

## A vibrant, abstract collage made from torn paper, fabric, and various found objects. The collage features a central yellow section with a book titled "Simply Said", a blue section with a guitar and musical notes, a red section with a star, and a purple section with a bird. Other elements include a green and white patterned square, a yellow and white patterned square, and a red and white patterned square. The collage is surrounded by torn newspaper clippings with words like "Do You remember?", "Hunting", "Music", "LOCAL", "NEWS", and "cooking".

Co. Clare VEC

Clare Adult Basic Education Service



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



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## Foreword

This year marks the 20<sup>th</sup> issue of Simply Said, the annual publication of writings by adult learners who are participating in programmes with the Clare Adult Basic Education Service. In 2007, over 2,000 learners availed of a variety of classes aimed at helping participants to renew their interest in learning, improve on their communication skills, reflect on their goals and develop new interests.

The learners writing in this publication present an interesting and varied collection of stories, poems, opinions, memories, hopes and dreams. Some of our contributors write about facing life's challenges and coping with change, others share memories, some pleasant and some painful. Others describe and reflect on important life events. Some are eager to share their joy in learning and express just pride in their achievements. All write with an openness, simplicity and honesty that readily engages the reader. So heartfelt congratulations and well done to all this year's contributors.

We'd also like to congratulate the Friary group who created this year's cover design. Members of this group have been actively participating in classes for 15 years. The beautiful and thought provoking design is their interpretation of what reading and writing means to them.

Finally, a sincere thank you to all the learners, the volunteer tutors and members of staff who have helped in the organisation and production of this year's issue. It is, as always, a great team effort. Well done and best wishes to all.

*The CABES Team*

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## **Springtime in the countryside**

To me, springtime is the nicest season of the year. After the long dark winter evenings, getting up early in the morning is a pleasure. It is nice to listen to the birds singing as I go to work in the countryside. The colourful fields of our native wild forest give me great pleasure. In the forest, the carpet of bluebells and buttercups is a beautiful sight. Trees are budding in spring. The first to flower are the cherry blossom, wild gorse, furze bushes and heathers. People plant their flower seeds for hanging baskets and garden borders in preparation for summer flowering.

In spring the birds are busy gathering twigs and other material to build their nests. It is a happy time of the year as new life starts appearing in the countryside. It is lovely to see young lambs playing in the fields as I drive along country roads. Farmers are busy in spring preparing their fields for planting crops of wheat, potatoes and various other vegetables and grain crops.

This year marks the final year that people will be allowed to cut turf in the bogs. It is sad to see this tradition lost forever in the countryside. Over the last few years many of the bogs have been planted with trees under European law. The bogs are now preserved for wild life. Unfortunately, bogs that have been planted are destroyed as wildlife sanctuaries. If planting continues many species of birds like the corncrake, skylark and the hen harrier could become extinct.

In the past David Belamy warned the Irish Wildlife Trust about the possibility of our native bogs being destroyed by Bord na Móna's turf-cutting industry. Now that private individuals are banned from slán cutting, I hope that the same restrictions will apply to Bord na Móna. I also hope that tree planting in the bogs will end so that our wildlife can have a natural habitat.

*By Tommy*

## **My fiftieth birthday celebrations**

My brother and sisters gave me a party on my fiftieth birthday. They brought me to the West County Hotel for a meal at night.

We had a four course meal. I started with vegetable soup which was delicious. For the main course I had chicken kiev with carrots, parsnips, mashed potatoes and gravy on the side. For dessert I had strawberry jelly and vanilla ice cream. The waitress brought in a beautiful iced cake with fifty candles lighting on it. I blew out the candles and then I cut it. The waitress cut a piece for everyone which we all enjoyed with our tea.

I got a lot of wonderful gifts and cards with fiftieth birthday wishes. It is hard to believe that I am fifty years old! I was happy that night.

At the end of the meal we went into the bar to hear Muriel O'Connor who was singing there that night. It was a very good night and I enjoyed it.

*By Eileen*

## **My work in construction**

The work is very hard in my job, but the pay is good. The work that I am doing is called shuttering.

Shuttering is put up and concrete is poured in between the shutters and there are steel bars put into the concrete. When the concrete is set the shutters are taken off and you are left with a concrete wall.

*By Declan*

## **Celebrations in our house**

This Saturday on May 3rd my son Thomas is getting married to Síla, and it is a very good reason for a celebration. We are very busy getting their new house ready for them at the moment. The buildup to the wedding is starting with Maria and her family coming tomorrow and on this Friday thirteen members of my family are coming from London. So there is a lot of excitement about and a lot of reasons for the celebrations.

It will be a big wedding, with over 200 people coming and more for the evening do. My brother is coming from America on Wednesday, and then he has to go to Kerry to pick up his clothes for the wedding. Everyone will be excited about meeting each other. Last time we were all together was three years ago for another wedding.

The wedding is in the church in Lissycasey and Síla's cousin is the priest, who will marry them. There will be three priests altogether and the church will be beautiful, especially if the sun shines through the stained-glass windows. Afterwards, the reception will be in the West County Hotel. It has beautiful gardens for the photographs. The celebrations are lovely to get everyone together and talk about the old times. Sadly, one of my brothers can't make it as he is too ill. So he and his family will be greatly missed, but I know that he will wish us all well. I hope we will have many more celebrations to look forward to.

*By Sheila*

## **My holidays**

I was on holidays in Lanzarote before last Christmas and it was great. I stayed in an apartment and it had a lovely pool, where you could lie out beside it on a sun bed. When it got very hot I used to jump in and swim for a while.

I'm a great swimmer and I've won medals in America and Scotland. I'm also a member of the Shannon Taekwondo Club. For the last six months I have been practicing twice a week which keeps me very fit. I have a yellow belt in Taekwondo and my goal is to get a green belt.

*By Margaret*

## **The pottery area**

I work in the pottery area in the Brothers of Charity Workshop with Paddy, Gregory, David D., Elaine, Gerard, David McG., and Pat.

I sit at the potters' wheel and pour in water to make the clay mixture as the wheel revolves, until the mixture is solid enough to be moulded into different shapes.

We make mugs, ashtrays, plates, jugs etc. These are then left on a shelf and covered with plastic to dry out. They are then dipped in a mixture to glaze them and left back on the shelf again until they are ready for decorating. I love seeing the items on display when we finish.

*By Danny*

## Looking Back

The pain, hurt, grief and the tears,  
Closed doors, no lights, no telling,  
The whispers, the creaking steps on the stairs,  
The cracking of bones, the grinding of teeth,  
The cries for help by the bed,  
The country walks, the family trips  
All so happy, it was said.

A funny man always a joke,  
A pure gentleman he was known,  
A gifted man, could do anything, he could.  
Truly an artistic man at heart,  
Although I hate to admit it,  
Sometimes in that house was good craic.  
Now years later all filled with pain,  
For the life, that we had then was all lies and betrayal.  
We were denied the right to grow up without shame,  
Our emotions were poisoned with secrecy and blame,  
Why did our father make us feel shame?

Many years have come and gone, still I feel the pain,  
Hiding in my corner, in my head he still remains.  
Now I feel it at its end, one more hurdle to pass,  
One day I will be myself, free from you at last.  
You could have made a good Dad, if you didn't ruin that  
chance.  
But tough Daddy, you don't get a second chance.  
So go on, sit at the counter, and order another round,  
You're a pure gentleman Daddy,  
You're a gas man, you're sound.

*By Anne*



## **The broken shaft up the mountain**

One Sunday when I was young, my sisters came home from Mass and told us to go back to the neighbour's house. When we arrived they were waiting for us. Then we went to the marquee and took some ice-cream. We headed up the mountain and found a pony. Then we found a pony car. We tackled the pony onto the car and off we went.

We headed towards High Street. In we went to a house to find out what time it was. On our way back from the house disaster struck. Our pony car got turned and we all fell off. We then discovered that the pony car was in a mess. We had to pull the car down the road with one shaft missing and my brother had to bring the pony. Two of the boys went to the shop with the little money we had to buy some nails. When they returned from the shop we tried to fix the shaft. We headed for the neighbour's house. On our way we met a man who took the pony and car from us. After we had eaten at the neighbour's house we went home and went to bed very quiet.

The following morning we went to school and after a while the teacher called me up. She asked me where was I the day before and I said "I was at home." She said "you were not. Do you know that there was a man nearly killed coming to the creamery this morning over you." We were very worried and told her what happened. I was glad it did not go any further and my parents were not told.

*By Tommy*

## **Pope John Paul II**

I like Pope John Paul II and I like reading books about him. In my computer class I sometimes look for information about him on the Internet.

He was born in Wadowice, a small town near Krakow in 1920 and his name as a boy was Karol Jozef Wojtyla. He was ordained as a priest in 1946 and became Pope in 1978.

Pope John Paul II came to Ireland in 1979. He came to Dublin Airport on an Aer Lingus jumbo jet. He visited Knock, Galway, Limerick, Drogheda and Dublin's Phoenix Park. He died on April 2<sup>nd</sup> 2005, and was buried on April 8<sup>th</sup>. I think he was a good person and so did many others, because over three million pilgrims visited Rome to pay their respects to his remains. The new Pope is called Pope Benedict the 16<sup>th</sup>.

*By Kenneth*

## **My family**

My name is Tanya and I am from Belarus. I am an interior designer and I like this job. I came to Ireland two years ago. My husband's name is Vitaly and he has been in Ireland for five years. We have two children, a son and a daughter. My daughter's name is Nicole, she is four years old and is interested in art. My son's name is Max. He is fifteen years old and wants to be a doctor. At weekends, we like to travel and we have visited many beautiful places. I am very happy with my family.

*By Tanya*

## **Dyslexia**

I live in Ennis, I have four lovely kids. My oldest son has severe dyslexia. He has always had problems with learning and he had a psychological assessment when he was in first class. At that time he presented with a low average of intellectual ability with difficulties in reading and maths.

He gets a lot of help from school. They are great with him. It was very hard for the both of us. I thought I was going mad. I dreaded doing homework. He would read everything backwards; write backwards and he could not remember anything we had done ten minutes ago.

I thought it couldn't get any worse than that, but I was wrong. This year I found out that because my son was lower than average he was not entitled to any help. If he was average he would get all the help he needed, I could not understand this. I thought that he should get all the help he needed because he was lower than average. I wasn't going to accept this. I met with the school and told them how I felt, they told me that my son wasn't going to be assessed because he wouldn't benefit from it. I told them it wasn't good enough and that my son had a right to learn and I wasn't going to give up on him. They were right there with me. They were fighting for him with me all the way. I was so glad to hear that the school got my son a new assessment and that we would see where we would go from there.

After the assessment we met the psychologist and we got great news. My son was better than we thought and he was entitled to loads of help. He would not be able to learn normally, he would need individual resource teaching, and would need to learn through assistive technology.

He has a long road ahead of him and hopefully he will be able to benefit from it. As a mother I could not understand what was happening with my son. If I knew then what I know now the last few years would have been a lot easier for both of us. I don't think anyone can understand what a child with

dyslexia sees, the frustration and feeling different from their classmates. But to me my son is perfect and I wouldn't change him for anything in the world. I love him for who he is and not for what he can and can't do.

*By Stacy*

## **Living in the country**

I grew up in the country on a farm. When we got our school holidays my brothers and I would be out working hard on the farm, saving the hay, which I did not like, or picking the potatoes, cleaning the vegetables in the garden and pulling all the weeds out that grew around them that stopped the plants growing.

I started working in a shop and meeting all the people that came in. I met my husband, Danny, out at a dance in Kilkee and we got married and had two boys. Sadly, my husband passed away, and I have been a widow for over 20 years. One of my boys is working in America and the other is here living near me.

I was delighted when I got away from the farm and went working and made my own money. The country has changed so much since then, all the old houses are gone now and some new ones built. I'm not sorry that I left the country, as I like the town, and it's nice and quiet where I live. My neighbours are all very nice, especially one neighbour who is very good to me. I visit my cousins on and off in the country and I like it for the chat, the tea and the brown bread. I would not like to go back to live in the country again as I would find it too lonesome on my own.

*By Patricia*

## **The museum**

In March we had a visit from John Rattigan, who works in the Ennis Museum as a curator.

He brought a lot of interesting things, for example, an old fashioned phone with a circular dial on the front and you used your finger to dial a number. He also had an old policeman's helmet, a hand baton and handcuffs which he let us try out. It was great fun. He had an old stamping machine used by companies to put the name of their company on the paper such as bills and letters.

