



TY

St. Gerard's School
Transition Year
2023-2024



Welcome to our Transition Year By Hannah Duffy

Welcome to the TY summer newsletter! Here you can find everything we've done this year as a year group and as individuals. It's been an action packed year filled with adventure, fun and learning. We've hiked up mountains, travelled to Killary and camped in the cold. We've made short films, become pro baristas and learned how to drive. We've also been on many work experience opportunities that have taught us what it's like to work and what the different jobs are like.

In this edition, we've compiled all of the articles we have written this year to help give you the best insight as to how jam packed our TY year was. We also have lots of photos to help you truly understand how much fun we had this year. It's hard to find one where people aren't smiling!

Without further ado, I think it's time to start our final newsletter edition. We hope you enjoy it! .



Camping Adventure By Hannah Duffy

On the 13th September two coaches arrived into the carpark of the St Gerard's Senior School to transport all the TY students and their numerous bags up to Lough Dan for the annual TY camping trip. You could feel the excitement in the air as the bus was filled with lively chatter and anticipation of the two nights ahead

When we arrived, we were tasked with assembling our tents, which was something many of us had never done before, so it was certainly a challenge. Once this was completed and the field was dotted with tents of all shapes, sizes and colours, we relaxed over lunch before our warm up hike to prepare us for the next day. We hiked for five kilometres around Lough Dan and were treated to the breathtaking views of the surrounding countryside.

On our return to the campsite, it was dinner time with a difference. There was everything from pot noodles to barbecued steak, depending on your level of camping experience, but it was all delicious because we had a great time preparing it with our friends.

After dinner, a bonfire was lit. This created a great atmosphere and everybody relaxed and chatted together despite the rain which had started earlier in the afternoon. The night in our tents was cold and wet to say the least, which led to everybody waking for an early breakfast. After breakfast we were gathered together to be told the very disappointing news that due to a severe weather warning we had to leave the campsite as soon as we had completed our hike. Everybody was sorely disappointed to hear this, but we soon overcame this and made the most of our day nonetheless.

We started out on our hike quickly after breakfast. The rain stopped and we were able to enjoy the beautiful views. It was long and tiring but we all really enjoyed chatting and spending time together. On our arrival back to the campsite, we sadly packed up our tents and loaded everything into the bus. Before we left the teachers cooked us a burger on the barbecue and then we departed for home.

It was a fantastic experience and everyone really enjoyed it.



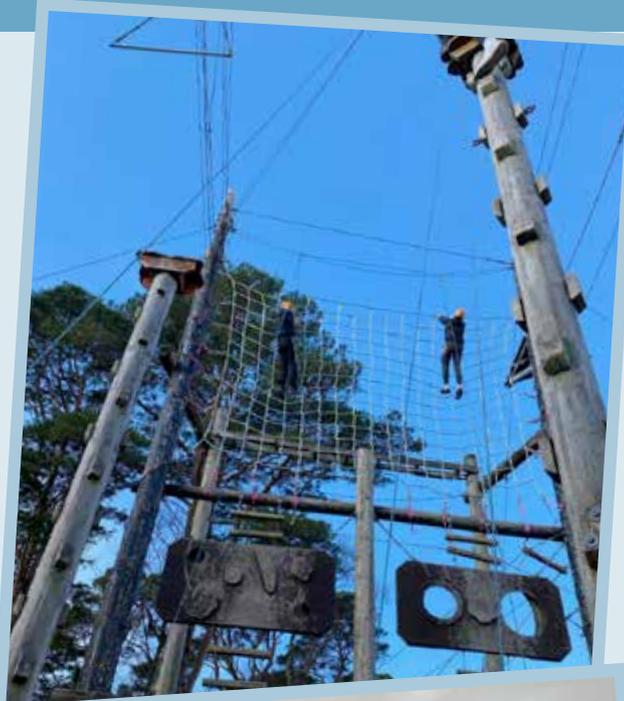
KILLARY By Daria Bokovenko

On 19th February, as we came back to school with refreshed minds after finishing the musical and the midterm, the TYs were ready to start a new journey to Killary Outdoor Adventure Centre

We always get told that TY is the year that brings us all together the most but it hadn't really felt that much different up until we approached the end of the musical. In my opinion, Killary is the place where it all changed and we really united. Since we had various activities each day in our assigned groups, we would always interact and put energy towards a common goal and each evening tell each other about our day's adventures. When we were completing the Killary Challenge, it took quite a bit of brainstorming and teamwork to succeed in the task. At the end of the day, we all did our best to collaborate and become a team. One of the outcomes of this is that we had different groups winning various games such as raft building, archery and so many more activities giving us all confidence and exciting things to talk about each evening. We all supported and helped each other throughout the week. This really came out in the treasure quest during the evening time where, as a group, we earned the resources for each other so people would be able to solve the mystery. This shows how well the students bonded in such a short period of time. It's wonderful how even without realising it, you start getting closer with people you barely knew before this, even if you did the musical with them or you were in the same form. I hope this connection can be kept for the rest of the school years.

In general, Killary was all to do with leaving your comfort zone and trying out new things without the feeling of being judged by others since everyone is going through the exact same thing as you. This challenge was most evident during the « Turf Challenge » which most of the students surprisingly enjoyed. We all had a great time, whether it was overcoming some of our fears like heights, while completing "High Ropes" or the "Turf Challenge" socialising and sharing our experiences with each other.

I can't help but feel a sense of gratitude to Ms Roy (who organised the adventure), Ms Ní Mhairtín, Mr Boland, Mr Wall, Ms Ní Fhéinneadhá and Billy for the incredible adventure we all had. From exploring new places to sharing laughter and creating lasting memories, this trip has truly been a once-in-a-lifetime experience. It's amazing how being disconnected from our phones brought us closer together and allowed us to fully immerse ourselves in the moment. I will forever cherish the friendships forged and the lessons learned during this unforgettable journey.



UCD Maths Course By Colm Kavanagh

This year a number of TY students, Dasha Bokovenko, Matthew Burke and I were invited to attend the Maths Enrichment classes in UCD every Saturday. For the first class, we went into a small lecture theatre. The professor, Andrew Smith, gave a two hour lecture on very complicated and abstract mathematical topics. This was definitely a challenge as it was far more difficult than the Junior or Leaving Cert curriculum. It was hard to believe that people our age could grasp the complex ideas and abstract concepts of this programme, but fascinating to talk to and interact with such advanced individuals. There was a test on Saturday the 2nd of December to determine the Irish Olympiad team. We are still awaiting their results but are hopeful. It would be great to represent St. Gerard's and Ireland at the next competition in Bath, England in July.

BT Young Scientist- By Charlie Geelon

The BT Young Scientist 2024 was without a doubt one of the highlights of my Transition Year. The application process started in September, when I began thinking about what my project would be. I immediately looked at issues in the world today, specifically ones that impacted teenagers. One stood out by a landslide, this was teenage suicide. I began researching studies in relation to the links between social media and adolescent suicide rates. I immediately began to see that there was a direct correlation between these two areas. Huang's (2022) review of 133 samples, reported a moderate problematic link between problematic social media usage and depression/loneliness amongst students. I discovered that problematic areas within social media platforms are cyber victimisation (refers to the process of victimising others through the use of information and communication technologies), and self harm related social media. This study is especially important as it is a meta analysis which is a study that assesses the results of a large number of previous, high-quality, peer examined research to derive conclusions about that body of research. At this point on the journey of my project, I knew there was a problem that needed to be addressed. Over the coming days I compiled my application for the BT Young Scientist 2024, which was then submitted on the 1st of October 2023.



Once I received the exciting news that I had been accepted to the contest on the 27th of October, I began working on the technicalities of my project. It was by no means an easy process, at one point I was unsure whether I would be finished in time for the Exhibition. However, with the amazing help of Ms. Aylmer, I was delighted to be able to present my project in January.

The exhibition itself was an incredible experience. From the perspective of my project, I received a huge amount of public interest, being interviewed by RTE, for a podcast, and by multiple TD's. However what I will cherish the most from the exhibition is the friends I made that I am sure will last a lifetime.

In conclusion, while it is by no means an easy process, I would thoroughly recommend all budding TY students to apply to the BT Young Scientist. It really is an unforgettable experience.

Work Experience By Hamish Whitelaw

For Henry Rachwal's work experience he went to the Netherlands to the city of Delft. He was working for a company called Octofude. This company specialises in facade glass and steel working. They work with architects on a daily basis to try to turn dreams into reality. During his week with the company he worked with different departments. He worked from sales to engineering to structural engineering. During his time with each department he would be told about what jobs there were and what each job would entail. There would also be different activities that he would complete that were organised for him.

The most interesting part of Henry's work experience was meeting with the structural engineers. He thought this was the most interesting because he really enjoyed the stress test. This was a test where the glass would be smashed and then they would test if it was still durable. He told me that he got the most out of learning the process in which an architect turns a project into reality. Next I asked Henry if he would look to pursue a career in the structural engineering business. He told me he wouldn't because it contained quite a lot of mathematics in the job. He did tell me that the work environment was good and the culture in the company was fun.

When asked if he would recommend it as a work experience he said yes and would rate it 10/10.

For Conor Harty's work experience he went to St. Kieran's Primary School. While he was there he was helping out teaching and helping out with work that needed to be done.

Conor told me that the most interesting part of his work experience was meeting the kids he didn't know and trying to get to know them. Conor would recommend this work experience to others because he thought it was a good opportunity to help out and teach kids to read and write. I asked him if he would pursue a career in this and he said he would because he liked teaching. The thing that Conor got the most out of was learning how the kids dealt with different subjects.

