twin boys. Their names are Rocco and Jay. They were born on April 20th, 2007.

I went to a *Westlife* concert two years ago. The venue was packed and fans were screaming. The band passed me on their way to the stage. I was only ten feet away from them.

I have *Westlife* CDs and a DVD. My favourite album is 'The Love Album' and my favourite song on the album is 'The

Rose'. I think fans love *Westlife* because they are like heroes and because they are very good singers.

By Declan

Moving to a new flat

Last September I had to get out of the flat that I shared with my friends. We were in the flat about ten years. We had to move because the building was condemned. There was no fire escape in it. I liked staying with my friends but my new flat has room only for one person and now I miss them.

My new flat is out the Kilrush Road. It has an open fireplace where I can put down a fire. I love to see a real fire! The new flat is bigger than the old one so I have more space for myself and my things. In the kitchen I have a cooker, a fridge, four wall presses, a table and four chairs. In the living room I have a sofa, two armchairs and my TV set. I have all boarded floors which I like as it is easy to keep them clean.

I am happy enough with my new flat, but would prefer to share with my friends.

By Eileen

Katie's trip to Lourdes

I went to Lourdes on the 8th of April. That was Easter Sunday. I went by plane with friends. We were on the plane for three hours.

There were a lot of religious shops in Lourdes. We visited some of them. We went to mass every day. Some days we went on bus trips. On one of the bus trips, we saw some beautiful mountains and fields. One evening we went on a procession with candles lighting.

We stayed in a lovely hotel. I shared a room with my sister. There were two beds in the room.

The best part of my trip was the big party we had the night before we came home. Everyone was singing and having fun.

By Katie

The irony of life

You live to be born.

You live to be happy.

You live to go to school.

You live to find your love.

You live to lose it.

You live to have a job.

You live to find your soul mate.

You live to start a family.

You live to have a newborn child.

You live to teach your teen advice.

You live to retire.

You live to have grandchildren.

You live to lose loved ones.

You live to die.

And when you die and see your own funeral you get to see how much your friends and family love you.

By Andrey

The history of makeup

Makeup has been used for centuries. There have been dramatic changes over time. 'A woman without paint is like food without salt,' as an old saying goes.

Wax has been used to remove hair and pumice stone was used to clean teeth. People have used white lead and chalk on their faces and henna for hair. Here are some natural

recipes, for wrinkle removal – melt one ounce of white wax, add two ounces of juice of lily bulbs, two ounces of honey, two drams of rose-water and a drop or two of ottar of roses and use twice a day.

Red rouge and red lipstick were used to make women look healthy. Lead and mercury were used in makeup even though they are very dangerous. Another substance used was coal tar to dye hair.

Men wore makeup until the 1850's. In Victorian times only prostitutes and actresses wore makeup. The 1990's saw big changes with many women using makeup and mascara. Now there are 100's of products to choose from and also there is botox!

By Bernadette

My experience of being pregnant

I am pregnant with my second baby and so far in this pregnancy I have experienced a totally different feeling than with my first child. My first child was born on 29th November 2004, weighing 9lb 1oz. She was born by caesarean section. When I was pregnant with her I suffered with a lot of kidney infections, very bad morning sickness and high and low blood pressure. I had eight admittances to hospital before giving birth as a result of these complaints.

With this pregnancy, I am now 22 weeks and no morning sickness, no kidney infections and no hospital admittances. I am due this baby on 24th of August and I really believe that I'm having a boy even though I have not had a scan to confirm this. I will be having a scan on 23rd of May and hopefully then I will know what I am having.

By Tracey

I don't like:

People in a hurry

Crowds

Turnips

The cold

Helicopters

Travelling on a plane with my wheelchair.

By Jonathan

How farming has changed since I grew up in the 60's

I grew up on a small farm in the sixties, and when I think back, things were very different. In those days, if you had a farm you were expected to be nearly self-sufficient. There was a great community spirit among small farmers, so when it was time to gather the crops or cut the turf all the neighbours got together and helped and all the family took part in the work. There was very little work in Ireland in those years and many men had to leave their families and go to England or other places to work. My father went to work in Dublin and he only got home about four times a year. My grandmother lived with us and she helped with the cooking and housework and looking after the children and that gave my mother time to work on the farm with the help of the older children.