He told us how butter was made in the old days and showed us butter pats for rolling and shaping the butter. He also had an imprinting design machine, called a pound-press for decorating the butter before selling it in the shops or markets.

He invited us all to visit Ennis Museum and we are going soon. We are all looking forward to it.

*By Martina, Connie, David McG., David C.  
and Barry*

## **Life in Ireland**

My name is Anna and I am from Poland. I read a book about Ireland and it fascinated me. It seemed to me to be a beautiful green country. Irish people seemed lovely and friendly and Ireland's history was difficult like in my country.

Today things are much better here in Ireland, and life is getting better in Poland so I am optimistic for the future. Here I live with my husband and daughter. Our life in Ireland is full of happiness and we hope to stay here for a long time.

*By Anna*

## **My favourite poem**

I learned this poem when I was in school. I want to share it with you because it is my favourite poem.

*The Creator* by Cecil Francis Alexander (1818-1895)

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

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

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

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

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

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

*By Theresa*



## **The Builders by Maeve Binchy**

I read this good book last month. It held my interest for most of the time. Some of the builders were kind to Nan Ryan in the house next door. She was kind to Derek and made tea and scones for him. I think Maeve gave it a poor ending which I did not like.

One character I liked was Gerry and there was one I didn't like who was trying to line his own pockets with the money.

*By Frank*

## **About me**

My name is Ronan and I live in Sixmilebridge Co. Clare. I go out every Friday night in Shannon with Trish and the lads. My favourite band is *Atomic Kitten*.

Hurling is my favourite sport and I think Sixmilebridge are the best team ever. Davy Fitzgerald is the goalie. He used to be the goalie for Clare for a long time. He won two all Ireland medals with the Clare team in the 1990s.

I love soccer as well and I have soccer training in Ennis every Monday. We went on a trip to Manchester United in March this year and I got my photo taken beside the FA League Cup which they won this year. I bought a Man United soccer top in the Museum shop and after that we watched a live soccer match.

I like going to classes in the VEC. I can go on the internet and look up all the latest news about hurling and soccer.

*By Ronan*

## **Sand of a dreamer**

Strolling through the sand, at twilight by the sea,  
This was a dream that once haunted me.  
Friends all around me, just having fun,  
When suddenly I realise, my voice is now gone.  
The golden sand beneath my feet,  
Has now turned against me.

From my haven earth, struggling in vain,  
As it pulls me down so deep.  
My screams they are pointless now,  
For my voice will not speak.  
Through my silent screams, my cries for help,  
Which nobody can hear.  
Try to be brave and shed my last tear.

Clinging for life that I now do treasure,  
Now well aware that all life is measured.  
Just as I draw my last breath  
Say goodbye to the world with regret.  
But willing to accept that this was my time  
Slip into death's eternity, I wake up and it's nine.

*By Anne*

## **My house in Ennis**

My house isn't new. There are three bedrooms and three bathrooms. I live in Ennis but I have no work here. My house has one little garden so I like it. Yes, I like where I live because it is very interesting. I think it is good for my life and my family and best for my children.

*By Gaetano*

## **Behind the scenes**

On stage the glamour and the glitz is seen by the public. The colour of the costumes, the scenery, the makeup of the actors all go to make a stage presentation enjoyable for the audience. But, with a capital B, do they realise what goes on backstage? I wonder?

It takes about four months to get a musical together. A meeting is held in September, to be told what show has been chosen and the date for the commencement of rehearsals is decided. The usual crowd turn up and hopefully new faces too. It is very difficult to get men to join. Are they shy? Can't they sing? Or is it that they don't want to make the long commitment? As a commitment it is.

The first musical rehearsal is called. Music introduced, maybe a video of the show is shown or a video of another society doing the show. The next week rehearsals begin in earnest. Sopranos, altos, tenors, basses are all sorted into groups and singing begins. Each group learns their lines and each group sings a different tune, which can make it difficult for some people. Eventually it all comes together and we are all singing from the same hymn sheet, as it were. Then actions and movements have to be put to the music. This can be very funny at times, especially in the beginning as nobody is sure what they are doing. But with a lot of hard work and concentration and remembering what you have been told to do, the show begins to take on some sort of shape. This stage is very hard work and ever so long as everything is done over and over and over again until everyone has learnt it. Remembering it, now that is another story altogether! But eventually everybody has the movement and remembers it with a fair amount of private practice. Now the non-singing sections of the show are added and the story of the show comes alive. Sitting and waiting to go on stage is all part and parcel of the show. It can be boring, but a good book, knitting or card-playing can make the time pass quickly.

The dress rehearsal is coming up and all costumes are given out. A big job as some fit and some don't. So a lot of to-ing and fro-ing with the company supplying the outfits goes on. To keep costs down costumes can be supplied from home but they have to be passed by the wardrobe mistress.

At last makeup is applied, costumes on and we are ready for the opening night. Tensions are running high and tempers' are on edge, but as the opening number is struck up by the orchestra, 'break a leg!' is wished all around, the curtain opens and away we go. Sitting around and waiting around still goes on, so the cards, books and knitting are good nerve soothers.

Quick changes can be nerve-racking and modesty goes out the window. The dresser is always helpful but not always available. Changing on the side of the stage is common with all stages of undress on show, but nobody takes any notice. Shyness can't be a feature as you'd never get on stage with taking time to preserve your modesty.

All kinds of jokes are played with the characters on stage, which can be very funny, but can backfire. The backstage crew is very helpful and excellent at their jobs but they can be very mischievous and play jokes on everybody. It is always taken with good spirit, as all people on stage, backstage, and crews of all kinds are dependent on each other and so have to trust each other completely. If young people are involved, this can be very helpful in character building.

As the show comes to an end, people become very sad as the craic has been mighty. That and the after-show party help to lighten the spirits and everybody is already looking forward to the next year's production.

*By Jackie*

## **My Life**

My life as a child was good. I have a sister and also twin brothers. We all get on well together. When I started school I was five year's old. School life was good. I made friends, but one day at school, one of my friends found out she had cancer. It was when she was in fourth class and she died in fifth class. She was missed by all of us. She was the best friend I ever had.

We all lived together with my mother and father and then it all changed. My father left when I was five, my sister was six and the twins were two years old. He still comes back to see us now and then, but it was twenty-eight years since he left. My mother took care of all four of us. She sent us to school and had to bring up four children on her own. She was the best mother ever. I would never change that.

Now I am older I live with my daughter and my boyfriend here in Newmarket. We are all very happy together. My life has changed a lot since then. Last year, my father came back at Christmas for a visit. It was good to see him but it is not the same when he leaves.

We all live in the same area. My sister has three children and my brother has one. Our family get on well together. We have managed on our own and that is about my life!

*By Jacqueline*

## **Swimming**

I like to go swimming on a Thursday with Marion. We have fun in the pool. I like to go swimming when I go on holidays too. Swimming is good exercise.

*By Eilish*

## **Swimming in the sunshine**

I love going on holidays. My family and I go to Spain nearly every year. I like Spain, the sun shines nearly all the time. I have to use factor 40 sun cream to prevent my skin burning.

Last February for the mid-term break, we went to Malaga. It was our best holiday so far. When we left Shannon airport it was wet, windy and cold. In Malaga, the sun was shining; the sky and water were blue.

I often go swimming in the pool here in Ennis but the pool in Malaga was outdoors in the blazing sunshine. Even though I like the pool in Ennis, it is nothing like swimming outdoors in the sun.

On holidays we eat out in restaurants nearly all the time. It gives Mum a break from cooking and we eat different food. Paella is really nice; we don't cook that at home. It wouldn't taste the same anyway if we ate it in Ireland – it's a real holiday dish.

Even though I like Spain very much I wouldn't like to live anywhere else but Ireland. Going on holidays is a bit like a lovely dream. If I lived in Spain all the time that dream would be gone.

*By Clíodhna*



## **My Easter holidays**

I got my Easter holidays on Holy Thursday from work for five days and I had a great time. I went for a drive with my brother Kevin on Easter Saturday to Limerick City for the day. We went to the Crescent Shopping Centre, which is a favourite place of mine for shopping. Unfortunately it was closed all day. We went there again on Easter Monday and it was packed all day with people. You could not get a place to park your car out there at half past three in the day. I had a cup of coffee with cream because I was thirsty for it all day. I always enjoy eating out or just having a coffee and a bun.

*By Helena*

## **Tea please**

Inside, at last, shivering, shaking,  
Cold and miserable  
Tea please, Anessa!  
Do eastern Europeans drink tea?

The golden amber flowed from scalded pot  
Glorious infusion of leaves from afar,  
India, China, Ceylon, Oh! What matter!  
Milk, a little sugar if you like. Joy!

The satisfaction of that first sip  
Warming hands on steaming cup,  
Relax; slow down, deep sigh, comfort  
Friendship, chat, love and laughter.

*By Maura*

## **My dear little country - Cameroon**

I am Youmen, and I'm from Cameroon - my dear little country in West Africa - a country of much cultural diversity with a population of fourteen million people.

My grandmother was born in 1891 in the Bamileke district in my country. She grew up with traditional culture and did not go to school. She was really a stereotype of my village. At fourteen years of age, she met and married my grandfather, who introduced her to a secret community. He was a king of my village, and he had many wives and he fathered a hundred and twenty children. My Grandmother had nine children before she died and she was very attached to her family.

I didn't know the importance of the Totem when I was a small boy in my village in the West Country. In the early morning I imagined I would hear the cat singing, but not crying, then he would knock on the door and run away and repeat the same movement while calling "meow, meow." My grandmother used to say "that is the sound of bad news in my family or my village."

The tradition of the Totem is similar to the Irish tradition of the Banshee. In my village the Totem is the traditional or magic animal which protects and takes care of my village, my family and the chief. Here the Totem was a spiritual black cat. He walks alone in the night and keeps a good relationship with good persons. The Totem keeps all traditional power, and if he dies, then the person should die as well. Nobody can see or touch it, and no one gets more power than the Totem. Like the Banshee, when death is near the Totem comes to sing. This is what my Grandmother said to my Uncle the night he died. She used to say always to me, "Don't forget to keep meaning in your life, you are the blood of this village, you must get the Totem to protect your future (your child, husband, and your life)."

Now I live in Ireland, I often think of my village, my grandmother, and my family and I remember her words about keeping meaning in my life. I think she was a wise woman. I miss my nice village in my dear little country in West Africa.

*By Youmen*

## Seasons

Summer  
Hot fresh  
Swimming chirping dancing  
Blue skies festivals *falling* leaves slackness fire  
Sneezing freezing fading  
Damp frosty  
Winter

*By Gerard*

Winter  
Cold dark  
Raining sneezing shivering  
Ice frost *birdsong* festivals Willie Clancy  
Playing music dancing growing  
Sunny bright  
Summer

*By Niall*

## **Patch the adventurous dog**

Patch was bored one day. He sat looking out of the window at a dull, grey, drizzly day. There was no one around to take him for a walk and the cat was no fun anymore as he was too old to play. So Patch decided to go on an adventure.

Patch jumped out the window and ran up through the fields and he kept running until he got to the top of the hill. When he got to the top he stopped and put his paws on top of the wall and looked around. Patch thought to himself, will I keep going or will I turn back. He had never been so far away from his home. He was starting to get hungry so he decided to keep going on his adventure.

When Patch got to the other side of the hill he saw lots of houses, and cars driving past. Patch started to get frightened because he had never seen so many cars passing him all at once.

Patch turned away from the road and ran towards a house that he had seen at the side of the road. Patch really liked this house because it looked just like his own house. Patch ran into the garden and started to bark. An old man opened the front door and saw Patch. Then the man said to Patch, "what's all the barking for, are you lost?" So the man brought Patch inside and gave him something to eat and the man looked at Patch's collar to see who his owner was. So the man brought Patch back to his owner and Patch's owner thanked the old man for bringing back his dog. The two men became friends.

*By Frances*

## **Soccer blitz**

Last Saturday I went to Limerick to play soccer for Ennis Brothers of Charity. The tournament was called Soccer Blitz. We reached the final and beat the Waterford B team by 4 goals to 2. I scored all four goals.

*By Thomas*

## **Treasured memories**

When I was young, I used to love going to my granny's house every Sunday. I used to get very excited about going. We would leave the house after 12 noon. It took an hour or more to get there.