Business Trip to Paris By Hannah Magee

I got the amazing opportunity to go on an international trip to Paris, France with thirty eight other TY students. Ms Scallan had been organising this trip for years and she was finally able to make it happen so I was very excited when my name was chosen out of the hat. I don't know what to expect from the business conference but I did feel curious as to what it was about. We arrived at the airport really early in the morning on Saturday and I was functioning on pure adrenaline. I tried to be prepared because I hate security in airports, and I also did not want to lose my passport or any important belongings. After my flight I was very tired but we immediately went on a bus tour around Paris.

Paris is a beautiful city and even though I had seen the architecture before, it still blew me away by how gorgeous it is. We saw famous buildings such as the Notre-Dame, the Arc de Triomphe, Luxembourg Palace and the Eiffel Tower. We ventured out in the big city by ourselves to explore and eat Parisian food. We then went up the Montparnasse Tower in Central Paris and I was very proud of myself for staying at the top the entire time because I am terrified of heights. I had achieved something I never thought I would do that day, and the views were incredible!

We spent two days in Disneyland. On the first day, I was a little tired but that didn't stop me from having a blast doing the rides. I don't normally do intense rides, but the first ride I did was a ride with a 360° loop and I wasn't prepared for it; however, it did give me adrenaline for the rest of the day.

I then went onto doing the most intensive rides in the park, such as the Tower of Terror and the Avengers ride. They were all really fun, but I don't think I'll do them again for a while.

We had the conference during day two of Disneyland. The conference was really good and very interesting. It was an eye opener for me because the panel were all inspiring and intriguing to listen to. My favourite entrepreneur was Louis Barnette. He began his chocolate career when he was twelve and he has been successful ever since. His life story was incredible and very moving, now wonder he had the determination to create such a unique and practical form of chocolate. I also listened to two other entrepreneurs talk and they both gave advice to young people that want to be future entrepreneurs. On the last day in Paris, we didn't do much. We went to the Stade de France and a shopping centre before heading to the airport.

As a group, we would like to thank Ms Scallan, Ms Broe, Mr Reidy, Danny, and Ms Fair collectively for taking the time to go around with us and make an effort to keep us all in line. They truly made the trip more enjoyable and because of this, we all created memories that will last a lifetime!



Work Experience Before Halloween By Hannah Magee

Work experience is a key part of T.Y. Already a number of students have completed work experience including the following....

Q: Where did you work for the additional work experience?

Isabel M: I worked in Cherrywood Educate Together National school for 7 days over the span of 4 weeks.

Isabelle L: For my first week of work experience, I went and did a 4 day long course in Davy's, Ireland's largest stockbroker from October 9th to the 12th.

Q: Why did you choose that company/organisation?

Isabel M: I chose this as it's something kind of out of the ordinary as a choice for work experience.

Isabelle L: I was fortunate to get one of the thirty places the programme had. Not only that, I wanted to keep my options open and explore every possible career choice, and this was an incredible opportunity that I didn't want to miss.

Q: What did you do whilst you were there and what do you think you learnt?

Isabel M: I helped my cousin who is an artist with workshops. She had to do these workshops with children to get inspiration for a final piece, which will be installed in early 2024. Something I learnt is that when you are working with children, particularly younger children and children with special needs, it's really important to keep changing what they are doing and know when to stop. This is because they can be distracted but it's also good to keep them entertained.

Isabelle L: Throughout the four days I was honestly surprised at the amount of information I had learned about the financial industry and stock markets. On the last day of the course, each person was put into small groups, and had to work together to create a stock pitch to present to over 100 parents / Davy employees. This was a challenge, but with it came great satisfaction.

Q: Final question, do you think the experience influenced your future career choice?

Isabel M: Although I really enjoyed my time and the work that I did, I don't think I could be an artist. For me I think I need a job where I know what I'm doing everyday and that is something that does not really exist in the job as an artist.

Isabelle L: Before this work experience, I hadn't properly considered a career in stockbroking, although now it is definitely a contender! Although I am not sure I will pursue a career in finance, I am really glad I completed this programme. At times this programme was challenging and fast paced, but I learned a lot and would definitely recommend it to anybody considering it.



Careers Evening By Uliana Nedinko

On the 21st of November at 7:30 pm students from 4th, 5th and 6th years had an opportunity to speak with people from different professions and postgraduate students who finished school and started college/university arranged by Ms Maguire. The evening was created so that students could get acquainted and delve deeper into those areas of future professions to which they plan to devote their lives.

The evening was possible thanks to the parents who agreed to share details from their professions. Each student had an opportunity to choose three areas of interest. Before entering, they gave out booklets with additional information about each parent who took part in the evening. Every 10 minutes, every student shared tables with one of three parents, who talked about their profession and students interested in the same field.

This event made it possible not only to look at professions of interest from different angles, but also to receive comments from people working in these areas. Very often, after graduating from college, students do not know what to do or what profession to choose, so it is very important to communicate with people who have connected their lives with a particular profession. It allows us to find out about their life path and what they consider their mistakes and the right decisions.

I would like to express my gratitude to all parents, students and teachers who took part in this evening. Through this event it helped us with one of the most difficult decisions in life - the choice of a personal path.

DSPCA By Charlie Geelon



On the 21st of October, a group of Transition Year students were lucky enough to get the opportunity to visit the DSPCA centre in Dublin. This opportunity arose due to the students' hard work through the organising of a bake sale which raised over €3000 for the organisation.

The trip was impactful and a great learning experience for the students who took part. It started by an educational talk being given from a member of the organisation, detailing the do's and don'ts of having and taking care of an animal. After this, the student's toured the grounds, getting to meet many friendly furry friends. To many of the student's dismay, no animals were allowed to be taken home!

Many thanks to Ms. Buckley and Simon for chaperoning and a huge thanks to Ms. Ní Fhéinneadha for organising the trip through the young social innovators module. Many of the students who did not take part are eager to continue carrying out charitable work through the course of the year.

Barista Course By Hamish Whitelaw

Between the 23rd and the 30th of November St. Gerard's TY students took part in the Barista Course. The purpose of this course was to introduce the students to how to make coffee .

We began with learning how to clean a coffee machine quickly by taking out the porta-filter and 'flushing' the machine. Next, we learned how to pull a shot of espresso, an essential component in the majority of coffees.

After the break we came back and learnt how to make hot chocolates. Something new was the different temperatures we had to try and get the

milk to and how some people like their milk burnt. Then we grasped how to froth milk by bringing the cup up and down to create a froth. The best part of the middle part of the course was probably doing the latte art. We were shown that to do latte art we had to pour from a height first then get lower to do the art. Then we sat down and learnt how to make different types of coffee.

After lunch it was time to put our new skills to the test against the customer. We prepared ourselves for the event by cleaning all of our stations. The customers started rolling in and the

coffee started to brew. One by one we knocked them off. The music in the background was spurring us on. There were multiple different roles required in our makeshift coffee shop. These included a runner who would get the cups to the baristas, then there were the baristas who were making the coffee and also there was the milk frother. Every person had a role and everyone did their best in their role.

Overall, the course was a hugely enjoyable experience as we learnt wonderful new skills while having fun with our friends.

PETER MCVERRY WORK EXPERIENCE

By Matthew Burke

In September, a group of Transition Year students completed work experience at the Peter McVerry Trust in the inner city in Dublin. Jack McGovern, Toby Lennon, Patrick Hanley, Finn Rankin, Robert Prestage and Daniel Hogan all wanted to learn more about the situation facing homeless people in Ireland today and do something about it. They believed taking this incredible opportunity would be an exciting way to achieve this.

The week started with meeting Fr. Peter McVerry and learning all about the inspiring work he and other volunteers do. Then they met homeless people and listened to their stories in a detox centre. They also visited a cafe that is run by the organisation. The highlight of the week for them was going to court in Dublin where people that the Peter McVerry Trust help are tried for petty crimes. Peter McVerry grew up in a poor family and he saw it as his vocation to help other people, according to Rob. Daniel explained that many homeless people end up in their situation not because of a stereotypical addiction to drugs or alcohol, but by having their home repossessed or family issues.

Toby told me that he met a nineteen year old man who was addicted to drugs in the detox centre and he told them all about the great work that the charity was doing to help him and so many others.



Finn described meeting a man called Ger in a cafe operated by former homeless people as “eye opening”. Ger explained how he was once a drug dealer and consumer and the dangers and horrors associated with the drug trade.

The six students all want to continue working with the Peter McVerry Trust in the future and they encourage other TY students to get involved with the charity. Having listened to the fantastic work our TY students completed, many other TY students have been inspired to get involved with the charity themselves.



JUNK KOUTURE DUBLIN CITY FINALIST

Junk Kouture

An interview with James McCann

By Hannah Magee

How did you learn about Junk Kouture?

Junk Kouture is something that I've always known about since I was really young, so since then I've always had an interest in it and I knew I wanted to get involved in it when I would be in fourth year.

What or who got you into fashion?

When I was around seven, I did sewing classes and I really found a passion for it but then I stopped when I was fourteen. Instead I started delivering my own sewing classes and I would teach other people.

What was the inspiration behind your design?

The inspiration for the look came from designers such as Harris Reed, and Paco Rabbanne also taking from chain mail and Simone Rocha's draping. I then drew up the design and I started collecting the materials like old road signs, bottle caps from bars around my area and fishing line.

What was the meaning behind the design?

The design symbolises the metaphorical shell or defence that people create to shield their innermost vulnerabilities, fears, or insecurities. As the outfit descends to the trousers the hard shell begins to break away signifying the letting in and trusting of others.

How did you gather your material for the outfit?