I remember we had to milk cows when we were young. We fed the calves with the milk, had milk for the family, enough to make butter and use the buttermilk to bake bread, and we had cream for Sundays. We had hens, chickens, and geese and we also reared turkeys to sell at Christmas. The money from the turkeys provided little extras for the family.

Everyone had a garden with potatoes and summer vegetables, and we grew cabbage and turnips for the winter. Most people reared a pig to kill and then cured the meat. People in the west of Ireland caught fish and salted them in a barrel to provide food over the winter. We lived by

a river that was quite good for salmon fishing. Our family poached for salmon, a joint effort with some of our neighbours.

The church and shop were quite near to where I lived. People were not buying trolleys of groceries in those days. The shopping would have been very limited, just the necessities such as tea, sugar, cocoa and that sort of thing. On Thursdays, there was a bread delivery at the shop and we always bought bread on that day. On children's allowance days, we always got a little treat.

The biggest change to affect farming was rural electrification and then the water schemes. The farmers employed contractors to do the silage and bale the hay. Most people have introduced self-feeding systems and water troughs so they only have to check cattle once a day.

There is less community support around now. People cannot live off the land but they have a choice these days, Ireland is a wealthy country with plenty of work and most farmers have full-time off-farm work. The big difference is that the work is local and they do not have to leave their families. We need a government to put forward some solutions to generate more income, so farmers could stay full-time on the land.

I think farming is a very healthy lifestyle, one is in touch with nature, seeing calves and lambs being born and crops growing. I have very happy memories of taking part in all of those things when I grew up on a farm.

By Bridget

Patrick's Day

The 17th of March is Paddy's Day. It is a great day all over the world for the Irish. This year it is falling on a Saturday and about 2.00 p.m. in Ennis the parade will start. It is great to see the people out standing around waiting for it to come around. It is the one day of the year that people wear green

I hate cleaning my room. I leave my stuff all over the place. I don't like my room very untidy but I don't want to clean it either.

Don't get me started on ironing. I never can do it properly. We should be taught these skills in school.

I can't stand cricket on TV. It's boring and I don't understand it.

Did I mention getting up in the morning? Needless to say I dread it. That's all my pet hates.

By Richard

Hamburg Christmas markets

On Friday 8th December 2006, I went to Hamburg with my sister Martina. We got the plane from Shannon to Dublin and then to Hamburg that evening. We got a taxi to Budapester Hof Hotel. We checked into the hotel with our bags and then we went down to the Blue U and got a tube to Rathaus Market.

It was a big market in the Town Hall. In the Town Hall, there was a giant Christmas tree. The decorations were big red balls on the tree. I saw Santa Claus and his reindeer sleigh with Mrs Claus flying in the sky. There was a beautiful crib in the big market. We got mulled wine, two Hamburg mugs free and some food. We went home to the hotel for the night after seeing the Rathaus Market.

Next morning, Saturday, we got up for our breakfast at 8.30 a.m. Then we went to the Ganse Market. There was a beautiful small crib in the Ganse Market. There were children skating in Wandsbek. There was a lake and on the lake there was a tree with white lights. There were adults and children ice skating. It was fun. My sister Martina took some pictures of me skating. We also went to Alster Market and had a look around. Then we went back to the hotel to have a rest. In

the evening, my sister and I went to the last Christmas Market. I brought home some nice Christmas gifts to my family. My sister took a lovely picture of me standing by the Red Bishop Santa Claus.

In all the Christmas markets there are handmade wooden toys, handmade puzzles, glove puppets, hats, Christmas tree decorations, porcelain dolls, crystals, candles, leathers and arts and crafts.

On Sunday, we flew back to Dublin and got the train to Limerick where my sister Carmel collected us and drove us home.

By Breeda

Farming

I live on a farm with my family. When I'm not at work I help out on the farm when I'm needed. Farming has changed a lot and the farmer has to follow a lot of rules and regulations if he wants to qualify for government schemes.