When we got there my Granny and Granddad would be at the door to greet us. We used to give them both a hug and go inside. When inside we would tell them all our news, and how things were for us. I used to talk to my Gran about things that made me sad. I never had a dad in my life and it hurt me, so I would talk to her. After we had a bite to eat, we would go to the barn and run around the place. There was a river nearby and when it was nice and sunny we would put our feet in.

My cousins lived up the road a bit. We would go up through the field to them. They had swings there. I loved to go on them. I felt so free, when I was there and loved being with my cousins. We were very close.

Now that I am an adult, I still have many fond memories of going to my granny's. The house was sold two years ago and I found it sad, but I will always have my treasured memories.

*By Siobhan*

## **Reading and writing**

I went back to reading and writing class, I am delighted I came back to the classes. I was not able to write a letter or I was not able to read a paper, I came good after a while. I come to the classes once a week and now I can read and also I am able to write.

*By Tony*

## **Kazakhstan**

Autumn is the best time in Kazakhstan, and the best place to be in Kazakhstan is the Green Market in the centre of Almaty.

Life begins very early each morning when farmers bring their produce. Vegetables are ripe and do not need to be cooked. All the fruits are big and ripe and very tasty. Water melons are huge, black and green striped basketballs that sometimes weigh 20 kg.

Bright yellow melons drip like honey when you cut them open. Peaches, plums, apricots and grapes are sold in buckets. Almaty in my language means grandfather of apples and apples of every colour, shape and size are heaped in piles every where.

Strawberries, raspberries, cherries and blackberries are also sold in buckets to housewives who bring them home to make jams. People leave the Green Market with bags and sacks filled with vegetables and fruit grown by local farmers, but the best thing about autumn in Kazakhstan is the price, everything is so cheap.

*By Ramash*



## **My favourite holiday**

My favourite holiday was when I went to Spain with some of my family. I went there for two weeks. I really enjoyed it because I got to spend a lot of time with my family. It was a really good holiday because the weather was lovely and hot all the time.

I got to make a lot of new friends while we were on holidays. I think it's really nice to get to know new people.

What I really liked most about my holiday was lying down by the pool taking the sun for a few hours. I also really liked going shopping with some of my cousins. It was nice because we got to spend a few hours together on our own. My cousins and I would go for something to eat when we had finished shopping.

We would go back to the apartment and change our clothes and we would head out to the pub for some entertainment. It was really good because we all had a laugh. Then we would head off to the discos at about eleven o'clock.

The last week I went shopping again to get presents for my family and friends at home.

The part I didn't like about the holiday was when our two weeks were up. I knew it was time for us to come home to the bad weather. I am going to go to Spain again for the lovely weather. I love the sun because in the hot weather I always get a lovely tan.

*By Elizabeth*

## Theory test

On the first of January 2008, one of my new year's resolutions was to pass my theory test and start my driving lessons. I practiced my theory test every Tuesday with the support of my tutor, Linda. I found it very difficult at the start; there was a lot to take in. I sent off for my test in February and got my test date for the 25<sup>th</sup> of April at 3.30 p.m. in Ennis.

I panicked when the letter arrived. I didn't feel ready. I felt insecure and thought I would surely fail. I felt sick and worried about the deadline.

We worked hard on the theory. Reading the book was helpful but I found practicing the test on the computer was easier than reading the book, because you could go back over the questions again and see where you went wrong.

I really didn't believe that this support was there, but the Clare Reading & Writing Scheme offered me support, guidance and an individual training plan tailored to suit me. It was just what I needed and I am really glad I was offered this help and support because I went on to pass my test first time. I got 39 out of 40 on the actual theory test. Yahoo!

I was able to turn a negative into a positive and if I can do that anyone can. You just have to believe in yourself and get the right help and support. There are services out there to help you so don't be afraid. Take the first step and give it a go.

*By Margaret*

## **The homeless boy**

Paddy sat staring blankly at the passers by, huddling into his sleeping bag. No one looked at him, no one noticed him, and no one cared about him. How did he end up here he asked himself?

Paddy remembered his family. His mother was nice and kind and loved her children but she had to throw Paddy out because he got in with the wrong crowd. So now Paddy is homeless and no one cares about him anymore. He is living on the streets in the cold. He is dirty and has no money. He has no food and he is hungry. He decided to go and find a shelter for homeless people, so he could get some food and get warm. But when he got to the shelter, it was full. He headed for the bus stop because he would always get an empty bus shelter for the day but at night he'd have to look for a doorway or alleyway to sleep in.

At the bus stop shelter he saw a bus headed for his home town. He looked sadly at it and wondered should he get on it. Will his family welcome him back or turn him away? He made his decision and packing up his few belongings, he made for the bus.

*By Nowell*

## **My house**

I live in a house in Ennis. It's old but very good. There are three rooms downstairs and there is one room upstairs. The TV is very big, so I like watching it in the living room. The kitchen is very small but that's no problem. One day I cook and the next day my friend cooks because I go to the pub. My garden is very long but thin. I like my house so I live in it.

*By Henryk*

## **My graduation**

Last October I graduated as a childcare worker with a Diploma. The graduation was held in U.L. Thankfully, all my family were there to see me graduate. I also met all my class mates at the graduation. As it was a special occasion we all got dressed up.

On my journey into Limerick I started getting nervous. As the evening drew nearer, I felt more excited. After a while everyone was called into the U.L. hall and then the co-ordinator called each student individually to collect their certificate. When it was my turn I felt very proud to be collecting my certificate after all my hard work over the past two years. Everyone clapped.

Afterwards my family queued up to have our photograph taken. As the graduation did not start till about 7.00 p.m. it was now getting late and we were all very hungry so we headed off to the restaurant where we had a lovely meal. We all enjoyed ourselves and continued to celebrate until all hours of the night.

I went to bed happy that night as I felt that I had reached my goal and was starting a new phase of my life. Happily everything has worked out well since then.

*By Jeananne*

## **Springtime**

Spring is late this year. The weather has been very cold. The buds are just appearing on the trees. It is too cold for the grass to grow. The farmers are late sowing their crops. I hope it gets milder soon. I like spring.

*By John O'D*

## Memories

Sunday morning, my First Holy Communion day. I was so excited at the prospect of getting all dressed up in my new finery. The night before I was put into a big aluminum bath in front of the fire and scrubbed with Lifebouy soap. Rags were put into my hair for ringlets. I was going to be lovely!

On the day of my Communion my Mam was in bed after having her womb removed, but I was too young to worry about her. So I had my little party in my Mam's bedroom. But first my dress had to be removed and the gold chain and cross had to go for safety reasons. Soon afterwards, I was all dressed up again and ready to be sent out to my uncle's house in Corbally for the cousins to have a look at me. My brother was given the job of escorting me, which he was very annoyed about. My little purse was getting quite heavy with all the half crowns, the six pence and three-penny pieces. But of course in those years we had no value in money. As we went from uncle to aunt in each house I was given lemonade and bread and jam, and of course something to put into the purse. On the way home I had to go behind the hedge to have a wee. However, I had a wonderful day and really enjoyed meeting my cousins. Back home my Mam took the money in the purse and gave me back a full shilling for myself. I was delighted.

Years later, when my brother, who was my escort on my Communion day, reached 60 years of age, we had a family dinner together. It was here that I discovered that my brother had bought a brand new fishing rod out of all the half-crowns that he had taken from my purse that day while I was relieving myself behind the hedge. Now I understand why he was so willing to mind my purse for me at that time!

*By Marie*

## **Pain**

So much pain  
In this world,  
Surviving life's game  
It can be so cold.

Getting through the day  
So much hurt,  
Just trying to accomplish my leaving cert.

When I look around  
Some people being sound,  
Just trying to get along  
In their hearts,  
Maybe it's not where they belong.

Keep your head up  
And keep smiling,  
If you don't,  
You can start dying.

*By Michael*

## **Manchester United**

My favourite football team is Manchester United. They are also called the Red Devils. The club was formed in 1878. The manager is Alex Ferguson. The team captain is Gary Neville. Their home ground is Old Trafford in Manchester. They wear red and white jerseys. My favourite player is Cristiano Ronaldo because he has the most skills. Someday I would like to go to Old Trafford to see them playing.

*By Richard*

## **A different experience**

November 2006 was a rough month for us. On the blessing of the graves, we decided to go out to the graveyard as my dad and brother are buried in Drumcliff Cemetery. After the graves we went to Dunnes Stores shopping centre for shopping. We returned to my house and put our dinner on. Then we went into the sitting room to watch TV.

About 5 minutes later my brother was screaming saying, "get out of the house quick it's on fire!" My Mam said, "go away you liar!" as my brother can be a bit of a blaggard. He said, "no Mam seriously I swear on Dad's grave." My Mam grabbed us all and ran out leaving the keys of the car in the house, I got the nerve to run back into the house as our car would have blocked the fire brigade's way. As I was running out the door I could hear a loud bang! My bedroom window was blown out; I cried so much just looking up as all my clothes, boots, trainers, make-up, jewellery, CD's and CD player etc. were in there.

My road was full of fire-brigades, ambulances, guards and people. It was like something you would see in a film. All my relatives started to arrive shocked at what had just happened. We stayed in my older sister's house that night, but she has her own family.

We left the following morning in search of a B&B, but due to the Fleadh Nua which was in town that weekend, every place was booked up. We drove for miles. Finally on the Lahinch road that evening we got a room for the night.

The following morning we were searching again. Finally, after another exhausting day of searching we got another room in a guest house out the Galway road for another night. The night after we had no luck and were forced to stay in the burnt house with no water, electricity or heating. It was a bad experience. The following night we got the Queen's Hotel for a week. It felt good!

We missed time at school when we were in the Queen's Hotel, me and my 5 younger siblings. I didn't concentrate much in school as I worried where we would stay when our time was up in the Queen's. Thankfully the Clare Inn Hotel had us for a week. It was difficult getting up so early for school. My Mam was under pressure making sure we got up early, had our uniforms ready and had us in school on time. We went back to the Queen's Hotel for another few days, then the West County Hotel for another night then the Clare Inn again for another week.

When finally the council gave us a house to use till our home was ready it felt like heaven! The end of January our home was ready. They didn't do a good job as we could still smell smoke. A year and a half later our home is doing well. It felt like we were going from post to pillar. It was a difficult time, but I will never forget the experience.

*By Melissa*

### **My summer holiday**

I look forward to going to Spain on holidays for two weeks with my family. I love walking on the beach and I like swimming. I love to relax for the two weeks. No house work and I love the shops and visiting the markets.

I love Spain because its beaches are so clean and the sky is so blue. After two weeks I look forward to coming home and seeing my cats and dogs again.

*By Mary*



## **My life in England**

It's kind of hard writing this in a book because it's kind of personal, but I feel it's a better way to get it out.

Back when I was younger, about 11, I was living at home with my alcoholic parents and my two brothers and one sister. My mother was basically dying, weighing six stone and my father was the only one keeping the family together. I remember a couple of times the social services would come round checking on us and looking into the cupboards to find no food was there. The social service worker went into the front room and saw beer cans all over the floor.

A few years later we were put into care and separated. That's when I got in trouble with the law and started smoking weed and got kicked out of school. After I came out of care I found that my mother had done a few years in rehab and had recovered. My father was still drinking.

Nowadays back in Ireland, my mother has been off the drink for about seven years and my father is still drinking back in England. I haven't seen my little brother and sister now in three to five years. But I'm looking forward to seeing them.

*By S.*

## **Jokes**

Why couldn't the two elephants go swimming?  
Because they only had one pair of trunks!

Why did you buy all those duck feathers?  
Because they were marked down!

*By Michael*

## **The brutal death of John Butcher**

Back in 1995 in Ireland when I was only a little boy, rumour had it that John Butcher was the most well known man for his land and cattle, but John Butcher received a brutal death.

It was early morning when John awoke from his bed with the noise of his cattle. He got up from bed, stuck on his wellingtons, took his stick and went out to see what the problem was. He walked about 15 minutes away from his small farm house to the field where his cows were kept. He opened the gate and entered the field.

John was stunned when he saw eight of his best cattle lying on the ground dead and bloody. He looked around and saw four cows walking up the fields towards the cliffs. He rushed up to try and hunt them back but when he reached them he noticed something very strange about his only bull. His eyes were red and his mouth was covered in blood.