I was very lucky to have easy access to these resources, my dad was able to get me road signs from his work. For the bottle caps, I had to go to eight pubs everyday and ask for the bottle caps. They were actually really hard to get because the pubs regularly threw them away. I then drilled all the holes in them, spray painted them and weaved them through.

How long did it take to complete your design?

About two to three months. I found it easy to work on my own too, because I knew from the start what I wanted to do and I enjoy working independently as I have creative freedom.

How did you feel about your competition and the other competitors?

I was actually very surprised when I went in because the standard was very high this year compared to previous years. When I got there I was really nervous because I hadn't seen most of them before as some weren't online.

Do you think we should do Junk Kouture more in Gerard's?

I think if someone really wanted to do it, they could ask because if I'm being honest, it does take a lot of time and effort for both the student and the teacher. I was very lucky to have Ms Magee helping and supporting me. She has been wonderful.



MUSIC FESTIVAL

By Lucy Curran

On Thursday, the 26th of October, the annual St Gerard's School Music Festival took place in the Junior School Hall. It was irrefutably a night to remember, with pieces from Beethoven's 'Appassionata' to 'I'm Just Ken' from the Barbie Movie, there was something for everyone to enjoy. What was the highlight for me was the TYs who participated: Ava Browne, Colm Kavanagh, Dasha Bokovenko, Emma Rose Miller, Uliana Nedilko, Chloe Holohan, Charlie Geelon.

The evening commenced with the Junior Vocal Soloists followed by Junior Instrumental and Junior Groups. Witnessing each musician's talent and confidence on stage was a sight to behold, and a massive achievement for each individual, regardless of whether they took home a prize or not. However, those who did receive awards absolutely earned them, as they dazzled our distinguished judges with their performance. These people were Molly Browne in second, and Elodie White in first for the Junior Vocal Soloists, Rory Brennan Hobbs in the Junior Instrumental section, and Caitlin Park and Lily O' Sullivan in Junior Groups.

With the Junior Section complete it was time for the Seniors to perform. Backstage was filled with the sound of rehearsing instruments and voices, and the atmosphere was humming with a mix of nerves and excitement. First up was the Senior Groups section, with performances from the dramatic 'Phantom of the Opera' to the



romantic 'Can't Help Falling in Love'. Next up was the Senior Instrumental, once again containing a huge variety of acts, from piano sonatas to notes from a flute. Finally, to close the show was the most competitive section of all, the Senior Vocal Soloists. With the most participants of the night, the pressure was on, but every single performer rose to the challenge. At the end of each act all those spectating were confident that they had seen our winner, only for the next competitor to blow us away yet again. Ultimately, however, the judges managed to make this tough decision, and results were ready to be announced. In the Senior Groups section Emma Rose Miller and Ava Browne placed second,

with Chloe Holohan, Colm Kavanagh and Uliana Nedilko in first. Then, in the instrumental section Sadhbh McGloughin came third, with Charlotte Ballagh in second and Patrick Chen in first. Finally to close the entire evening, our Senior Vocal Soloists awardees were Charlie Geelon and Laura Hogan in fourth, Charlotte Finnegan Quirke in third, Katelyn Glass in second, and Eva Harbourne in first.

Overall the Music Festival was a hugely enjoyable experience, which I would recommend to all. Whether it be to participate, or merely spectate and support, it is a night filled with music, fun and laughter.





YSI By Ava Browne

Each TY class has the opportunity to take part in the Young Social Innovators Module (YSI). In this module the TY classes plan to raise money for a charity. This year the TY YSI class decided to do a bake sale to raise money for the DSPCA as you read about in the last edition, and to also hold a shoe box appeal.

The YSI class spent time arranging and organising a shoebox appeal to deliver gifts to children affected by poverty. This took place the week before exams. The TY YSI class spent time going around to the classes and making posters to spread awareness. This was to encourage students across the school to help out in any way they could. The charity chosen for this shoebox was Team Hope because the charity aims to help people living in poverty through the delivery of education, healthcare, protection, nutrition and skills building. This charity is chosen every year, and these boxes are given to kids of all ages for Christmas.



ST VINCENT DE PAUL By Hannah Magee



On Monday the 17th of December every student in TY took part in organising the Christmas hampers for the Saint Vincent de Paul Charitable Foundation. It is an annual tradition for TY students to take part in this wonderful charity event, so it was no surprise that everyone was delighted to be involved.

More than four hundred hampers were prepared and delivered to different locations in Wicklow. The parents, teachers and students who volunteered to help and deliver the hampers have our deepest appreciation. The deliveries would not have been

possible without their willingness to help out. We also want to express our gratitude to the SVP staff and teachers who helped to organise this event.

I would like to acknowledge the hard work and determination the 5th years and TY students put into creating the hampers that are given to those who are less fortunate. Charity work and volunteering is a noble cause, and a valuable way to spend a day for all the students who participated. Most of all, thank you to Ms O'Connell for arranging this.

RDA By Choni Wong-Cotter

The RDA is a service provided for the young children of St. Catherine's Special Education School at Ballintreskin Farm. The positive effects therapeutic horse riding can have on children with disabilities are life changing. The movement of the horse actually stimulates the brains and helps improve cognitive abilities, speech and motor skills. This service is run completely by volunteers who bring in their horses from 10:30 to 12 each Tuesday for the benefit of six interchanging children every week. It is an amazing experience that is open to some very fortunate TY students each year.

Every Tuesday a maximum of six or seven students from St. Gerard's leave school and make their way to Ballintreskin Farm for 10:10 in order to set up the arena and prepare the horses for the arrival of the children. At 10:30 the children of St. Catherine's come by bus and are escorted by their helpers into the arena where the TY students are waiting to help them onto the horses. Depending on the needs of the children there will generally be one TY student and one helper walking alongside the horse to ensure that the child is completely safe and comfortable. Once all the children are mounted and have two side walkers with them the lesson will begin and, depending on the group's abilities, we do several activities to engage with the children. At 11:30 the kids dismount and are brought safely back to the bus while another group comes in and gets mounted on the horses. After both groups are brought back to school at 12, all the TY students untack the horses, put them back into the trailers and tidy up the arena. The students then arrive back at school in time for lunch and afternoon classes.



This is extremely rewarding work that I would suggest for every TY student if given the opportunity. We get so much out of it when the little kids smile at you or laugh while petting a horse: it is an amazing feeling that few other things can give. Giving back to the community is a part of TY that should be experienced to the fullest.

Difference Day By Cuan Woods

On the 19th of March, our TY students spent the day at Camphill Community Centre, Thomastown. Camphill Communities of Ireland is part of an international movement working with people with intellectual disabilities and other kinds of special needs. Originally created by war refugees in Scotland almost 70 years ago, today, Camphill has over 100 communities in 20 countries.

Rather than going to school normally, the TY's helped to renovate the herb garden and build a seating and barbecue area.

The TY's volunteered to help for the day and it was great to see how committed everyone was to the task at hand. Most of the work involved digging up weeds from the flower beds and adding new soil, creating new gravel paths, and building a seating area for a new barbecue that we also had to make. The TY's left the school at 7:45 in the morning and returned at 6:00 in the afternoon, having spent the whole day hard at work.

Although it was a challenging task, the Transition Year students really showed their dedication to the cause and tried their best to help renovate the area to make it an overall better experience for the residents of the Camphill Community. Despite the fact that they had to get up very early in the morning and work through the cold weather, the TY's gave it their all and it was all worthwhile knowing that all of the effort spent is going to a good cause helping those with intellectual disabilities and special needs.

This was a super experience for us and really built on the relationships developed since the musical. It was a really fulfilling day. Thanks to Denis O' Reilly and his team for facilitating this.



Three Peak Challenge

By Cathy Keogh

On Friday the 26th of April, all the TY students participated in the Three Peaks Challenge in aid of Difference Day partner The Camphill Community.

We set off to the big Sugarloaf. This was probably the best part of the hike I think. It was challenging but not too difficult and the views from the shoulder were really pretty.

The small Sugarloaf was my least favorite out of the three mountains because the last part of the hike to the top was very steep. But again the view from the top was stunning and we took a well needed lunch break at the top.

The final peak was nice and relaxed. It was a gradual hill and only got challenging at the top. I felt such a sense of relief and accomplishment when we reached the top of Bray Head. #

What was great about this hike was that it captured the evolution of the group. It was a really super way to finish out the year and to do it for such a good cause was great.

This was a sponsored hike to raise money for Camphill Communities of Ireland residential center in Kilkenny. As a year we raised over €7,000 for the centre.



Photography - By Amelia Cobbe

On the 15th and the 22nd of November we were lucky enough to have the opportunity to take part in a photography course. We had a brilliant instructor, Elise, who took us through different aspects of photography such as lighting, timing, angles and the different colour tones in photos.

After talking about different famous photographers and their work, we headed outside to put what we had learnt to use. We walked all around the school and took the time to take numerous photos of anything that looked interesting or the lighting was good. Every now and then Elise would point out and take a picture herself to show us what to look for which was really helpful as it could be complicated to figure out where the lighting was coming from and what the best way to go about showing it in a photo was.

After taking hundreds of photos, we headed inside where we were talked through how to use "snapseed" to edit our images. After experimenting with that for a while we then each picked our three favourite pictures and sent them to Elise to show to everyone else. We then went through everyone's photos and offered thoughts and opinions on each by running through what we had learnt.

This was a great workshop that I and my peers thoroughly enjoyed as it was very useful and informative.



Drivers Ed - By Cathy Keogh

On the 23rd and 24th of October some of the students in the year took part in the drivers ed course. This course was facilitated by the Irish School of Excellence. The course was split into two parts, a classroom section and a practical section.