One scheme is called the Rural Environmental Protection Scheme (REPS). It is drawn up by a planner and the work is spread over 5 years. The farmer has to work to a deadline but the work is phased and if he fails to meet this he will be fined. The scheme is paid for by the EU and the Irish government.

When a farmer is involved in the scheme, there are some things he is not allowed to do and some which he must do. For example, he cannot remove walls or woodlands as this would be harmful to the environment. He must upgrade the farm, ensure proper care of water against pollution and follow the guidelines about fertilizers, etc. A scheme inspector comes to check that the work is done as it should be. The farmer can make a lot of money from the scheme as he benefits in the form of guaranteed payments.

had was going through the Lough gates when the water level dropped. It was a bit scary, but exciting.

The class got lots of information on the Internet in advance of the trip. My overall impression of the trip was that it was well worth visiting this island. It was a beautiful place of tranquillity, views and history. It's a place I would like to go to again.

By Rina

Art exhibition

I have been doing FETAC art classes for the past two years. Never in my life would I have thought that at the end of the course we would have an exhibition for the whole world to see! I really enjoyed painting landscapes and I never thought I could do all this. But our tutor just seemed to think we had it somewhere in us. I learned a lot and, as a class, our work was pretty good.

When we were told that we could exhibit our work in the local gallery, we were a little nervous, but it worked out so well. We gave our work titles and we typed them out on labels and stuck them beside the paintings after they were hung on the wall.

We had a grand opening with photographers, our families and other local artists who really liked what they saw. We had wine and cheese and it was a great night altogether. I think I am going to continue learning more about the different styles of art.

By Emer

Making the súgáns

Some years ago when we would be stacking the oats, my father and uncle would put a few sheaves aside for making súgáns. They would be left up safely until about November, then they would be taken down and scotched – that is knocking off the grain.

Patsy would then be asked to make the súgáns. Then on the night appointed he would come with his twisting bow. It was really a hazel stick turned and tied back with a string. I was very young then and had to wait a while before my turn came to twist one. Patsy doubled a few bits of straw on the bow and I was away. He kept checking me for going too fast or too slow until I got the fist of it. I backed away as I twisted and steered my way to the room door and as far as the bed. "Are you at the bed?" he would shout and when I said I was he would say, "Come on now!" I'd start walking back and he would shout, "Go back, go back!" He needed time and a little pressure on the súgán to wind up the miróg.

By Joe

Things that I do

I live on a farm with my parents. My brother John runs the farm. My father is retired and I help my brother. I open the bales and feed the cattle. I take the dogs for a walk every evening and I would always look in on the cattle.

Last summer, I worked at the Tea Rooms in Kilfenora in the kitchen. I hope I can go back this year. I also work at the centre every day. I prefer working in the Tea Rooms as I meet lots of new people and tourists.

I went to Lourdes with my family last year. It was a lovely place but very holy. There were lots of shops and a pub.

still go hunting, but not for rabbit. The fox is still the enemy. Old habits die hard, so me and my friends still enjoy a good day's hunting every Sunday.

There is no 'closed season' for foxes, rabbits, mink, magpies or grey-crows, as they are classed as vermin. Every Easter there is a cup for gun clubs who have killed the most vermin. It is a pity people are still killing foxes and rabbits, as they are getting very scarce. The others are multiplying and causing a lot of damage.

By 'A Hungry Man'

My difficult life

My name is Anne. I left school at twelve years of age and went to London to work in a hotel. It was hard work and long hours. Got married to a man I met there when I was nineteen years of age. The marriage was difficult at times due to his drinking. I had six children. I had to take care of them myself and work in the mornings. I had seven but I lost the first baby. I came back to Ireland and moved in with my in-laws for two years of hell.

Eventually we got a council house and lived there for a few years until my mother-in-law died. My father-in-law was like a father to me so we moved back in with him to look after him. He died a few years ago and I miss him all the time. He was always a great support to me and my children.

Now my children are grown up I have a bit of time to myself. There is sobriety in my house now, thank God.

I picked up the courage to come to the Adult Education Centre to improve my reading and writing. I was so nervous the first few times. Now my life has turned around and I hope to pass my theory test and learn to drive a car.

By Anne