John slowly moved back in fear of the bull. The bull couldn't keep his eyes off of John. John started to run towards the gate but the bull stormed after him. Just before John got to the gate the possessed bull rammed his horns into John and pushed him against the gate. John screamed for his eldest son to come and help. The bull threw John to the ground and then walked away. John tried to climb over the gate but the bull saw him and stormed back towards John again and stuck his horns into John so hard that his son back at the house awoke and heard his father's screams. John's eldest son rushed out of bed got the shotgun and ran towards his father's screams.

When the boy got to the field he saw his father on the ground and the bull eating his remains. He loaded the gun and shot the bull in the side. The bull looked up and ran towards the boy roaring. He fired a second shot and hit the bull in the head, he stumbled but the bull kept running. The boy loaded the empty shotgun with two new bullets. He

aimed the gun well and shot the bull in the head for the second time. The bull went down but he wasn't dead.

The boy went over and kneeled down beside his father and started to cry. Suddenly the possessed bull rose up and walked slowly in pain towards the boy. The boy looked into the bulls red, frightening eyes, picked up the shotgun and shot the bull for the last time. The next day a few men from the village came up and threw the bull off the cliff into the water, the bull was never seen again.

That boy was me, James Peterson Butcher, son of the most well known man in Ireland, John Butcher!

*By Aaron*

## **About adventurers**

My name is Hedi. I'm from Germany and I have lived in Ireland since December 2007, because my husband got a job in Ennis. We rent a house in Tulla. I left my whole big family in Germany. They are happy about our emigration to Ireland, because they can visit us often. But I'm not the only one in our family who has gone to another country.

Aunt Helma and her husband Horst are also German, but they immigrated 45 years ago to Canada. They lived there in British Columbia in a small town called Prince George. Uncle Horst was the boss in a timber factory, Aunt Helma was a housewife. Now they are pensioners. They have three daughters and four grandchildren. From time to time they visit their old home town in Germany.

*By Hedi*

## **Living in Ireland**

My name is Mike, and I'm German. I came to Ireland in October 2007, because I got a good job here. In Germany nobody had a job for me. I knew many things about Ireland, because I was on holiday here many times.

Now I live in a lovely house in Tulla. It's not so old and it's a big house with central heating. There are three bedrooms, and there is a large kitchen with dining area, an office, a hall and a living room with an open fireplace. Also there is a bathroom and utility room. There is a large garden in front of the house, a terrace and a lawn in the rear. There is a garage in the rear too. Around the site there are meadows, with cattle. I live there with my wife Hedi.

I love the house because it is large, without stairs, and I can go into the garden whenever I want.

*By Michael*

## **A visit from my sister**

My sister came from Boston USA for Easter with her husband and son. I had not seen her for 20 years as she had not come home in all that time. It was lovely to see her and we had a lot of catching up to do. We had to get to know each other again. She brought me a beautiful present. Sadly, she had to return to Boston and she was lonely leaving. Hopefully it will not be as long until she comes again. We were all very lonely.

*By Noreen*

## **My grandmother**

My grandmother passed away last month. She was 97 years of age. She lived in Killorglin, Co. Kerry all her life. My grandfather, her husband, had a farm and she helped out on the farm and reared five children at the same time.

I never saw either of them drive a car. I remember seeing them many years ago in a horse and trap. That was a long time ago when I was younger. There are not many horses and traps around now.

My grandfather died in 1985. Their son, my uncle, stayed at home with my grandmother and he lived in much the same way as his parents had, nothing changed much. He is in his sixties now and living in the house on his own. He never married. I didn't see my grandmother that often but I'm sad that she passed away. She worked hard all her life.

*By Patrick*

## **Visit to a cousin**

We went to Galway to visit our cousin Marie, her husband Brian and their two children at Easter time. We went by bus and our cousin picked us up at the station. Her house is by the sea and we loved it there. We went out to eat and we also went shopping and played with the children. They have hens and ducks and we had fresh eggs every morning. We really enjoyed our time in Galway.

*By Susie and Geraldine*

## **Group trip**

It was a lovely sunny day and we were going on a trip to Kerry. We were going paintball shooting. We left at 9.00 a.m. and we went across on the ferry. When we got to Kerry we had to travel to Tralee. We got there around 11.00 a.m.

We had to listen to the man before we were allowed to start. We had to learn the rules and about the equipment. When he was finished, everyone headed into a big field. We had great fun shooting everyone. We had around two hours to enjoy the game. It started to rain and it was getting very messy.

We were ready to go, so we said thanks and we were on the bus to go back. We stopped to get something to eat. When we were all finished we headed back to the bus and we were on our way to the ferry.

We arrived home around 6.30 p.m. and I really enjoyed the day out with the group. We had a really good day.

*By Sarah*

## **My fear of falling**

Years ago I went to the Burren with my school for two nights and I had to climb a cliff. After that I had to abseil down it and I just couldn't do it. I had safety stuff on me and I still couldn't climb down it. It was too scary for me! I had a great time at the Burren after all that hassle. We walked up a big hill and down it again, we played games and had nice food. I had a great time at the Burren, apart from the climbing!

*By Tracy*

## Leaving home

I left home at 18 years of age, because I got married to my childhood sweetheart. We had a quiet wedding because my Mum had passed away and my father had gone to America. I married in the church in Carrigaholt and we had a small reception at home. I felt a bit lonesome after my parents, but I didn't mind leaving home at that time. Life after that was fairly hard, working on the farm and looking after the house. The children came along, and that was a full-time job between the inside and the outside. All my eleven children were born in Kilkee and at that time no one was around to help me. Looking after the children was a full-time job. As soon as the child was born, they would be baptized. There were no disposable nappies, so you had to wash everything from the basket in the bucket. No machines, everything had to be done by hand. I made some of their clothes, but we got plenty of parcels from England and America for the children.

On the farm we all worked together. Everything was done by hand, again no machinery to help you. As my children grew up they started to make their own way. One by one they left to go to America and England. I was very lonesome after the first daughter leaving, but then you have to get used to it. They had to go and make their own way because money was scarce at that time. Now they all have done well for themselves and they are living their own lives. I live on my own in Kilkee, but I miss the house being full of people and life. But you get used to it, although it can be very lonely. I like going to the Active Age group for the company and the chat with friends.

*By Kathleen*

## **Súgan chair**

The thrashing was a big day for farmers in the fifties. It was autumn, end of summer and moving towards winter. The thresher would arrive early in the morning, about 8.00 a.m. and then all the neighbours would come to help.

My mother would prepare all the food the day before – scones, apple tarts, or apple-cakes as she would call them, like loaves with apple in the middle. They were lovely! She would also kill and prepare chickens and maybe a duck or two and a fletch of bacon. Everything would be cooked in the oven beside the fire – no fancy cookers in those days! The loaves and scones cooked the day before were covered with a white cloth, which was made from flour bags. The flour came in white bags stamped with the maker's name. So when the bags were empty they were washed in cold water first, and then boiled in a big pot hanging over the fire on a crane, with washing soda. They were then rinsed and spread out to dry on a hedge to get them really white. I don't know what the hedge was, but it was a special one that my mother said got the bags extra white. When you had enough, four of the bags were opened, hand-stitched together and starched to make sheets. Those were hard times.

The bacon from your own pig and cabbage came from your haggart (a kitchen garden near your house) was cooked in a pot hanging over the fire. We hated that haggart when we were young because in cold weather we had to pick vegetables on frosty days to take in for the dinner. No picking them the night before as they wouldn't be fresh enough!

When the thresher started up it would make a lot of noise so my brother and I would run out to see it. When the sheaves of wheat were put into the thresher lots of mice would jump out of the stacks. To this day I hate mice! There were bags attached to the back of the thrasher and the corn would flow into the bags. The straw came out of another chute. This



straw was very important as it was used later to make the súgan for the seat of the kitchen chairs.

The wheat was taken to the mill to make flour and feed for the cattle. The flour was coarse, brown or white as the miller could separate the grain. Oats were used to make brown flour whereas wheat made white flour. These two grain were the main ingredient for homemade bread. Fields of corn were compulsory in those days – it was the law.

My father made all our chairs. When a tree was getting too old he would cut it down. He would keep the good wood to make his chairs and the rest was used to keep the home fire burning with the turf he cut from his own bog. All the farmers had their own bogs back then. To replace the tree he had cut down he had a sheltered area and he planted conkers in the ground about 36 inches apart for new trees. It took two years before they even looked like a miniature tree but he was very patient. The compost he used was farmyard manure. It worked and they eventually became trees.

My father wasn't even related to a carpenter and on your maddest day ever you wouldn't put him building a house. But he made chairs, armchairs, even rocking chairs and planed them as smooth as a professional. Patience was his strong point – the neighbours called him a 'cool man'.

Well, the chairs needed seats so súgan had to be made for these. So this is where the straw came into use. My father first made a twisting bow. A sally rod was found as it could twist to form a handle and a u-shape. A cord was put around the u-shape about two inches from the end being used to hole the straw. He made a loop with the straw which he fitted into the two inch space in the twisting bow. He would sit in the barn and somebody would have to walk backwards twisting the bow. My brother would start and as it was so monotonous, he would be replaced by my other brother. Then it would be my turn and I could get nobody to replace me as my brothers were good runners and of course they had to train, especially if twisting straw was on the menu! The

balls of straw were ready for the chairs, but as they didn't last very long it was an on-going process. It was a job that had to be repeated again and again.

The best news I ever got was when my mother was in town one day and she needed something in the hardware shop. She spotted some half-inch twine in a few different colours and she took it home with her for the chairs to match the curtains. I was delighted but my father always maintained it wasn't as warm as the real súgan. But, it lasted a lot longer than the straw. My mother always had a way of saving the day!

*By Maureen*

## **What I enjoy**

I love coming to work in the kitchen of the Brothers of Charity workshop in Ennis. It is a beautiful, clean, shiny, spacious kitchen.

My job is to make the tea and coffee for the morning, lunch and afternoon breaks. More people drink tea than those who drink coffee at work.

Other things I enjoy are walking and bowling. The weather doesn't bother me, so I walk most days of the week.

I sometimes go to the cinema, but I enjoy watching TV at home as well, or just flicking through magazines to see all the glamour and style of the celebrities.

*By Edel*

## About Mary

My name is Mary. I attend the Brothers of Charity workshop in Ennis. I mainly work in reception. My duties in reception include answering the phone, taking messages and I also remind people to sign in and out on the visitors' book.

I also do cookery every Wednesday and this week I made a sponge cake for my brother for his birthday. We share the same birthday but I am one year older than him.

At the moment I am staying in Elm Park (respite) and Emer the houseparent is going to take me out to celebrate my birthday. I will be going home to my own family tomorrow evening, and my brother and I will celebrate our birthdays together.

*By Mary*

## Learning English

My name is Jurgita. I am from Lithuania. I came to Ireland two years ago. I came with my family, my husband and my daughter.

My daughter goes to school. She likes school, because she can play with her friends at school and she can learn English. After school my daughter really likes to watch TV. On the TV she can watch really good programmes for children, but in Lithuania there aren't good programmes for children.

I think we will go back to Lithuania after 1 year. I want my daughter to start 1<sup>st</sup> class in Lithuania, when she is 7 years old.

*By Jurgita*

## **My week**

I have a very busy week. I work, go to classes and do activities like yoga. Here is an idea of what my week is like.

**Mondays:** I work in a crèche with the babies. I like this job. I start at 10.00 a.m. and I finish at 1:00 p.m. There are five babies in the crèche. I work with two others. I go to reading and writing classes in Ennistymon in the afternoon from 2.00 to 4.00 p.m. I like going to these classes. I like improving my writing and the painting. I'd like to do more painting.

**Tuesdays:** I do yoga in the morning with Pauline and Erica. In the afternoon I do cookery. We usually cook our lunch. We do a lovely Hot Pot.

**Wednesdays:** I go to my classes in Ennistymon again. In this class we do painting with Mary. I love this. As a group we had an exhibition in the Ennistymon library. I love colour and I had the six primary colours in my painting, it was of a flower.

**Thursdays:** I go to Spanish Point in the morning. I work in the toddler's group with Siobhán. I paint with the children and we have tea there. At the beginning of the class, Siobhán and I put the sign outside the door. The sign says 'Toddler's Group'. I work in the Bakehouse restaurant in the afternoon from 12:00 to 1:30 p.m. I work with Irene. I prepare the bread and put it in baskets for the tables. I make the pots of coffee, and fill the jugs of water. I clean the tables when people have gone.

**Fridays:** On Fridays we go back to our classes and we go to the sports hall for some team sports and then we do some reading and writing. I help clean the house in the afternoon. I go walking in the evenings and at the weekends. Generally I relax at the weekends. Sometimes I go out with my Mam and Dad.