The classroom section consisted of taking practice theory tests, hazard perception tests and learning about the cost of insurance. Each student took the practice theory test twice, most improving the second time around, although still no one managed to pass! After completing the theory test we moved onto the hazard perception test. This test consisted of a series of video clips and we just had to click on the screen when we felt a hazard was present. Finally we got to research and find our dream car off Donedeal. After

carefully selecting the best car we went onto AXAs website and researched how much it would cost annually to insure such a car annually.

The second part, and in my opinion the best part, was the practical section of this course. During this section of the course we learned lots of very useful information. We did a crash course in mechanics where we learned all about the engine and how to change a tire. No need for the AA. After completing this we moved onto driving! We got to do laps of the car park and even practised reversing out of a parking space!

In conclusion, I think this course is a very useful course to have done as it taught the TY students helpful life skills that will come in handy in years to come.



Film Workshop

By Amber O'Donohoe

Over the week of the 2nd of October our year took part in a film workshop. This was a really interesting workshop, that each form took part in for a day. Our whole year was very excited for this workshop as it was an opportunity that none of us had gotten before, and was also a chance to see how our favourite movies and shows are really made.

We started off the day by making our own short films. From this we were able to see why some people's films worked better than others, and were able to learn about all the various aspects that go into film-making. We talked about lighting, the positioning of the camera and the set up of a scene. I personally didn't know much about how a film is made, and how much really goes into making one scene. I was amazed at how much a small element such as lighting could change the mood of a scene and the atmosphere.

After this each person was given a job to do such as director, camera operator or sound engineer, to name but a few, so that we could film our own scenes. This was a really fun part of the day as we all didn't know how any of the equipment worked, and didn't stop laughing and learning for the whole day! This workshop also gave each new form class the opportunity to mix with each other while working together during this workshop.

Overall this workshop was really good fun and an experience we won't forget soon!



Law Ed. Workshop - By Hamish Whitelaw

The T.Y Law Ed. Workshop commenced on the 11th of October and the 13th of October 2023. Two groups completed the workshop which was run by a barrister named Jack.

At the start of the Workshop we were introduced to Irish law and how it worked throughout the rest of the course we covered several different topics for example we covered all the different offences such as manslaughter, drug offences and murder. We also covered different cases such as the Ana Kriegel case. At the end of the course after listening about all the different information we got to do a Mock Trial. In this part we got to experience a court case and act out different roles in the case. Some of the roles were Witnesses, Defence Attorneys, Victims, Judge, Jury and Prosecutors.

74 people in the year completed the workshop and here are what some of them thought about the course. I interviewed two people about it. First I asked them,

Did you enjoy it ?

Bobby Sherwin enjoyed it because 'It was educational and fun but interesting at the same time.'

Matthew Burke 'Really enjoyed it because it was really eye opening and gave him a great insight to the legal profession'

What was their favourite part of the course?

Bobby Sherwin said that 'the mock trial was their favourite part because it was interactive and learned how the courtroom worked at the same time.'

Matthew Burkes' favourite part of the course was 'Being the judge and handing a sentence to the criminals. It was a fun and educational way to learn something new.

Would you recommend it to others?

Bobby Sherwin would recommend it 'because it sets you up for the option of a future course.'

Matthew Burke would 'absolutely recommend it to others because it teaches people how a courtroom operates and the value of law in our society.'

Overall I would say that the course was a pretty good success for the year. The overall reception about the course was good and everyone left having learnt something new.

The Ploughing Championships 2023

By Hannah Magee

This year, many TY students went to the Ploughing Championships. Given the location of the Ploughing Championships it was accessible to many visitors, including schools. The championships is a great place to create memories with friends, there is an extensive area of carnival rides and trailers that provide food, such as burgers, pizza and cuisine from various countries. I bumped into a TY student working at the championships, and was lucky to get the opportunity to talk to her. She had spent three full days experiencing the wonderful atmosphere, highs and lows of the Irish weather and really importantly dealing with the public at the vendor stands.



Feedback from Daria...

Dasha Bokovenko worked in the hospitality sector in "The Crepe Box". She said the days were very long, as she had to leave the house at 4:30 A.M and head into Loais. She learnt how to make crêpes using special griddles and a batter spreader, how to fill them with different savoury and sweet fillings and how to make different types of hot drinks, like coffees and hot chocolate and even some of the basics about latte art. Some of the skills that she said she improved were her social skills. In the hospitality sector, you have to work with people, talk to them clearly, correctly and politely. She mentioned as she was taking the orders and charging the customers, her mathematical skills were beneficial as she had to work under a lot of pressure. Time pressure was her biggest enemy, but the most important thing is to still maintain the quality of the product. Working under such pressure was challenging, but she kept a positive and patient outlook. She has many positive memories from the event and she said she will definitely work at such a festival again if she has a chance.

Next year I look forward to attending the Ploughing Championships and experiencing all that's on offer. Hopefully the weather will be on our side, as an outdoor event the weather is highly impacting on the event's success!

Gambling Talk with Tony O'Reilly - by Colm Kavanagh

One of the eye opening events of the year whole year gathered for a talk about gambling with Tony O'Reilly. He has recovered from a serious gambling addiction that left him with time to serve in prison. This talk was not just informative but it also gave a different perspective on an addiction to gambling. As gambling is so deeply embedded in our culture, it is almost impossible to stay out of. While many people gamble, not many have an addiction to it.

This made us think what's so dangerous about a gambling addiction? Well, it's the fact that anyone can very easily hide an addiction to gambling unlike an addiction to drugs or alcohol. Due to this fact it can get very serious and lead to huge mental health and financial problems.

Tony also talked about the science of gambling. When you win a bet a "feel good" chemical called dopamine is sent to your brain. People can easily get addicted to the feelings produced. The fact that you can develop a tolerance to this is even more dangerous as you need to bet large sums of money to get the dopamine.

Gambling can also act as a form of escapism for people addicted. They rely on it. From this point on, it is very hard to escape the gambling cycle. Tony managed to get a very strong and important message to us all through his life story and unfortunate encounters with gambling.

This talk was very beneficial and will be useful to remember in the future.

Hospitality Course

By Daria Bokovenko

All of the students in our year had a wonderful opportunity to complete the "Hospitality Skills Course" with Fiona Dunne. The aim of this course is to provide the opportunity to develop our own natural abilities and understanding of the hospitality industry and to gain experience in catering. It also helps us to explore our creative side and develop confidence in working within the catering industry. Some of the modules that were included in the course are:

Identification of cutlery (setting up the table for different meals); Carrying plates;

Taking an order (different systems used in cafes and restaurants); Serving food and drinks; Customer Service and Handling customer complaints.

We staged multiple situations that are the most common complaints in the catering industry, such as a customer being served cold soup or having a glass with some lipstick on it. We found out that through following a system "LAST" (listen, apologise, solve and support), different sorts of issues can be solved.

The other thing we looked at was how to carry plates. At first we were surprised by how professionally Fiona could do that, but in a matter of thirty minutes of training, it didn't seem that hard at all anymore. Later on, she also poured some water into them and we had to walk and try not to spill it. And all of us succeeded, no broken plates!

One of the most important parts of this course was that it explained what qualities and skills we need to have in order to get a job. This is really useful, especially for people our age that are looking for work placements all the time.

After this course, my classmates and I felt much more confident about going to an interview. We now know how to write a CV properly and what to include in it, and how to present it and ourselves in a job interview. We know how to act, and watch our body language.

The "Hospitality Skills" course is a wonderful, valuable and positive experience that covers numerous different aspects. We have learned tons of new important things and I would feel much more confident now if I was to get a job. This course is something I would highly recommend to everyone.



Self Defence - By Choni Wong Cotter

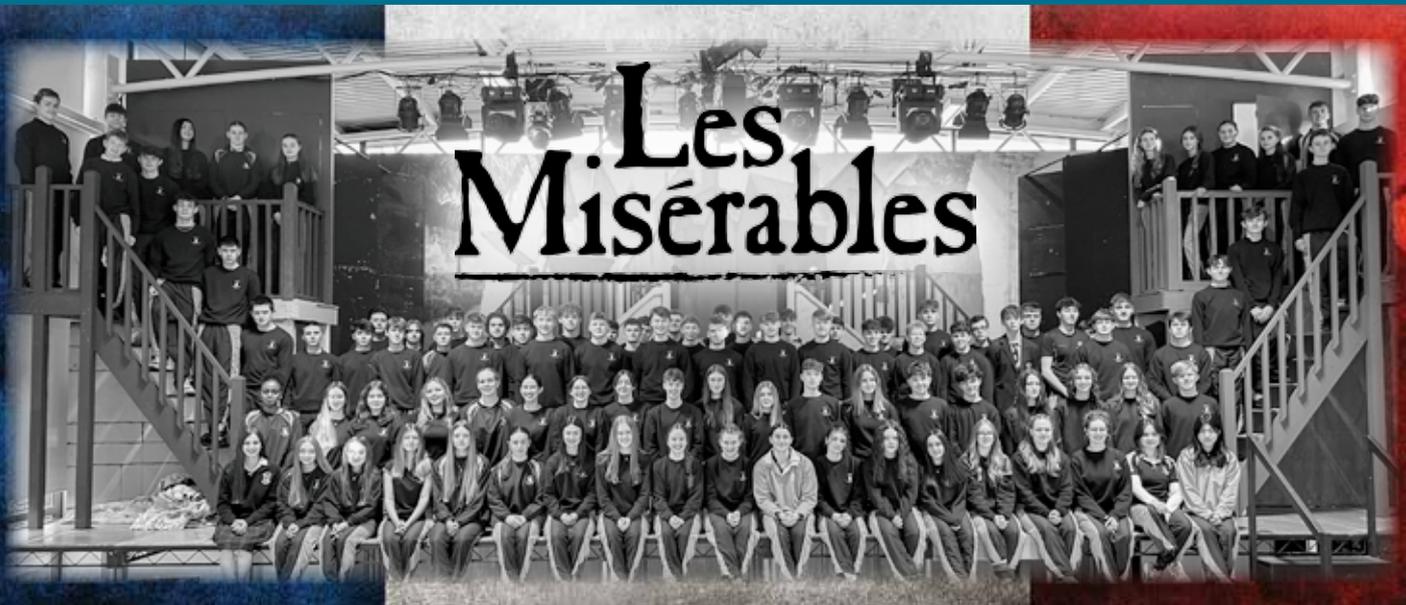
In November the TY students had a Self Defence course. This included a two hour talk on what an attacker looks for in a victim, a full day of practical defence work and an assessment in order for us to get a certificate in self defence.