*By Máiread*

## **Hairdressing**

Hairdressing is something I would really like to do because I would like to learn how to colour hair and do different styles. I had my own hair done recently in Coyne's hairdressers.

When I went in the woman asked me what colour I wanted in my hair. She showed me different colours and I picked a colour. Then the woman told me to sit down and she coloured my hair. It took about two hours altogether.

There were two hairdressers, one coloured my hair and the other one cut and blow dried it. The hairdressers were very nice. They were asking me why I was changing my hair colour. I told them I just wanted my natural colour back. It cost me €65 to get my hair done.

*By Rebecca*

## **Changes**

I first went to the Daughters of Charity in Limerick when both my parents were ill. When I left Limerick to come to the Brothers of Charity in the Gort Road in Ennis, I found it strange as it was more sheltered and away from the outside world.

I live ten miles from Ennis with my foster parents. I go home to my parents on a regular basis.

Come September I will finish with the Brothers of Charity and I will have to get a job. I am hoping to work in a shop.

*By Paddy*

## Starting school

I have a clear memory of my first day at school. My twin sister and I walked the three and a half miles to Burrane National School. During the day the parish priest visited the school to meet the new comers and had sweets for us. My sister was too shy to take one so I took her sweet and gave it to her when the priest was gone. At about two o'clock we walked home and got a great welcome from my father in the farmyard. My mother was busy in the kitchen.

My mother worked very hard, I rarely saw her sitting down. She milked the cows, she cooked, cleaned and made our clothes. She helped us with the homework but with seven children it wasn't easy to find enough time for us all. My mother died when I was sixteen, my youngest brother was only eleven. I had already left school when I was thirteen and I fell into the role of housekeeper until I was about twenty. During this time I also helped train my father's greyhounds.

For the first while I sat with my sister and enjoyed the activities which were like play. I really liked playing with 'márta' and I remember well making a scrap book collection of leaves. My twin sister was quite good at school and let me copy her work. I wasn't a lazy boy but I liked being out on the farm doing my jobs and I fell behind.

For the first year at school I sat with my twin sister. She was quite good at school and I copied her work so I never picked up and learned for myself. The teacher then put me sitting with another girl. This girl tried her best to prevent me copying using her elbow as a shield. I still managed to copy and even wrote her name as my own. I spent a lot of time doodling and drawing tractors, I was also the one to do the odd jobs like, starting the fire, heating the bottles and opening the windows.

When I was nine, I was assessed as dyslexic but with a high IQ, because of my IQ I wasn't put in the slow learners' class. As a result I left school at thirteen unable to read and write.

*By Kevin*

## **Driving**

I don't think it's fair that when a young person wants to drive, they do their theory test, pass, and then they have a provisional licence. Off they go in a car and they might never have driven a car on the street before.

Most people learn to drive from friends or family in the woods or in fields.

I think every young person should take driving lessons before they go out alone, or they should have some type of test with theory and driving and cut out the provisional license. It should be made a bit harder to get insured to drive on the roads because there are lots of dangers when you are driving. It is important to know and concentrate on what you are doing when you are driving because anything can happen.

Most young drivers like to show off in front of friends. They speed, do wheel spinners and so on, but it's not right. If you're the type of person to do that you shouldn't be on the road. They could cause an accident or hurt someone. I have been in a car crash and I would never like to experience that ever again.

I also think that it is not right to have these cars that can go fast when the highest speed is 100 k/ph and on motorways 120 k/ph so cars shouldn't be made any faster.

*By Natasha*

## **Music and me**

I learned to play the whistle at fourteen years of age. Packie taught me to play the whistle. My two brothers also played. Michael, PJ and I all played in London in competitions. I had a Volkswagen when I played in Mullingar. My happiest memory was getting second prize in Mullingar.

I got the plane to London; it was terrific to arrive in London. I wanted to get work and money. I applied for a job as a barman selling pints. I went to London in 1965. I used to come home once a year. I met many musicians there. There was a fiddler called Bobby who played 'Speed the plough' and 'The dog in the bushes'. He was a quiet man. An Irish man called Jimmy made a record called 'Paddy in the smoke'. A fellow called Danny played the fiddle with me.

The Fleadh Cheoil was held in Preston. They had competitions for the All England Fleadh Cheoil and I came second in the tin whistle competition.

My favourite tunes are 'The sailor on the rock' and 'George White's favourite'. I didn't teach anyone to play.

I had no girlfriend in London. I worked hard to get a house.

*By Niall*

## **Out for a meal**

I sometimes go to Glór for lunch with friends. The people and staff are very friendly. The food is good. I always have water with my meal. Glór is very near to where I work.

*By Paul*



## **Fishing with my Dad**

I sometimes go fishing with my father. Usually we go to the Bridges of Ross on the Loop Head Peninsula. It is very dangerous there. You are on top of big rocks which can be slippery and you have to cast out your line over the cliff edge. Usually we catch mackerel in the winter time. Sometimes we get up to five or six dozen and then we sell them to family and friends. I don't mind eating mackerel, but my favourite fish is cod. I like fishing because it is a good sport and it is fun to do.

The thing I like the most about fishing is when the fish catch the hook. I have to reel it in fast because there is a seal there, and he often takes the fish if I reel it in slowly. When I reel the fish in it is hard to do as there are five or six fish on the line and they are trying to get off. They are going in different directions and this makes it harder to reel them in.

*By Amy*

## **An evening with Daniel O'Donnell**

For weeks I had been looking forward to going to see Daniel O'Donnell. The concert was on in Glór on the 16<sup>th</sup> of April. My friend Ann booked the tickets for myself, Martina and Monica.

I enjoyed the concert very much. Daniel sang my favourite songs. He told jokes and he danced on stage. He was very funny. After the concert he came out to talk to us. I got my photo taken with Daniel. I also got a CD of Daniel after the show.

*By Martina*

## **The big 40**

I was four with a nought on Wednesday April 16<sup>th</sup>. I went to work as usual and Bernie surprised me with a gorgeous cake and candles. I had lots of cards when I went home and had a lovely get-together with my house mates.

I then celebrated my birthday in the Woodstock Hotel on Friday 18<sup>th</sup> with my family and friends. I got my hair done and Noleen did my nails for the night. It was the best party ever. It was the first time I ever got a bouquet of flowers.

Being 40 doesn't feel too bad so far.

*By Jill*

## **Remembering**

An Indoor memory: The one indoor memory that stays with me is that of listening to the crickets. They sang or made a shrieking sound around the fireplace at night.

An outdoor memory: The best outdoor memory I have is going hunting with my brothers and neighbours on the Sundays, the terriers and hounds chasing rabbits, hares and foxes. When rabbits were plentiful we would have as much as five or six coming home. The myxomatosis put an end to that. It was a disease that was brought into the country to control rabbits. It almost wiped them out in a few years.

*By Joe*

## **Stained glass**

It was a great experience. We were sorry to see the course finishing. It was a two-hour class every week for five weeks – not half long enough. Gerry was our tutor. The first week we learned how to select colours that match and cut and shape the glass. We chose a design we liked and then we cut out a template in cardboard. We cut out a rainbow in different colours of glass and we grinded it. We washed the glass and applied the tape and then the flux. The flux helps the solder to stick. We learned how to solder the pieces together and ended up with a rainbow in the clouds. We attached a hook and a suction clip so that we could hang them up at home.

The second day we selected colours and cut out an angel and a butterfly. These were more difficult to solder as they were smaller and we had to be careful not to burn our fingers.

On day three we made a boat. On day four we cut out a fish. It was easier to work on the pieces that day as we were getting used to working on the glass. On day five we made an angel. At the end of the course I had six pieces and I am very happy with them all. Our pieces are in an exhibition in Ennistymon library from the 15<sup>th</sup> April. It was a great experience and I enjoyed every minute of it, as I did with all my courses which I have done in the last few months.

*By P.J.*

## **Things I enjoy doing**

Myself and two friends have started doing cookery with Nora every Thursday at the Brothers of Charity workshop on the Gort Road. There are only three of us in the group so we really enjoy the class. So far we have made pizza, sausage rolls, scones, apple tart, pancakes and various salads.

I also enjoy going away for short breaks with my niece Breda. We have been to different hotels in Ireland and usually go sight-seeing, shopping and relax over a nice meal in the evening.

*By Teresa*

## **Computer class**

We started the computer class in October. Our tutor is Margaret. We have made cards for Christmas, St. Patrick's Day, Easter and birthday cards. We get to choose what pictures we want to insert and what verses we want in the card. We can print them out and keep them. We have also made calendars and inserted pictures of our choice and were able to print out copies for ourselves. We have checked out the Internet and sent e-mails to one another. This was great fun. Margaret has shown us how to use the computer properly and this makes it interesting. Now that I know a little about computers, I would be interested in learning a lot more in future classes.

*By Michael*

## **My broken leg**

Last year I broke two bones in my left leg. It happened like this.

One morning, at home in my own house, I was rushing down the stairs to go swimming with my friend. I don't know what caused it but I fell down the stairs. My Mum was in the shower and my Dad was in bed sleeping so neither of them heard me fall. I was very sore but I was trying not to panic. I kept calling my Dad and he woke up after a while. He got an awful fright when he saw me.

My Mum and Dad tried helping me up but it was very painful. They had to carry me out to the car and bring me to hospital. They cut off the leg of my pants there and put on the cast. I was frightened and crying but everyone was very kind and that helped me a bit.

At home I couldn't get into the shower with the cast so we put a plastic bag over it and tried using the bath instead. Our bathroom is upstairs and when I wanted to use it I had to crawl up on my hands and good knee. It was terrible. My hands got sore from the crutches as well.

This went on for six weeks. The only good thing about it was that loads of people visited me. My only sister was in Australia at the time and I really missed her. She's home now and my leg is better, so all is well again.

*By Sarah*

## **How to pull a pint of Guinness**

1. Choose a cool, clean, dry pint glass and place on drip tray under the Guinness tap.
2. Fill the glass about two thirds full holding the pint glass at an angle to the nozzle.
3. Leave to settle for a minute or so until it changes from its cloudy appearance to become black with a white head.
4. Then pull to within an inch of the top and let settle again.
5. Finally top off the pint and wait for the final settling (a few seconds). The pint of stout should look black with a creamy white head.
6. Drink and enjoy.

*By Paddy*

## **It was a common sight years ago**

Years ago, you'd see plenty of donkeys and carts in town. One appeared recently and younger people were standing in amazement looking at the driver of his donkey as he rode into town sitting on his cart. People came out of doorways and cameras were out to get snaps of the man, his donkey and cart. So things have changed a lot in my memory. Indeed there were no problems such as air pollution or accidents, though accidents did happen with horses and carts anyway. With the donkey, nothing serious happened and nothing as serious as the present car accidents. It is a pity we can't manage our transport better.

*By Joe*

## **Our house**

We share a house with Jill, Mary and Pat. We have good fun in the house and are kept busy. We have lots of board games and also do arts and crafts on Monday evenings. We go to drumming classes on Fridays and swimming on Monday mornings.

We can watch TV, read magazines or listen to CDs when we want to relax. Sometimes we dance to music on the radio.

We go for outings in the car on other days either to do the shopping or to go sightseeing depending on the weather.

Sinead manicures and paints our nails, straightens Marie's hair or takes us to the hairdresser when we need a cut or change of style.

*By Marie & Bridget*

## **Reading and writing – one to one class**

I go every Wednesday to meet with Bridget, my tutor. We do reading and writing exercises. We sometimes read books and write about these stories in a copybook. I love reading stories from books. She is a nice woman and makes the class interesting. It is hard work but when it finishes I will miss the class. I have joined the library now and go and take out books that I read myself.

*By Martin*

## **My struggle with the cigarettes**

I have been a smoker since I was seventeen years old. I smoked ten a day for a number of years and it gradually crept up to thirty a day. Despite all the warnings in the media about the damage they were doing to my health I found it extremely difficult to break the habit.

However, about a year ago, I had a nasty cough that lingered for quite a while and I decided to pack up the cigarettes. I was well armed with a supply of nicotine patches, nicotine lozenges and herbal cigarettes, how could I not succeed! All went well for five months. I was even bragging to my friends how easy it was to give up the cigarettes. It was too easy to fool myself into thinking that I could have one smoke and then go back on the herbals. One led to two and in no time at all I was back smoking thirty a day.

My next attempt at giving them up was less successful and lasted six weeks. Some weeks ago I gave them up again and this time I did not rely on any substitute. At the time of writing this I am still struggling with being off the cigarettes, however, I am determined to stay off them this time.

*By Anita*

## **On the farm**

My parents have a farm in Kilkee. I go home every weekend to stay with them. We have cows still in calf. All the calves will be born by the end of April. When there is no grass for them to eat in the winter we feed them silage. This will go on until May when there will be plenty of fresh grass.

*By Paul*



## **A visit to the Dáil**

On Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> April, a group of us went to Dublin to see Bertie Ahern on one of his last days in the Dáil. He had a welcome for us and we had a welcome for him. He was delighted to see everyone and he had great time for us. We met him in his office in Leinster House and he shook hands with us and we had pictures taken. I had met him in Ennis before and he remembered.

We went up to where their meetings were on. There was a man with a black suit who told us everything about the place and showed everyone around. There were pictures of people like Garrett Fitzgerald, Charlie Haughey, Jack Lynch, Albert Reynolds and Liam Cosgrove. We met Eamonn Ryan and Michael D. Higgins.

Bertie gave each of us a pen with the 'Dáil' on it. We'll miss him when he goes.

*By Kevin*

## **What sign language means to me**

I learned sign language many years ago. It has made a big difference to my life. I can communicate with my sister and my friends at the workshop. Marian asked me to help her to give classes in sign language to some of the staff at the Adult Education Centre. The classes are held on Fridays at 2.00 p.m. and last for an hour and a half. They are finding it hard to remember all the signs. It is easy for me because I have been practising it for a long time.

*By Katie*

## **New job**

I have a new job in the Family Resource Centre. I have to do photocopying, putting cards in envelopes and sending Christmas cards. Mary Jane helps me with this job and I go every second Wednesday.

Next week I'm going on holiday for a few days to Cobh in Cork. I'm going with two friends and we're going to stay in a nice hotel. We will go shopping and to the cinema. I love shopping and looking around. I think I will buy some trousers, a blouse and a jumper. I hope the weather stays nice for our trip.

*By Colette*

## **The Westlife concert**

I am looking forward to the *Westlife* concert on the 1<sup>st</sup> of June in Dublin.

*Westlife* are a great group and I am a fan for a long time. I really enjoy their music and have all their CD's. I was very excited when the concert tickets were given to me at Christmas. This will be my first live concert. My boyfriend is travelling with me on the train from Ennis to Dublin.

Nicky Byrne is a singer with *Westlife* and he is married to Georgina Aherne. They have twin boys that are just one year old. I hope that I will have lovely memories of the *Westlife* concert.

*By Anne*

## Critics – a rap

This one's for all the people who talk  
Shoot you down before you reach the top  
Cause they just don't know much about me  
You know the types that say this and that  
Jealous types trying to hold you back  
Soon it will be as clear as can be  
For those who feel that they need to speak  
My life is more than stories on beats  
You'd know that if you knew about me

Can I just rock a rhyme one time?  
Elevate minds enjoy the vibe  
Like 93 till infinity I'm alive  
I light the vicinity spit the rhyme  
But I still receive cut eye, when I bust rhyme  
Must be the light or the shine from the white  
It can't be the skill or the beat or the mic.  
Could it be jealousy that you're not quite like me  
I'm not like you, your attitude is at the altitude  
Like dude I want to battle you  
I'm not budging only God's judging  
You can take the glory, I'm not fake fronting  
Nothing's stopping me, God's still calling me  
Your own insecurities is killing ye softly  
The rap artist, dissed than disregarded  
Stick around, yo, I'm just getting started

This one's for all the people who talk  
Shoot you down before you reach the top  
Cause they just don't know much about me  
You know the types that say this and that  
Jealous types trying to hold you back  
Soon it will be as clear as can be  
For those who feel that they need to speak  
My life is more than stories on beats  
You'd know that if you knew about me

All of a sudden I'm becoming the talk of the town  
Cause my lyrics seem to be getting more positive now  
It's true I'm the same dude they're talking about  
'Cause I don't hand out tracks when I'm walking around  
But I know "what you know"  
Only God can judge me, so if it's only God that loves me  
I'm OK, I can say that, I'm a man of God so when I make raps  
I'm like eight tracks, I don't play, they can talk the talk  
I walk the walk, while they at Mardi Gras and in the dark  
they're lost  
I don't stop to watch I walk with God like ladi dah  
They still watching, they probably are

You can't catch me or form a weapon against me  
The best kept secret has sworn to protect me  
If you got a problem I suggest you arrest me  
I'm not guilty, dirty, but not filthy  
Like the Kennedys' you want to put an end to me  
Bullet in my melodies but ye never met me  
I love my enemies not just cause it says so  
I got joy un-control over flowing yo  
Don't hate it, you'll keep us separated  
Where's the love man? Yo, it's so underrated.

*By M-zee*

## **Slovakia**

In my country, I eat lots of different food. I love cabbage dumplings. Here in Ireland, I can cook but my sister also cooks spaghetti and rice dishes. I am very lucky because she is a good cook.

*By Rudi*

## **Busy life**

My name is John and I live in Ennis. I am 24 years of age. I go to the Brothers of Charity everyday.

I go to work Mondays and Tuesdays and I go to the V.E.C. on Wednesdays to learn computers at the Adult Education Centre. I go to the swimming pool on Thursday afternoon between 2.00 and 3.00 p.m. with my friend Adrian. We have great fun. I am going to a BBQ on Friday. My friends, Gerard and Kathleen, are going with me. Burger with ketchup is my favourite food and orange is my favourite drink.

I like sport and this weekend I am going to play table tennis in the Special Olympics. I have won gold and silver medals for table tennis before.

I go to stay with my family at the weekend. My sister Elizabeth's birthday was on last Saturday. We had a party. Mammy, Daddy, Mairead, Catherine, Robbie, Lisa, Laura and Emma were there.

My Auntie Peggy died and also my Nana and Granddad. I have had a busy year.

*By John*

## **My new home**

I have a new home in Kilrush. I came to live here a year ago. I was in hospital in Ennis for a long time as I was very sick. I have improved a lot since coming here. Everyone is so nice and good to me. I have made many friends and I am very happy here. I hope to make it to my new home.

*By Peggy*

## **First Communion**

My nephew who is called Padraig is 8 years old. He likes school, TV and cartoons. He likes to play with his little brother Andrew, aged six.

He made his First Communion on Saturday last 26<sup>th</sup> of April 2008 at Sixmilebridge Church. Fr. Harry Bohan said the Mass for the 46 children their families and friends.

After Mass we all went to the Woodcross Restaurant where we had a very nice meal. I was taking photos on my digital camera at the church and at the restaurant.

We went to Youghal Co. Cork for a few days to celebrate the occasion. It was all lovely.

*By James*

## **Jokes**

How do you make a sausage roll?  
Push it down the hill!

Why did the apple turn over?  
Because it saw the swiss roll!

What is the fastest vegetable?  
A runner bean!

What did the bell say when it fell in the water?  
I'm ringing wet!

*By Martin*

## **A good time at the training centre**

I attended the training centre at the Gort Road for five years. I enjoyed it there. I made a lot of friends and I learned a lot of new skills. I loved doing the computer class. I was able to type and do painting on the computer.

In the spring time we did gardening outdoors. We sowed seed in pots and put them in a glass house.

Two years ago on June 3<sup>rd</sup> I moved to the workshop in Clonroad. This was a big change of life for me. I soon got used to it and made new friends and learned more on the computer. I love going to the canteen for my break.

*By Desmond*

## **Working on the farm**

I work on a farm in Carron. They have pigs, sows, banbhs and a boar. They sell the banbhs. I feed the pigs, I give them meal, water and potatoes. They also have cows and a bull and I feed them too. Another man cleans out the sheds.

I also work in the recycling facility in Inagh. I sort out the recycling and put it into the proper containers. There are many people working there and we have our tea together. I live on a farm with my Dad and I do a lot of the farm work at home.

I like going to the mart and I like to play soccer. We play team sports on Friday in the gym. We divide the teams up equally and we pick captains and keep score.

*By Seamus*

## **Pancakes**

I do cookery with Nora and have made lot of nice things including pancakes, scones, apple tart, biscuit cake and tea-brack. She has a recipe book which is so easy to follow as both the ingredients and method are accompanied by pictures and are in order page by page.

This is the recipe for pancakes.

4oz. plain flour  
Pinch salt  
2 eggs  
4 tablespoons melted butter  
½ pt. milk and water

Sieve the flour and salt into bowl. Whisk eggs together with the milk and water. Gradually add the flour and whisk until all ingredients are mixed well. Add melted butter and whisk. Brush frying pan with remainder melted butter and heat. Pour two tablespoons of batter into pan, tilt pan and cook for 1 minute. Flip over and cook for 10 seconds.

*By David*

## **Friend**

Last Christmas was a lonesome time for us. One of our residents got sick and died. We miss him but have very happy memories of him. We had a special Mass said for him in our house. His family came and spoke about how happy he was with us. James, we will always remember you R.I.P.

*By Margaret*



## **Fishing**

Last week me, my cousin and our friend Mark from the caravan park went to Seafield pier fishing. We had no bait so we used spinners. Spinners are a small piece of shiny metal with two or four hooks and when it is in the water it shimmers so the fish are attracted to it.

We were there for about two hours and still didn't catch anything. At the pier there were a few boats and on one boat there was a dogfish. My cousin Darren picked him up by the tail but he was still alive! So we threw him back into the water. We were messing on the boat and found a tray full of small fish. As a joke my friend Mark picked up one of the fish and put it at the end of a hook. There were a lot of tourists around and I said, "I caught one, I caught one!" All the tourists started looking at me and were very impressed. I thought it was very funny.

*By Thomas*

## **Preview: Manchester United v Chelsea**

Manchester United will play Chelsea in the Champions League final. These two sides are no strangers to each other as they met on numerous occasions but never in a Champions League final, they didn't even meet in a Champions League match.

Manchester United went through a tough two leg match against Barcelona and Chelsea beat Liverpool. The final will be played May 21<sup>st</sup> in Moscow. Manchester United won the tournament in 1999 and will find it hard to win again but I expect them to win by one or two goals.

*By Michael*

## **Travel**

I love to travel so when my father told us we were going to live with him in Ireland we were very happy. It was the first time my sister and I were going to travel in an airplane, and my sister was afraid to get into the plane.

When we got to Libya, the immigration officer put us into a nightmare. My sister started crying and panicking because she thought they would send us back to Ghana. After wasting our time, finally we got into the plane. We finally got to Dublin and the immigration men started asking us so many questions, like who are we going to stay with? We told him "our father" and gave him his phone number. He called him and my father came for us. Finally we were free from this nightmare and we were so happy that we were going home.

*By Mavis*

## **My car album**

I like cars. I like to look at the pictures of cars so my tutor and I decided to start an album.

First we collected pictures of cars from the newspapers and from magazines. I bought a folder and plastic pockets for the album. We cut out the pictures of my favourite cars and we stuck them on pages for my album.

I like my album and I enjoy doing this project.

*By Gerard*

## Diary of our spring garden

Over the course of a few weeks we did a gardening programme with the Clare Adult Basic Education Service. We kept a diary of all the things we did and we were lucky enough with the weather.

February 14<sup>th</sup>: We dug over the garden and pruned the roses. We set sweet pea and germinated the lettuce.

February 21<sup>st</sup>: We set two different types of cabbage 'greyhound' and 'golden acre' and we planted sunflowers and antirrhinum.

March 6<sup>th</sup>: We prepared vegetable beds and added chicken manure.

March 13<sup>th</sup>: Our tomatoes in the tunnel are growing quite well and we brought the cabbage and lettuce outside. Lettuce looks good enough to eat already!

April 8<sup>th</sup>: Our luck with the weather has turned! We look at gardening magazines and go to the library to look at books by famous gardeners.

April 15<sup>th</sup>: We dug the rose bed and put new moss peat on the soil. We trimmed any weeds around the garden.

April 22<sup>nd</sup>: We put plastic and bark over the soil surrounding the roses. We discussed lots of ideas to keep away slugs.

We enjoyed our classes. It was great to get to work in the garden and then discuss what we did, write about it and take photos of our plants.