Every single part of this course was enjoyable and extremely important. I would really recommend taking part in this course and getting the most out of it because it is a skill that will serve you well all your life. In the theory section of this workshop our instructor, Darragh, spoke about different levels of awareness, how to present yourself as alert and cautious (so as not to be chosen as a victim), and how to read a situation in order to keep yourself safe.

The practical part of the course was the most fun and important aspect in my opinion. We learned different strikes and attack moves: one person in each group had pads on and we took turns using the moves we had learned. There were several different parts of the practical course including offensive and defensive moves, how to avoid attacks, and ground fighting. This was the best part of the entire course, if not the entire year, as you get the chance to mercilessly wrestle on mats with your friends.

The Self Defence course is a course that I would recommend for every student in TY as it gives students the opportunity to learn an important life skill while at the same time having fun. Take this opportunity as it is the only time no one will separate you and your friend in school in the middle of a wrestling match.





WHO AM I? MEET THE LEADS by Cathy Keogh + Choni Wong Cotter



Jean Valjean: Matt Fitzpatrick

Have you ever done drama before? No, I have never done any singing or drama or ever performed on stage before.

Did you get your first choice of part?

No, I actually wasn't going for the main part. I just wanted to be a background character but I ended up getting the main part in my audition.

What are you struggling the most with so far?

I'd say the high notes in the songs and singing all day can be hard. Learning all the words is also difficult because I have a lot of songs.

What's your favourite song from the musical?

'Bring Him Home' because it's a really hard song to pull off but once you do it's very satisfying.

How do you feel about the fight scene between you and Javert?

It's funny trying not to laugh on stage. I feel like we won't laugh when the parents are there or the Junior School is there but in rehearsal it's hard not to.

Do you wish we had a different musical, and how do you feel about the lack of talking and dancing in this musical?

I don't really know many musicals but I think it's cool because I've heard it's one of the best musicals Gerard's has done and it's the ten year anniversary. As for the lack of talking and dancing I feel like it's going to add a certain challenge because it's all singing, but I think it's cool to be a part of that.



Javert: Sam Fennely

Have you ever done drama before?

I have, I did drama for a couple of years when I was younger in drama school.

Did you get your first choice of part?

I did. Javert was my first choice because I thought the role fit me well and I especially thought I could sing 'Stars' well so that's why I went for it.

What are you struggling the most with so far?

What I am struggling the most with is probably the fast bits in some of the songs. The pace picks up and the tempo picks up so I struggle with that sometimes.

What's your favourite song from the musical? 'One Day More' would be my favourite song because everyone is in the song and I just like the sound of it.

How do you feel about the fight scene between you and Javert?

It's funny trying not to laugh on stage. I feel like we won't laugh when the parents are there or the Junior School is there but in rehearsal it's hard not to.

Do you wish we had a different musical, and how do you feel about the lack of talking and dancing in this musical?

No, I think Les Mis was a good musical for us all to do and has lots of characters so everyone can be involved. I think we have a good year for voices, lots of people can sing, so it doesn't have to be a talking and dancing play every time.



Marius: Colm Kavanagh

Have you ever done drama before?

I did drama and musicals in primary school and then I'm doing drama in school now.

Did you get your first choice of part?

Yes, Marius was my first choice. I didn't want to go for Valjean because a lot of his songs are quite high and I don't have the vocal range for that. I'm really happy with the character that I got..

What are you struggling the most with so far?

I'm struggling with the high notes and the acting. I just need to try to increase my vocal range, hopefully Chris will help with that. I mean some of it is a bit challenging because some of the lines are so hard to sing, you really just have to go for the notes.

What's your favourite song from the musical?

I like 'One Day More'. I love when everyone else sings together.



Cosette: Ulianna Nedilko

Have you ever done drama before?

I started drama this year. It was really exciting for me because I love drama and I did some drama in Ukraine when I was small like some concerts and singing in some little dramas but not much. I really like movies and it's like a little place in my heart and I'm so obsessed with this.

Did you get your first choice of part?

When I saw Cosette I instantly fell in love with her part.

What are you struggling the most with so far?

Performance because sometimes I'm really nervous to perform and it's hard but I know all of the people who perform on the stage and who have a part with lines they all will be so nervous and I just need to trust my voice.

What's your favourite song?

I would say 'In My Life' because it makes sense of Cosette's life, in particular you can understand her because this song shows you who she is.

Do you wish we had a different play, and how do you feel about the lack of talking/dancing?

I was surprised about the dancing in the musical because it's really important to show what happened in this time of history, but now I'm happy with this and I like the dances we have which I saw. For example, in "Lovely Ladies" and "Master of the House" I think they're really good. I'm happy with our play though.



Eponine Alice O'Leary

Have you ever done drama before?

Yes, I did in Junior School. I did it outside of the school as well.

What are you struggling the most with?

Learning lines is kind of a struggle because my lines are in loads of songs in random places. I really like the way most of my songs are intertwined with other songs like 'A Heart Full of Love' that I do with Colm and Uliana, but it can be difficult to get my timing right for when I come in.

Did you get your first choice of part?

I was stuck for who I'd rather be, Fantine or Eponine. I

was leaning more toward Fantine because of her main song 'I Dreamed a Dream' but I'm happy with Eponine because I prefer her other songs. I think she's a good part as she's a lead role and I like that she's kind of irrelevant. She doesn't have anyone who loves her, but I think it's funny the way Eponine is kind of the third wheel in a relationship, she's like a nobody that people don't really care about.

What's your favourite song from the play?

'One day more', I really like it 'cause loads of people are in it and the harmony lines are really satisfying to hear.

Do you wish we had a different play, and how do you feel about the lack of talking and dancing in this play?

I think the lack of talking is good because it makes it easier to learn the lines because if they're talking lines, for me, I think it's harder to learn them. The lack of dancing is kind of sad 'cause that's the most fun. For the time we have I feel like it's kind of stressful but I do like the play very much.



Enjolras: Charlie Geelon

Have you ever done drama before?

Yeah, from the age of 8 I was in a drama agency and I made it up to grade 7. I also did numerous acting ads and commercials such as Homestore and More, Samsung and Kerry Gold.

Did you get your first choice of part?

No, I didn't. I originally wanted to be Jean Valjean but I did not have the vocal range for it.

What are you struggling the most with?

Definitely the vocal range of the part. There I was stuck for who I'd rather be, Fantine or Eponine. I was leaning more toward Fantine because of her main song 'I Dreamed a Dream' but I'm happy with Eponine because I prefer her other songs. I think she's a good part as she's a lead role and I like that she's kind of irrelevant. She doesn't have anyone who loves her, but I think it's funny the way Eponine is kind of the third wheel in a relationship, she's like a nobody that people don't really care about.

What's your favourite song from the play?

I think 'Stars' is probably the best solo song and I did that for my first audition. I loved learning it and it got me into Les Mis. But my initial favourite song when I first watched the movie was 'Do You Hear the People Sing'.

Do you wish we had a different play, and how do you feel about the lack of talking and dancing in this play?

No, absolutely not. This would definitely be my dream musical to do. In regards to the talking and dancing I'm delighted there is no dancing because I'm very uncoordinated and I'd say that could knock me down a few roles. Even today when we were doing 'One Day More' I could barely do the marching. I think the talking you don't really notice as much as there is so much emotion in the actual singing of the songs you could almost say a lot of it is reciting rather than singing.



Madame Thenardier: Isabelle Lynch

Have you ever done drama before?

Yes I did drama all the way up through primary school with Mrs Carney and I always loved that.

Did you get your first choice of part?

I think so. There's not that many female lead roles in this play so I first really wanted Eponine because I love the song 'On My Own'. I originally really wanted her and then one day I decided to audition for Madame Thenardier. I was surprised at first when I got it and for a second I was a tiny bit disappointed but now I am really happy with my role as I think I am more suited to it than the other parts.

What are you struggling the most with so far?

I am struggling with getting fully into the character. That will just have to be something I get used to the more I do it, because I feel like when you're not on stage and just practising nobody is giving 100%, no one is fully their character, but that will change closer to the time.

What's your favourite song from the musical?

'I love 'Master of the House' because it's just a bit of fun and everyone is singing and dancing. I'm up on a table at one point, as long as the table doesn't break it's fun.

Do you wish we had a different play?

When it was announced at first I was like oh god this is so boring, but the more you listen to the songs and the more you do practise it actually becomes really fun. My part is very different to the others as it is more fun than serious, so it's a bit of fun for me! I am definitely really happy with it now.

Thenardier Shane Kyne

Have you ever done drama before?

No, I have never done drama before.

Did you get your first choice of part?

I didn't really know what I wanted. I just auditioned.

What are you struggling the most with so far? The acting while singing, it can be hard to do both.

What's your favourite song from the musical? 'One Day More' because it's very catchy and I like the way we are all singing in it.

Do you wish we had a different play?

No really, this one suits our year pretty well. I think it's pretty good because we have a very strong singing year, it's good.



Fantine: Lucy Curran

Have you ever done drama before?

No I haven't, this is my first time. It's never really been something I have thought about, but I did speech and drama very briefly in the Junior School.

Did you get your first choice of part?

I did. I was only auditioning for Fantine because I hoped if I did well enough I would get another smaller role with a few lines. I was really shocked when I actually got the part but I was delighted.

What are you struggling the most with so far?

I like 'One Day More'. I think everyone singing together is really cool especially when the ensemble comes in for the big final note. My favourite of the songs I'm in is 'I Dreamed a Dream' as it is the only song in the soundtrack I had heard before starting the musical.

What's your favourite song from the musical?

'One Day More' because it's very catchy and I like the way we are all singing in it.

Do you wish we had a different play, and how do you feel about the lack of talking and dancing in this play? Not really, this one suits our year pretty well. I think it's pretty good because we have a very strong singing year, it's good.



Little Cosette: Choni Wongcotter

Have you ever done drama before?

I have done drama since I was five, I was with an acting agency for a bit but I lost all that in Covid so I'm really loving being back at it with the musical.

Did you get your first choice of part?

In all honesty I didn't even consider Little Cosette because I thought like everyone that it would be played by a first year, but I'm finding out I make a pretty good eight year old, awesome, and I'm pretty happy with that.

What are you struggling the most with so far?

I was struggling with actually walking up onto the stage in front of my year (mostly Ms Olohan) because I only ever did plays before rather than musicals, but drama is what I love and I wanna do it well.

What's your favourite song from the musical? 'One I love every song in this musical, now my favourite musical, but my top is probably 'Can You Hear the People Sing?', when everyone sings together I feel things.

Do you wish we had a different play, and how do you feel about the lack of talking and dancing in this play?

Doing this play especially when it's so loved is amazing and I wouldn't wanna change that. Talking and dancing are my favourite parts of theatre but this play combined with the incredible singers we have makes it so exciting that no matter what I wanna be a part of it.

LOVELY LADIES' - INSIDE THE WARDROBE By Amber O'Donohoe

This is an interview with James McCann who designed the 'Lovely Ladies' costumes. He is making all the Lovely Lady costumes along with curating the rest of the costumes for our TY musical Les Misérables.

What inspired you for the costumes? Marie Antoinette, 16th century France, and photographs from the internet of paintings of people wearing old aristocratic dresses from the period of the play.

When did you start getting into fashion? I've always liked it but I started properly

making clothes at seven.

Any costume in particular that you're really excited to make? My own it's absolutely fab

How long does it take to make a costume? It depends, normally about five hours but I could make one in a night if I had to.

Have you done anything like this before? I've done Junk Kouture and I've been Young Designer of the Year two years in a row

Who's your inspiration? Harris Reed and Jean Paul Gaultier.

What do you want to do when you're older? I want to be in high fashion and couture and be the creative director of a fashion house like Schiaparelli, Alexander McQueen or Hermes.

Is there a path to follow to do this? I want to do a BA in woman's wear in Central St Martins.

What was the hardest part of making the costumes? Making them and altering them to the actors.

Where are you sourcing the materials? The Fabric Outlet in Kildare, everything



is five euro a metre it's fabulous.

Thanks so much to James for his hard work and fabulous costumes!

The First Attack'- Opening night review

By Ava Browne

The Transition Year students performed the musical Les Misérables. This production took place over the course of four days, there were seven shows produced from the 5th to the 8th of February. Behind the scenes there was a huge amount of work put in.

The opening night for this amazing show took place on the 5th of February. Although it was the first time that the TY students performed in front of an audience, everyone was amazed by the overall performance and talent that was produced over such a short period of time!

All students gave it their all, and everyone lived up to the high bar that was set from many years ago. Although all students performed well, there were definitely some who stood out and managed to completely indulge in their character. Valjean, who was played by Matthew Fitzpatrick, and Javert, who was played by Sam Fennely, completely played their characters with 100% effort. Their performances resulted in a standing ovation that went along with both of their amazing solos. On the acting side of things the Thenadiers managed to put in an incredible performance. The acting level that was produced by the Thenadiers left the audience in shock, they were definitely one of the audience's favourite from their amazing performance to their funny comments! There was incredible light and sound production throughout the musical, thanks to the band and all the people working on set. The sound and light effects really stood out during the barricade.

Along with Ms Olohan conducting the students it became an overall amazing performance.





Soroptimist Public Speaking Competition By Lucy Curran

On Saturday, the 11th of November, the Soroptimist Public Speaking Competition took place in Marino Community Special School. This competition was a hugely enjoyable and informative experience for all who participated.

Prior to the day, a list of topics, each accompanied by a quote, was sent out for every competitor to choose from. As a result, it was fascinating to listen to each speech and hear the unique interpretations of each quote by different speakers. From St Gerard's School, myself and fifth year Laura Hogan competed, delivering our speeches to the best of our ability. Laura even went first, opening the day with an excellent start. The variety of subjects discussed was amazing, from the importance of women in politics to how words only hurt if you let them. What was amazing was that the personality of each participant shone through in their speech.

Unfortunately, neither St Gerard's representative placed in this competition, but due to the incredibly high standard of our fellow competitors we were both proud to have done the best we can, and still walked away feeling proud.

UCD Debates By Daria Bokovenko

This term, three of our TY students; Lucy Curran, Charlie Geelon and Daria Bokovenko, had a wonderful opportunity to take part in The Leinster Schools' Debating Competition, based in UCD.

Debating is really useful for school, but also life in general, as we end up getting a better sense of what's going on in the world, we gain the ability to challenge ideas around us and get a handle on what we think of important issues. We prepared our speeches based on facts and statistics and presented them to other teams from different schools. In total, we have completed two rounds of debates so far. We rebutted, offered Points of Information, and listened to other speaker's ideas from their point of view. We became better at public speaking, presenting our arguments and we learned from our mistakes which is the most important in the life of an individual.

Overall, The Leinster Schools' Debating Competition was an important and valuable experience to all the participants and it is worth it to try at least once in your life.

Pro Am Debating By Lucy Curran

On Tuesday, the 14th of November, the Pro-Am Debating competition took place in Trinity College. This was a hugely enjoyable and informative experience for Charlie Geelon and I.

The way this competition operated was each secondary school student, or am, was paired with a college student, or pro. From then on there were three rounds, each of which were preceded by fifteen minutes of preparation time. These motions varied hugely, ranging from the damages of social media, to a hypothetical situation involving Batman. This was both enjoyable and different, as up until that point any debating motions I had ever encountered were always serious. For this reason, it was a welcome and refreshing change.

Once these three rounds were completed it was time to hear who had made it into the final. While Charlie and his pro did not progress, I was lucky enough to make it to the Gold Final. For both of us it was a super event and exposed us to a level of debating that we had not encountered before. I would absolutely recommend all TYs participate in this competition and look forward to competing in similar events in the future.

Oxford Schools Debates - By Charlie Geelon

On the 10th of March, I, alongside fellow Transition Year student Lucy Curran, got the incredible opportunity to participate in the Oxford World School Debates 2024. Over the course of the day, we competed in four rounds of debating. The motions covered a variety of different obscure topics, one example being "this house believes that parents should not teach children about their own conceptions of the afterlife".

I think as a pair we were immediately taken aback by the standard of the competition, with teams coming from across the globe solely to compete. However, we absolutely rose to the challenge, and over the four rounds we placed first, second and fourth twice. Ultimately however we unfortunately did not progress to the semi finals of the competition however it was an incredible experience nonetheless. We hope to continue to further our skills and compete to an even higher standard next year.



Strasbourg Trip By Lucy Curran

Throughout the course of this year I took part in the Rotary Ireland Youth Leadership Competition, completing several rounds of interviews and presentations for a panel of judges. Ultimately this process led to me being awarded an absolutely unforgettable trip to the European Parliament in Strasbourg.

The trip was a whirlwind of activity, with each day beginning bright and early. On Monday we paid a visit to Belfast City Hall, posing questions to the High Sheriff. We then travelled to Stormont where we were able to sit in on discussions taking place on a range of subjects from road traffic to childcare.

The following Tuesday morning we were given a presentation in the EU Liaison Office about the importance of voting for young people, before being taken on a fascinating tour of the Masonic Hall. Next we visited the Dáil, touring the building and sitting in on some of the debates. Following this we met and posed questions to many politicians in the Dáil Bar including Alan Farrell, Mairead Farrell, Norma Foley, Jack Chambers and even Micheal Martin.

Wednesday, although the longest day of all, was more relaxed, filled with travel and exploration of Strasbourg city. The following morning, however, marked the beginning of the highlight of the whole trip. In the European Parliament we were given the chance to meet young people from other countries across the EU participating in the event, before entering the Hemicycle to begin the day's events. Firstly we were welcomed by EU Parliament President Roberta Metsola and had Q&A sessions with Robert Zile and Vivienne Halleux. I opened the interaction by posing a question to Vivienne Halleux, becoming the first student from any of



the participating countries to speak in the Hemicycle. I also asked a question to Robert Zile about steps being taken to combat the cost of living crisis, contributed to multiple of the cuff discussions, and observed a prepared debate on the EU's "Zero Pollution Ambition".

On Friday we were once again up early to maximise the amount of time we could spend in Strasbourg. My friends and I toured the city, popping into vintage shops, buying souvenirs for family and friends, eating delicious food and taking photos of the beautiful buildings.

Our goodbyes in Dublin Airport once home, although sad, were filled with satisfaction at what we had achieved. Each of us had arrived home with newfound friends for life and memories that will stay with us for the rest of our lives.



Namibia By Colm Kavanagh



A group of eight TY boys went to Namibia with a team called the Kingsley Holgate Foundation which was doing a trip called the Africa Odyssey. According to Jack, they decided to join the group in Namibia because it is a safer country in Africa. Visiting Namibia “opened our eyes” to a vast inequality as both “immense wealth and grinding poverty” sat side by side. Shane Kyne’s father and has gone on expeditions before with this group and so he helped the boys organise their trip and communicate with the foundation.

They all had to raise money for the trip. The goal was €50,000 and they raised that by setting up fundraising events. They sold ice cream in school as well as having a go fund me page. They went swimming to raise awareness and money also.

Throughout the trip there was about 3000 km of driving starting in the capital, Windhug. They stopped out in little towns along the way to give out mosquito nets, play football with the villagers and speak with them about their lives and how they live. The boys did some conservation work to stop people from selling rhino horns through teaching kids about the practice and how to stop it.

One thing that stuck out to Jack was the way they lived. When they went to a tribe they found that the people were living very simply and without technology. All they really worried about was their cattle. As well as that all the kids were so well mannered and never took anything for granted, which Jack said was such a great thing to be able to do.

The trip was definitely such a great experience and it is amazing that the boys were able to go - Finn Rankin, Shane Kyne, Patrick Hanley, Ruairí Phillips, Robert Prestage, Jack McGovern, Dan Hogan





European Youth Parliament

By Matthew Burke



My whole life, I have had a strong interest in current affairs, politics and social issues that affect everyone in our society. I was delighted to continue on from other similar activities I have been involved with this year by participating in the European Youth Parliament recently. Both Jack Leahy and I had a great experience.

The first part of the day was the opening ceremony. I was assigned to be on the ENVI 2 committee. It was fascinating to be a part of a melting pot of different cultures and nationalities from around Europe. Our brief was to research the problems facing people with intellectual disabilities of all ages in Europe, and to discover solutions to improve their lives. It was shocking to see how our system has failed these people, from the moment they are born until old age. After much brainstorming and reading firsthand accounts from people in the intellectually disabled community, we created a list of what we believe to be the five most pressing issues facing this cohort across Europe.

Upon making these findings, we were proud to begin creating solutions. It was the final part of a terrific first day at EYP. After much research and productive deliberation we came up with eight proposals on how to solve them.

The following day we were going to present our proposals to our fellow delegates and the jurors. My favourite part of the weekend was the round of open debate where we could share our opinions on the problems being discussed and search for weaknesses in their arguments. Our committee worked very effectively at this.

At the end of the day, it was our committee's opportunity to share our proposals. Our opening speech went remarkably well and we did a fantastic job rebuking the other committee's scrutiny of our proposals. After the debate, I gave our closing speech. I was delighted with how it went and I believe that it helped encourage some other delegates who were undecided to back our proposal. Our proposals were then voted on and it was easily passed, with 45 votes in favour, 16 against and 6 abstaining.

I loved EYP from start to end. It covered issues that I have been passionate about for a very long time. I am very grateful for the opportunity to participate in something like this. The Law Society of Ireland were very generous to lend their spectacular building to hold the event.



Ethiopia Trip By Charlie Geelon

In March, a group of 14 transition year girls travelled to Ethiopia on a charitable trip. I got the opportunity to talk to Thea Whelehan who gave me an insightful rundown of the trip.

How did you get the opportunity to participate in this amazing trip?

One of my best friends Alice is of Ethiopian descent and she decided to bring a group of her friends with her. We had always known from a young age that Alice's mother Anne had planned on doing this trip as she had done previous similar journeys with Alice's sister.

What were the primary goals/objectives of the trip?

Our main project was in Aleltu which was one of Anne's schools where women and children go there for a year. While the kids are in school, the teacher's train the mothers on how they can live a sustainable life and create a living for themselves.

What work did you specifically do?

The 14 girls who travelled over did a lot of painting in the classrooms of schools, a lot of playing with the kids. On one of the days we taught them how to play the recorder which was very hard to listen to! We also played volleyball against the men's team, whom we unfortunately lost to.

How did the experience impact you personally?

It definitely opened my eyes to the world that was out there. We saw that we live in such a privileged world, and to see people with so little was quite moving. The children in Ethiopia were so happy with so little, even though you could see that they were really struggling, they were extremely grateful for your help.

Did you implement any long term plans to ensure that the benefits of your work continue?

Yes, Anne (Alice's mum) was the main person who did this. She vowed that she would keep returning and continuing to help. We visited 2 schools which she had built and you could see the impact they had on the local community. Anne and Alice are going to continue to travel back to make sure that the people are getting the support that they need.

Do you have any plans/aspirations to return to Ethiopia again?

I loved Ethiopia. The locals were incredibly friendly and it was such an amazing community. Anything you did with them they were incredibly grateful for. Even just within Africa in general, there was a lot of poverty but then so much gratitude for what they had. So yes, I could definitely see myself carrying out more charity work over there.



Cathy Keogh, Hannah Willis, Bluebell Dynes, Thea Whelehan, Darby Condren, Eabha Cunningham, Isabelle Lynch, Amelia Cobbe, Alice O' Leary, Arianna Durkan, Jessica Kelly, Ava Browne, Mia McDonald, Amber O' Donohoe

Portlaoise Prison Trip By Uliana Nedilko

Transition Year students were given an unusual opportunity to visit Portlaoise Male Prison this term. It was the first time to visit a prison not only for TYs but for the school. A limited number of places were allocated for this trip, so in order to get there, students had to write down the reasons why we wanted to visit the prison. Forms were selected by teachers.

TYs were given the opportunity to visit the prison site and find out the details of the prisoners' accommodation and life inside a prison. We were also able to ask questions on the topics we had been interested in such as what education can be achieved in prison? and do prisoners often reoffend?

The students visited different places on the grounds of the prison. We were given the opportunity to familiarise ourselves in detail with the security measures, the visiting room, workshops rooms and were also allowed to look at the place where the cells are.

TYs got acquainted with the schedule prisoners and what they are allowed to do during the day. Prisoners have access to psychological help and they are also allowed to visit church. We learned that prisoners have the right to attend workshops: wood working, metalwork, bricklaying, framing, icon embroidery and DJ skills. Prisoners also have access to a gym and basketball court.

We also learned more about the specifics of working in prison: what courses to take at college, where the internship takes place and what salary you can expect.

At the end of the trip, the students were very pleased with the visit. We learned a lot of interesting information and indulged in discussions about whether such conditions could correct the prisoners' opinion of what they had done. This question is still open for thought.

Sign Language By Hannah Duffy

Each form got a chance to learn Irish Sign Language and about the deaf community on different days throughout the month of November as part of the Sign Language course. My form, 4B, completed this workshop on the 6th of November.

Everyone went over to The Pavilion for half a day and got the chance to learn from our instructor Jenny. Before we even got to the sign language section of this workshop, Jenny told us about some of the deaf children she works with and the different methods they use to communicate or hear their family members and friends. She explained that some people wear cochlear implants to help them hear while others rely entirely on sign language, some also use a mixture of both.

We were then taught many of the basic phrases and conversation topics in sign language. We all now know how to ask someone what their name is (and how to respond to that question), how to ask someone how they are (and how to reply to it), the basic colours, animals and where we live. It was really interesting and beneficial to all of our lives to learn the basics of Irish Sign Language (ISL) as Jenny told us that deaf people appreciate people just trying to sign to them, whether they are effective or not. This is perhaps the most important part to take away from this workshop. In order for deaf people to have the same opportunities as everyone else communication is key. Jenny said that a little goes a long way and that as long as you try to sign people will be very appreciative and will teach you things you don't know in order to help.

This workshop was one that will stick with us for the rest of our lives.

DCU Early University Entry By Cuan Woods

During the year, five of our TY students (Lucy Curran, Cuan Woods, Michael O' Cuinn, Charlie Geelon and Chloe Holohan) took the opportunity to take part in DCU's Early University Education Programme. A wide variety of courses are offered, ranging from engineering to philosophy. For one day each week from the start of the school year to the first week of December, each student goes to DCU instead of school. There, the courses are taught in the style of university lectures instead of conventional classes. At DCU, the students taking part in the programme were able to connect with new people from a range of backgrounds across the country and experience what third level education is really like. The programme is designed to challenge gifted students, so the lecturers there did not shy away from giving the TY's college-student levels of work through a variety of different assignments and a final exam at the end of the course: some lecturers even took the questions from previous exams that the university students had done years before.

It is programmes like these that serve as reminders as to how fulfilling TY can be to students who take all the opportunities they are given and push themselves out of their comfort zones.

SCT Plate Finals - By Choni Wong Cotter and Hannah Duffy

I interviewed Ronan Kelly after he scored the winning try in the Plate Final for the Senior Rugby team. This was a great success and it was super to hear what Ronan had to say.

How do you feel after participating in SCT?

I feel great, I feel like I actually have learnt a lot throughout the whole thing because you go up at the start and everyone's older than you, bigger than you, their faster than you and it is a really weird jump from playing against people your own age but the more you do it the more you get used to it and it got easier over time. It was a very good experience I thought and it'll make me better in the future.

What do you think you could improve?

I can definitely improve on my handling under pressure because the older everyone gets the less time you have to do your passes and everything so that is something I definitely need to work on but that will come with time.

What was your position on the team?

I played on the right wing number 14 and my role was just kind of to get the ball and run because I'm the last man closest to the touch line so when I get the ball I just have to go as fast as I can and try not to get put into touch.

How does it feel to be the only TY on the team?

At the start it was quite weird because they were that bit older and it's weird not having any friends to play with but then by the end of the season they were a lot more friendly with me and I got a lot more comfortable when at the start I was the only TY and I couldn't play how I wanted to because I wasn't sure how everyone else would react if I messed up but it definitely got easier the more I did it and I had two other TY lads with me on the bench that came along throughout the season so that also made things a lot better.

How has the season been for you ?

It's been fine, it was definitely a slow start then it picked up a lot and we ended up winning the senior plate so to get a come back off losing our first cup match ,against a team we know we could have beaten, and win something tangible was very nice cause our morale was quite low and that's the last game for all the sixth years as well so to go out with such a big win and to get the trophy home was something that I thought was very nice for the school and you know some justice.



SPORTS By Amber O'Donohoe

We have many students playing different sports in our school. It is a huge achievement to see such variety in sporting ability amongst our students. This term I interviewed some of these students to learn more about them and their sports as I thought this would be a fun way for all of us to learn from these athletes. I interviewed four people; **Eva Doyle**, an Irish and Leinster hockey player, **Darby Condren**, a member of the inter schools horse riding team, Malachy Kenny who is involved in a Leinster Athletics Training Programme, and finally **Jack McGovern** who is a part of the Senior Rugby Team.

How long have you been playing your sport?

Eva: I started hockey when I was seven in 1st class in St Gerard's and Bray Hockey Club and I have loved it ever since.

Darby: I've been showjumping for 6 years and riding for 10 years.

Jack: I started playing rugby when I was around 6, playing for Greystones Minis and continued that until I was 9 until I started playing in Gerard's.

Malachy: I have been doing athletics since I was 12.

Who inspires you?

Eva: I'm inspired by Katie Mullan, the women's Irish hockey captain.

Darby: I'm inspired by Cian O'Connor. He has amazing horsemanship and is a great showjumper.



I don't think anyone on the Senior Hockey Team this year will ever forget the day we won the plate. It was the biggest final most of us had ever been in and the fact we had the opportunity to bring home some silverware was amazing. There are four fourth year girls on the SCT hockey team and all four of us helped bring us to the final however, on the day only two of us were playing as it clashed with the Ethiopia trip.

We played St Andrew's College on Monday 11th of March in Three Rock Rovers Hockey Club. The fourth, fifth and sixth years were brought to the match so the noise was huge, with different chants every minute.

We had played Andrews during our league campaign and we drew 1-1 so we knew it was going to be a highly contested match. And that it was. We worked hard throughout the whole game and gained lots of chances throughout. We also defended well when Andrew's came hard at us in the second half.

Despite our best efforts to get a goal during open play, the match ended 0-0 meaning it had to go to a shootout. We lost to Muckcross in the cup this year on shootout and when we played Juniors we also lost our cup game on shootout so nerves were high going into this. There was so much at stake for our team.

As fourth years it's easy to say we still have two more years at senior hockey, but for the sixth years it was their last ever school match. We wanted to win for them as much as we did. Five brave people from our team stood up to take a 1 v 1 and everyone else watched nervously. It was 4-4 after all five penalties from both teams which meant sudden death. We went through two sudden death points with both goalies saving shots and people scoring to keep us even before Katie, our goalie, made an amazing save that gave us the opportunity to win it.



Charlotte Ballagh stood up to take this penalty and within 8 seconds we had won. Andrew's were probably the favourites going into this match so the fact we had just beaten them was shocking to everyone.

We, as a team, couldn't believe we had done it. Everyone was almost crying with happiness going around hugging different people. We were going to get to lift the trophy and that is a feeling that I will never forget. I feel proud to have been on this team as a fourth year and I can't wait to see what we can do again next year

Malachy: David Rudisha inspires me.

Jack: Jack Conan inspires me, as he went to Gerard's and now plays for the Irish rugby team.

How do you deal with nerves?

Eva: I listen to music and talk to my teammates.

Darby: A good warm up and rescue remedy helps me deal with nerves.

Jack: I usually listen to some relaxing music before a match to get me in the zone as nerves can distract me sometimes.

Malachy: I like listening to music to deal with the nerves.

As you can see, we have huge talent in our TY year group, and cannot wait to see what they achieve in the coming year.



US Ambassador Visit - By Matthew Burke

The Ambassador's Residence is located in the Phoenix Park, across from Áras na Uachtaráin. It has been described as a 'Mini White House' and I would definitely agree. Upon arrival, an embassy staff member gave us a tour of the grounds which were beautiful. We were then given a tour of the opulent residence, which was breathtaking. We then met the American Ambassador to Ireland, Claire Cronin in the foyer. She gave us a tour of many rooms, including the red room, the blue room, the dining room and the ballroom. She was extremely welcoming and hospitable and she made sure we enjoyed our tour. We learned many things about the history of the building, like how seven presidents had visited; John F. Kennedy being the first and Joe Biden being the most recent.

After our tour, we were brought into the ballroom where we were offered a selection of drinks, crisps and chocolate bars. We were then given the opportunity to ask questions of the ambassador. She spoke about her main priorities, which were strengthening Irish-American relations, encouraging investment from Irish businesses into the U.S. and ensuring peace was maintained in Northern Ireland. Before being ambassador, she was the house majority leader in Massachusetts, working on many important issues like gun reform and new measures to tackle police brutality in the wake of the George Floyd case. She studied political science and she also worked as a lawyer for many years. Due to her experience, she was the natural candidate for the role. Part of her role is hosting special guests, such as President Joe Biden's trip in April. There were mainly logistical challenges for his visit and he visited the Ambassador in the residence where he had lunch and prepared his speeches for a few hours.

Meeting the U.S. Ambassador was an incredible experience for all of us. Ireland has always had a special relationship with America, connected by centuries of Irish people emigrating there. The Ambassador, Claire Cronin, is very proud of her Irish ancestry on both sides of her family, so having an Irish-American Ambassador and an Irish-American President is symbolic. It was incredible for us to meet her and learn more about Ireland's connection to America and her role as ambassador. She is an inspiring person and an excellent ambassador.



Work Experience Before Christmas By Hamish Whitelaw

I held a series of interviews with T.Y students about their work experience week. I had a couple of questions about their week here they are below.

MAX MORONEY

For Max's work experience week he went to a place called Dubai Aerospace in the Grand Canal. He learnt about the financial side of leasing planes, how A.I. worked, about models of aircrafts and how aeroplanes are bought and sold. I then asked him why he chose it because he had an interest in the mechanical sides of planes and plane leasing. Max enjoyed his experience thoroughly and would recommend it if you had an interest in economics and aeroplanes.

AIBIDH CONDREN

Aibidh spent her week at a place called Total Stunts. Throughout the week she

did many things such as working on a short film, where she enjoyed working behind the camera. The main thing that she did was the risk assessment, which means finding any hazards in the stunt so there was no danger when the stunt was performed. Doing this meant the actors were safe doing their job. Aibidh would recommend this work experience to others.

CATHY KEOGH

For Cathy's work experience she went to the Business Post in Dublin. On Tuesday Cathy went into Leinster House. She also wrote an article about whether primary school children should be allowed phones in school that got published in the paper. As well as that she sat in all their meetings about the newspaper and what would be going into the newspaper for that week. Cathy chose to do her work experience

in The Business Post because she enjoys writing and her uncle is the editor of the newspaper. Cathy would recommend her experience in The Business Post to others.

MATTHEW BURKE

From the 4th to the 8th of December Matthew attended work experience in the House of Oireachtas in Dublin. While there he drafted legislation on A.I in a group, learned more about The Constitution and took a tour of the Dáil. As well as this, they had lunch in the member's restaurant, met several TD's from around the country and had a reception with the Minister for Education, Norma Foley. Matthew chose it because he had an interest in politics and current affairs, and would recommend this programme to anyone with similar interests.

Conclusion

It's hard to sum up in a few sentences exactly how much has happened this year and how impactful it has been for all of us. Trips, activities, courses, guest speakers, work experiences and charity work; you name it, we've done it. It's hard to believe that only 6 months ago we headed off camping as our first official TY trip, it feels like we've done so much since then!

Although we partook in such a variety of activities, the one lesson each had in common was that it brought all of us closer together and pushed us out of our comfort zones. Each week was filled with something different and challenging for all of us and I can most definitely say that every one of us are finishing TY feeling that little bit more confident and proud than when we started the year back in September.

Of course with every successful Transition Year, there are numerous people working tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure we got the most out of this year. So thank you to the all our teachers, our families and our friend who supported us so much this year.

Each week was filled with something different and meticulously planned by our brilliant year head, Ms Ní Mháirtín, and our wonderful Transition Year Coordinators, Ms Roy and Mr Wall. Without a doubt this year would not have been nearly as fulfilling and rewarding if we didn't have these three teachers who worked so hard to seek and provide such incredible opportunities for all of us.

From organising countless activities and learning opportunities to managing all of us on exciting trips, and of course, putting together a fantastic musical production, I'm sure it wasn't an easy job, but you wouldn't have known it from how seamlessly things were organised and carried out. So from each and every one of us students, we want to express our utmost gratitude to Ms Ní Mháirtín, Ms Roy and Mr Wall for working so hard to ensure we got the most out of our Transition Year, thank you so much.

None of this would have been possible without, as always, the endless support from our headmaster, Mr Geraghty. Mr Geraghty made sure to encourage us to try new things, and take every opportunity we could. Without his help and enthusiasm we would not have been able to fulfil our year nearly as much.

To everyone else who worked so hard to help us this year, thank you from all of us, none of the amazing experiences would have happened without the support of the St Gerard's Community.

Special thanks...



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