*By Joe, Mary, Níall, John, Tom, Gerard, B.B.,  
Mary Ellen and P.J.*

## **Learning hospitality**

My name is Veronika and I'm in the hospitality course at the Clare Youth Centre. I started the course in September 2007. We learn about hygiene, food for breakfast and lunch, how to serve the public and how to prepare food. On Tuesday and Thursday we work in the coffee bar. We wear a black uniform. When we work in the kitchen, we wear a white jacket. We must remove all jewellery and wear no nail polish. I like this course because it's giving me extra skills. It has been sometimes challenging to do this course as English is not my first language, but I'm trying.

*By Veronika*

## **My birthday**

I just had a big birthday party. I go to the Brother's of Charity centre every day and my mother had a cake from a Miltown Malbay bakery sent in. It was huge. It had cream, strawberries and other fruit in it. We had a great afternoon. My family came for the party and they all gave me money as presents.

I am going to see Daniel O'Donnell and buy some clothes and a C.D. with the money.

I like country and western music and I love going to see the musicals that are put on every year.

*By Bríd*

## **Life is for living**

Life is an exciting surprise. I wake up in the morning looking for positive experiences and I find them in the most unexpected places. Life always provides for me and others and we should all appreciate what we have in life.

*By Jacinta*

## **House hunting**

I want to move from my house because of the dangerous traffic on the road and I am house hunting now. I would like to get a four bedroomed house because I will have one of my sisters come to stay with me. One of my friends will come to stay also.

I go to the workshop every day and I enjoy doing my collage work. I stick in pictures and then I write in things with Antonio.

In the evening I watch TV and I like the soaps like *Emmerdale*, *Coronation Street* and *Fair City*. My favourite soap is *Coronation Street*. David is in jail at the moment because he broke a lot of windows and tried to hurt his mother Gail. He was being nasty to people. I don't know why he did that.

I have two brothers in Cork, and I go down on the bus to see them. I like Cork. It's a very nice city and I liked the shops there. I have a sister in London, and sometimes I go to visit her too. I hope I find a nice house soon.

*By Kathleen*

## **Orla's bird table**

I have made a DVD about the birds that come to my garden at home. It is called '*Orla's Bird Table*'. Paddy and others from the Brothers of Charity helped me to make it.

I made the DVD to teach children about how to get to know birds and how to feed them. We filmed birds like the robin, the blackbird, the blue tit and the house sparrow. It took a long time to film the birds and you can see them coming to the bird table and feeding on birdseed, peanuts and monkey nuts. Birds will also eat fruit such as apples. But you should not feed white bread to birds because it's too soggy. There are many different kinds of bird feeders. The best is one that you can hang on a tree. Otherwise the cats can get the birds and rats can get the birdseed. My favourite bird is the robin because he is very cheeky and I love to watch him in the garden.

I use my DVD in a presentation about birds. I like to tell people how to feed them and look after them. I like doing the presentation, but it makes me feel nervous. I like to speak up for myself and for people to understand me. Doing the presentation gives me confidence. It also helps me to raise money for the West Clare Wildlife Club because the money from each DVD sold goes to the club. I feel I have become famous already and I am very happy about that.

*By Orla*

## **Hurling**

I am mad into the hurling and I want to play for the Clare team. I was five or six when I started playing hurling. I was the primary school captain in sixth class.

*By Darren*

## Healthy wholemeal bread

### Ingredients:

300 g wholemeal flour  
100 g white flour  
1 tablespoon wheatgerm  
1 tablespoon bran  
1 level teaspoon bread soda  
Half teaspoon salt  
450 mls. buttermilk  
2 tablespoons melted margarine  
1 egg

### Method:

Preheat oven to 200°C / 400°F or gas mark 6.

Sieve the white flour, bread soda and salt into a bowl. Stir in the wholemeal flour, wheatgerm, bran and make a well in the centre. Beat egg if using and add with melted margarine and buttermilk. The mixture should be very soft, add more milk if necessary. Put into a greased 20 cm tin and bake for about an hour. The base should sound hollow and the crust should be crisp.

*By Margaret*

## Memories

An indoor memory: We had a nice kitchen in the house. We had three bedrooms. I had five sisters and I was the only boy. Father and Mother were there also.

An outdoor memory: We had eight cows. We brought the milk to the creamery. We cut the hay and sowed a garden.

*By Thomas*

## **My cottage by the sea**

As a child I used to dream of a cottage by the sea. After roaming around different parts of the world, firstly getting married, then sadly losing my husband, I felt life had finished for me. However, I had to keep going and as luck would have it, I ended up in Kilkee in a small cottage by the sea. It was a small, dilapidated little cottage with broken windows and an old range that was falling apart.

But I just fell in love with it. Life had started again for me. It was just like a bit of heaven, the wide open spaces and all the people I will never forget.

I have lived here in this cottage for 24 years now and it is still beautiful. The cottage stands for my life and I gave up my city ways and realised that the simple things in life are precious because as you go through life, you want this and that but you need so little to live. So, to anyone struggling out there, there is always a silver lining to every cloud. I believe that God has done all this for me.

*By Bernie*

## **Dogs**

Dogs are nice animals. Some dogs make good guards dogs. Dogs have to be walked on a regular basis this is also good exercise for the owner. They need grooming and washing to keep them healthy. Dogs can be taught tricks, like beg for food and fetch a stick. When a dog is a pup they jump around and lick you all the time.

*By Robbie*



## Concrete feet

Today I decided to go for a game of snooker before class at the Youth Centre. On the way out, I noticed some road works were going on. The next thing I know, I'm up to my ankles in wet cement! Just then, the builder called out, "watch out for the concrete, it's still wet!"

My new runners and tracksuit were completely destroyed. My Dad had to drop me home and call the Youth Centre to explain that I would be late. I dumped my runners in the sink and finally arrived in the Youth Centre half an hour late!

*By Fionn*

## Bertie

Bertie is alright. I will miss him as Taoiseach. I think he was a good Taoiseach. However, he got into trouble with his money problems. He is a Dubliner and his father came from Cork. He liked going to matches and he'll have plenty of time for that now! Brian Cowan is the next man for the job.

I like watching television. My favourite programmes are *The Late Late Show* with Pat Kenny, *Questions and Answers* and *Tubridy Tonight*.

I walk my dog Prince every evening. He is a good dog and keeps me active. I look after Prince. I feed him in the morning and in the evening. I wash his shed every evening. I help my nephew JD every evening with the cattle.

*By Michael*

## **Our reading and writing class**

Every Monday we have a reading and writing class at our centre. For the past few weeks we have been reading words and looking at pictures of fruit and vegetables. We recognised most of them, carrots and turnips, for example, but there were quite a few we had never seen or eaten before such as blueberries, passion fruit and star fruit. Our teacher decided to go to the vegetable shop and buy some of the more unusual fruits for us to taste. When the others in our centre saw them they wanted to have a taste as well.

We started off with blueberries, everyone liked them even though they were a little bit sour. Next came passion fruit. When it was sliced open it looked so disgusting that most of the group wouldn't even taste it. We liked it even though it was very sweet. It's easier to eat if you don't look at it.

Next came star fruit. It's yellow and shaped like a star. It was kind of tasteless. It's really only used to make food look nice, it's not always eaten.

The last fruit we had was avocado. There was a big stone in the middle of it. Not very many liked it; it had a funny taste, neither sweet nor sour. Some of the class said that if food doesn't look nice you think it won't taste good, for example, the passion fruit.

We liked all of them but then, we will eat anything.

*By Chime, Johnathan and Ross*

## **Wednesday**

After breakfast I go to Sheedy's shop to get groceries for my neighbour and to buy my daily newspaper.

At 10.30 a.m. I set off for Ennis to attend my class at the Clare Reading & Writing Scheme on Clonroad. I can read quite well now and since going there my writing has improved a lot.

After class I have a meal at the Pepper Mill or Charlie Stewart's pub. I then do some shopping at Dunnes Stores before driving home.

In the afternoon I read my paper and then relax before my dinner. Afterwards I enjoy watching sport on TV.

*By Tony*

## **Some things I like**

I just finished a four-year course and graduated before Christmas. I got a certificate and we had a big party and all my family were there. In the course I did life skills, work experience, cooking and nutrition, English and math.

I love animals. I have two dogs and a donkey. Sonny and Rosie are the dogs' names and Jack is the donkey's name. I feed the animals and ride Jack sometimes. He kicks me off but I just get back on. The dogs and the donkey are great friends and play together.

I am doing a course in Ennistymon at the moment. I work six hours a week at English, maths, art and gym. I like the gym best because I am very good at it.

*By Pauline*

## **Our Easter visit to Galway**

My sisters and I took the bus from Lahinch where we live, to Galway, to visit our cousin in Galway city. She is from Fanore, the same as ourselves. She is married to a Galway man and she has five children. We stayed three days with them and went shopping in the city, had a meal in a restaurant and did a lot of talking. It was a lovely visit and we hope she will come to Lahinch to visit us.

I am doing a course now for six hours a week. I do reading and writing, maths, gym and art. I did a painting in art and it is on show in the library in Ennistymon. It is a vase of flowers on a table. I am doing one now that might be shown in Glór. I work at Seaworld in Lahinch. I like the large fish and I also like to meet people. I would like to continue my classes and hope there will be more of them.

*By Marie*

## **Davy Fitzgerald**

Clare hurling goalie Davy Fitzgerald had to retire this month (April) because of a serious injury to his hand.

He hadn't played a match for nearly a year because of a dispute with the former Clare manager Tony Considine. Last September Mike McNamara took over as manager and Davy tried being goalie again. He wasn't able to stop a ball travelling at speeds of up to 100 miles an hour anymore because of his hand. When it didn't work out, Philip Brennan, who had taken Davy's place when he was out for the year, took over as fulltime goalie.

I think Philip Brennan is good but I don't know yet if he's as good as Davy.

*By Declan*

## **Learning computers**

I go to the Brothers of Charity day centre every week. We do computers every day. I'm learning to send e-mail. Computers are good fun. Liverpool is the best soccer team. I look up their website on the internet. I learned how to do that in the centre.

We also do cooking. I like stirring saucepans. Sometimes I make a mess. That's good fun and I don't get into trouble for it. We eat everything we cook. Spaghetti is my favourite.

*By Sean*

## **Moving to Ireland**

I am Dutch and living in Ireland for many years. When I came in 1985 I felt I went back 50 years in time. I had no real telephone so when I wanted to contact someone in the Netherlands I had to wait for hours until at last Marie the operator would put me through. One time a man came on and I was complaining about the waiting time and the bad reception. His answer was "well Mam, maybe there was a bird on the line!"

Our electricity went off many times. A bit of wind and I had to find candles. One time I bought a mattress. They came to deliver it and I could not believe my eyes, they had put the mattress on top of bags of coal. It was black and filthy! No point, I never sent it back. Things like that I was not used to, but after 23 years of living here I feel happy to be in the country. When we became a single Europe, times changed for the best. The only thing I want to see changed is new and better hospitals, without waiting times.

*By Liz*

## **A sporty family**

The Special Olympics were held in Ireland in 2006 and I was part of a group doing gymnastics. I did the ribbon and the ball and hoop. I have been practicing for the Olympics since I was in school. Sister Eileen is involved with the Special Olympics and she organised our trip to Dublin for us.

The most exciting bit was being presented with the medals. I don't mind what kind of medal it is, it's the excitement of standing on the podium and listening to the crowd cheering that I love.

Around 20 of us stayed in a hotel in Dublin. We shared rooms with our friends which was good craic. The food in the hotel was lovely, I love eating out. We had helpers with us all the time and they were very nice. They never got cross with us.

I come from a sporty family. I play hockey, table tennis and go swimming. My brother plays soccer, hurling and rugby and my sister plays with Éire Óg. She coaches children as well.

My Dad and I go to lots of matches together. Sometimes we help out by selling match programmes. My Mum supports us all by going to any sports events we're involved in.

There's sports gear all over our house and the washing machine is constantly on but we wouldn't want it any other way.

*By Kate*

## **A busy week**

A bus collects me every morning and takes me to the Brothers of Charity day centre. The bus driver's name is Flan and he's very nice.

We do a lot of things in the centre. Derek, my care worker brings us for nature walks. They're really good.

Andy teaches us computers. I'm getting good at them now. I love going on the Internet.

Alan does painting with us on Fridays. Last week we were painting a picture of a house. He said mine was very good.

We go to the new canteen in the Adult Education Centre for our break and lunch. I've made lots of friends there.

*By Liam*

## **My night away**

Last night I stayed in the respite house for the first time with my sister and two care workers. I really enjoyed the experience. We went to Tesco which was great, because the aisles are nice and wide for my wheelchair. It was good to be able to buy food for our dinner. We came back and had our dinner. Then we went for a walk in town by the Marina.

It was good to feel a bit independent. When we came back we watched the television for the evening and then we went to bed. It was nice staying in a different house for the night and because my sister was there, I didn't feel lonely. I enjoyed the experience.

*By Maura*

## **A typical days farming**

I look after the farm when my father goes out for the day. Sometimes he goes to the mart or to a wedding and usually this takes all day.

On days like this I get up very early and milk the cows. We have a milking parlour with milking machines and these do the milking for us. The milk is collected every second day by lorry and taken to Kerry Co-Op. I check the cattle and feed them then I clean the milking parlour.

I have lunch around 12 or 1 o'clock. After lunch I might put up fencing or spread fertiliser or maybe gather hay or straw for the calves. Sometimes I have to dose the cattle to prevent disease. In the evening the cows are milked and once again the milking parlour has to be cleaned. Good hygiene is very important.

I go home and have dinner. By now I'm tired so I might watch television or read the paper. If it's the weekend I go out with friends, otherwise I go to bed early and I have a good sleep.

*By Dermot*

## **My Pony**

I have a pony, her name is Roisin. She is 21 years old, the same age as me. By night she sleeps in the milking parlour as we have no milking cows anymore. I give her Weetabix and milk every morning and she has a bucket of water for when she is thirsty during the day. I ride Roisin from the end of April or the start of May until the end of the summer.

*By Therese*



## **Growing up in my village**

My name is Marie and I grew up in a small village called Moveen, two miles west of Kilkee. In those days a lot of people lived there but many of those houses are closed today because of immigration.

I went to Kilferagh School until I was seven years old and then I came into Kilkee to the convent where I finished my schooling. I stayed with my grandmother in her house in the West End of Kilkee and I used to walk or cycle to school.

When we got our holidays from school it was great as I helped on the farm. We had a dairy farm and we also kept a few sheep and horses. I loved helping with the milking and feeding the calves during the Easter holidays. When the summer came we helped with the hay. It was all done by hand or horses in those days, no big machinery to help like now.

I had a very happy childhood. I lived at home until I was sixteen and then I went to Dublin nursing. It was good to grow up in the country, all that fresh air and good food. I still love where I live.

*By Marie*

## **My favourite person**

Pop is my favourite person. He is a daddy and a granddad. He is a lovely man. I visit him frequently with his daughter. I look forward to the visit. He is my best friend.

*By Ann O'C*

## **The active age group**

Monday afternoons we have a lovely group of women; we have great chats, laughter and fun. Our wonderful tutor has been teaching us a great many things - glass painting, writing, plant pot painting, food and health studies and many more. The list is endless. We've also done yoga, exercises for the elderly, computer training, stained glass, tenpin bowling to mention but a few. Again, the list is endless.

In amongst the chat, laughter and fun, there are the more serious discussions that have been held as well. During our meeting there are the cups of tea to lubricate the tongue more, plus the lovely home-made baking that is produced by a dedicated member at times, and the munchie biscuits and other goodies that are all brought in by different members of the group. Wow! Are the inches expanding the waistline? Yes! I think so, but all are too good to refuse.

We take a break during the summer months and look forward to the autumn to start again. Another new beginning, another term, another year, a big thank you to all.

*By Valerie*

## **Work**

I work Monday to Friday. I enjoy working. I pick rubbish off the roads and meet some people I know on the roads. John is my boss. He is a very nice man and I have a great laugh with him sometimes. I like working on the roads as I meet lots of people. I start at 10.00 a.m. and finish at 2.30 p.m. When it rains I go into the centre.

*By Martin*

## **Knockalough Lake**

Knockalough Lake is near to where I grew up in Kilmihil. It is near the Crossroads Pub. It is one of my favourite places. I like to walk around the lake and look at the rocks on the shore and look at the ducks and swans. I go to the lake with my Mam or Dad and we would bring a picnic of sandwiches and milk. I painted a picture of Knockalough Lake a while ago and it was put up in the library in Ennistymon.

I am getting a new quad bike for the farm work. I will be able to carry nuts for the calves and cows on it. You don't need a licence for it. I would be the only one to drive it and it will be my pride and joy. The model I want to get is a Suzuki. My Dad is getting a quad bike for himself, too.

At the moment I am doing work experience in a hardware shop in Miltown Malbay. Pat is my boss. I work there three days a week. I like meeting people and stacking shelves.

*By Adrian*

## **Missing my family**

My name is Renata and I am from the Czech Republic. I am 29 years old and have three children. I have been living in Ireland for nine years and I really like the country. My children go to school in Ireland and they have lots of friends. However, I miss my family because most of them are in the Czech Republic. I find this very hard.

*By Renata*

## **Liverpool FC**

On Friday 11<sup>th</sup> April ten of us went to Shannon Airport to board a plane for Liverpool. When we landed at Liverpool Airport we got into taxis and they brought us to our hotel.

We dropped our bags in our hotel room and went exploring Liverpool. On Saturday morning after breakfast we went shopping. I bought a Liverpool jacket and hat for the match on Sunday.

Saturday night we went to a Chinese restaurant for a meal. I had all three courses. I didn't like chilli in my main course. After dinner we went to a night club.

We headed to Liverpool stadium on Sunday. It was raining on and off. Liverpool was playing Blackburn. Liverpool beat Blackburn 3 – 1. We got to meet the Liverpool players and I got the Captains armband. We took lots of photos.

*By Stephen*

## **Daniel O'Donnell**

I went to see Daniel O'Donnell in Glór in Ennis. I had a great night. He is my favourite singer. He sang from 9.00 p.m. to 11.00 p.m. All the money raised went to charity. I had my photograph taken with Daniel. My friends had their photographs taken too.

*By Ann T*

## **My pet rabbit**

My mother bought me a rabbit last October. The rabbit is female and I called her Sampras. She is grey in colour and is small in size like a small pup. She has grey eyes. I feed her rabbit food and clean water. Her food is a mix of cereal and nuts. I buy the food at the pet store at Kelly's Corner.

I clean her cage once a week and give her clean paper and straw. Sampras is quiet and great company. I take her into the house near the range on the cold nights. She is very clever. Her ears stand up straight listening to me talking to her.

Everyday after work I visit her in her cage and we shake hand to paw and then she runs around her cage because she is happy to see me.

My father bought a new cage for Sampras. It is two foot long, and is red and white in colour. It has a blue door to keep her inside.

*By Kieran*

## **My favourite soccer team**

My favourite soccer team is Manchester United and my favourite player is Ronaldo. They are the best team in the world. I have been supporting them for five years. I have never been to any of their matches.

*By Henry*

## **Farm life**

I live on a farm with my Mum and Dad. We have cows and calves. I help with the calves and give them calf nuts. We also have a bull. When the calves are big we bring them to the mart and sell them. In my spare time I train for the 250 mile charity cycle with my Mum.

*By Conrad*

## **This year**

This year I would like to get a new job. I hope to get a new job working in a crèche. I would especially like to work with babies. I have worked in a crèche before, but it was only every second Monday.

I have a niece and a nephew who I like to play with. Sometimes I mind them for my sister.

This time I would like to get a four day job from twelve to five as I have another job from half nine to half eleven most days. I have been practising job applications with my tutor. If I can't get a job in a crèche, I would like to get a day job in a pub. I would not like to work nights as it would be too long.

My sister is having a baby in April or May. I'm going to Daniel O'Donnell on the 16<sup>th</sup> of April at 8.00 p.m.

I hope to see Hazel back in the Dulick Centre and that she gets better soon.

*By Sylvia*

## **Preparing for work**

I've been with the Brothers of Charity for nearly four years now. In that time I've gone on work experience three times. The first one I did was in Yums restaurant during the summer holidays. It's a busy restaurant. I helped set the tables and clean up afterwards. Even though I got paid well and they were good to work for, I don't think I'd like to work full-time in a restaurant.

Next I worked in Mangans Cash and Carry. This was more my kind of work – stacking shelves and helping out around the place. They needed someone strong for that kind of work. I'd like to work there when I'm finished in the centre.

My last placement was in TM Office Supplies. I helped stock the shelves and fill the van for deliveries and sometimes I went with the driver and helped him. It was a good place to work.

Working and getting paid for it is good. When I leave the centre I hope to get a job and get well paid for it.

*By Declan*

## **My house**

I live in Newtown, Kilkee on a farm. I have lived there for 52 years ever since I got married, and it seems like only yesterday when I first came to that house.

It is an old farmhouse, and my six children were reared there. I have two boys and four girls. Two of my daughters live quite close to me, and I have a son who lives nearby, in his own house. It is lovely to have the family nearby.

The house is an old farmhouse with high ceilings and an open fire, but we now have a range in it. I like the range for cooking and it keeps the whole house warm. You get used to taking the ashes out in the morning and it is not so messy. We have extended the house over the years since we have been in it. It had no bathroom when we first moved in, but now we have all mod cons. I love my house and I could never see myself living anywhere else.

*By Mary*

### **Still finding the way**

Watch out words I have a pen in my hand  
I am looking for words and me mind's about to expand  
The problem I have with the words to write  
Is they're all about you, yeah you, you're the news tonight.

You could never know what you gave each day  
When you taught me to see the world in a new way  
Now the time has come for this new world to move on  
We leave behind friends and have some friendships to grow strong.

Along the path we choose east, south, north and even west  
Always remember you hold the foundation for my future to rest  
Thanks seems so little to say  
For all them memories that have still to come home and play  
So it's never say goodbye, it's till we cross paths again  
And remember it's always new beginnings that give the end.

*By Mick*



## **My trip to Biarritz**

In June 2007, my mother and my two sisters and I took a flight from Shannon to Biarritz, in the south of France. We were so looking forward to a holiday in the sun. After a two hour flight we landed to the sun shinning down on us.

We stayed in the Hotel de l'Ocean for the first night and the last night of our trip. There was a beautiful church next to the hotel with statues of St. Anthony, St. Teresa and Mount Carmel. We lit candles in the church. We then moved to a self-catering apartment with a view of Biarritz and the beach. Most days we relaxed at the beach and went for a dip in the sea, ate good food and ice cream. One day we hired a car and drove to Lourdes. Although Lourdes is a busy place it is easy to pray there. We went to the grotto of Our Lady and St. Bernadette. My sister and I had a 'Holy bath' in Lourdes which cleansed our souls. We got a gold medal as a keepsake of our trip.

Another day we drove to St. Jean de Luz. There was a nice beach and lots of shops. After some time strolling about, my mother and my two sisters had a drink and I had a big ice cream in an outside bar in the sun. On our return, my sister went shopping in the market. She bought French rabbit and pork and brought them back to the apartment. She stuffed the rabbit and cooked it in red wine. We all enjoyed the meal of French rabbit and pork, with fresh vegetables. It was a night to remember.

On another occasion we went to the Marine Museum. I was very interested in seeing the seals. A French man came out to feed the seals with fish. One seal jumped through a hoop. The names of the seals were Ciara, Charles and Tomas. They were very friendly mammals. I took some photos of them. My sister drove us to St. Martin's church and to a lighthouse nearby. The lighthouse was very long and high.

One evening we dressed up in our best outfits to go out to Hotel de Palais. The hotel had beautiful stairs, gold chairs and

glass cases with gold and silver jewellery in it. There was also an antique piano there. We had some drinks there and talked a while.

The last night we had a thunder storm with rain and lightening. We took a taxi and headed to a restaurant for a pizza and steak. We weren't going to let the weather ruin our last night.

Next morning we got packed and headed for the airport. We returned to Ireland to a heat wave which made us feel like we were still on holiday.

*By Breeda*

## **Our own president**

Dr. Patrick Hillery R.I.P. was truly one of our own, a great west Clare man and a great statesman. I had the honour of meeting Dr. Hillery both at home in Miltown Malbay when he opened the library and in Ennis when he opened St. Clare's School. I have a photo taken with him.

Dr. Paddy's father was also a doctor and like his son, was liked and respected in the community. He was elected President of Ireland (unopposed) in 1976. He held this office for 14 years, during which time he proudly represented his country both at home and abroad.

However, he never lost touch with his roots and was a frequent visitor to Clare and would spend as much time as he could in his beloved Spanish Point where he relaxed and looked very much at home. Ar dheis Dé go raibh sé.

*By Gerard*



