

# CENTRE POINT

## Newsletter of Presentation Ireland

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### REAL LEARNING IN A VIRTUAL WORLD

Mark is 15 years old. He found it very difficult to go to school and missed a lot of days and despite the best efforts of his parents and teachers he no longer attended school.

He was eventually diagnosed as school phobic. However, Mark has gained certificates in ICT, maths, communications and photography as part of the iScoil on line learning community.

iScoil is Ireland's first virtual school. It is an online learning community for young people aged 13 – 16 years who are out of school for a wide variety of reasons, including bullying, exclusion, physical illness, phobia, behavioural issues and lack of a school place.

Each student is provided with a computer and secure broadband. They are assigned a online mentor, who is a qualified teacher. The mentor develops a learning plan with the student based on their interests and abilities.



Subjects that students are taking include: Maths, Communication, Writing Skills, Graphic Design, Social,

Personal and Health Education, Computer Literacy, and Photography.

*Continued inside on page 2.*



Climate Change Activists and Avatars! Pic courtesy of Stop Climate Chaos Campaign

## COPENHAGEN CLIMATE CHANGE TALKS: NO DEAL BUT STILL HOPE AND ACTION FOR CHANGE

When our planet burns, as surely it will if we do not stop the rise in global temperature; and our children ask us what we did to prevent this impending catastrophe, what will we say? Did we stand up and play our part? Did we make the many changes big and small that we could as individuals, communities and countries to prevent disaster?

The UN Climate Change meeting in Copenhagen came at a critical juncture in humanity's history. It was hoped that a plan would be drawn up, acknowledging for the first time in history, the limits we are breaching with regard to climate change, and that a new way for all people to share and shape our planet would open up. It was a missed opportunity. We did not get a politically and legally binding international deal that both the Majority and Minority worlds could agree on.

However, Copenhagen was about more than official climate talks between nation states. It marked a significant point in an unfolding process of awareness raising on climate change among civil society around the world. This took the form of countless debates, demonstrations and actions in cities, in the media and on the internet.

As Senan Gardiner, Ecology Worker with Presentation Ireland, who was at the talks in Copenhagen says:

*Copenhagen was a success in terms of creating public awareness and giving energy to the green movement. Everyone—from world leaders to you and me—knows an awful lot more about climate change and its politics than we did a year ago.*

See inside for what can we do with this new knowledge ...

# iScoil - Real Learning in a Virtual World

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There are currently 40 young people learning on line in Dublin, Limerick, Galway and Longford. Demand for the service is growing.

“iScoil is an example of how digital technologies can help to re-engage young people in learning in a way that makes education relevant to their lives and interests”, said Marianne Checkley, iScoil’s Team Leader.

Feedback from the students, their parents and the National Education Welfare Board is very positive. Young people re-discover the joy of learning as they learn at their own pace and in their own way.

Students have the ability to send instant messages to each other and to join in online discussions which develops social skills. There are also workshop days when the students come together in real time.

iScoil is a Presentation Ireland initiative. iScoil grew out of the Presentation Sisters longterm commitment to education, learning innovation and inclusion for those who do not benefit from the education system.



iScoil is an online learning community for young people

Nano Nagle, foundress of the Presentation Sisters set up schools for excluded children in Cork in the 18th century.

iScoil re-imagines this vision for inclusion in education for the 21st century as part of the e-learning revolution.

*For more information see [www.iScoil.ie](http://www.iScoil.ie)*

## Stop Climate Chaos

**What can we do to stop climate chaos? At Presentation Ireland we are taking steps to promote:**

### Education for Sustainable Development

This is UN Decade for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). Critical thinking and questioning are at the heart of action for sustainable development. How far has my food traveled? How do I reduce, re-use and recycle? How do we make the transition to a low carbon society? Programmes like Be The Change, Transition Towns and Community Powerdown are great learning experiences to empower people to live sustainably.

### Campaigning for Change

Get involved in the Stop Climate Chaos campaign at [www.stopclimatechaos.ie](http://www.stopclimatechaos.ie) campaign. This year the campaign is working to make sure that the Irish government delivers on a strong climate law as promised just before Copenhagen. Contact your local politician and call on the government to take the lead, and push for an international agreement in Mexico to keep the rise in global temperatures to 2 degrees C or less. Otherwise hundreds of millions across the globe will lose their lives and livelihoods, up to a third of land-based species may become extinct, immense political instability will occur as people migrate to avoid droughts and floods and compete for scarce resources, and great economic damage will be caused by increasingly extreme weather.



Campaigners call for a Just Climate Law

### Living simply

Ireland is the 5th most climate polluting country per person. If everybody lived like the Irish we would need the resources of more than three planet Earths to survive. But we have just one Earth. And if it is to be a just one, we will all have to do our fair share to prevent climate chaos. For a simple, engaging and fun breakdown of sustainability and our current economy go to [www.storyofstuff.com](http://www.storyofstuff.com).

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t because you are on our mailing list of individuals and organisations with whom we would like to be in contact. If you do not wish to receive future copies, please let us know. Your views on this newsletter are welcome.

# DESIGNS ON THE FUTURE IN CORK

## We Made This

Profile of some of the Initiatives in the New Community Space in South Presentation, Cork

### Youthwork

The Greenmount Youth Initiative, managed by Foroige, is providing a professional youthwork service and much need activities for young people in the local area. The Big Brother – Big Sister befriending service for young people is also operating out of South Pres. A series of animation/puppet workshops with teenagers is also planned.

### Multicultural Integration

The Migrant Workers centre has relocated to the new community space. This centre is very busy welcoming and supporting new arrivals to Ireland, particularly with people from Poland, Moldova, Russia, Georgia, and the Ukraine.

A feature of the “We Made This” process is its cross-cultural nature. The process has involved young and old, settled and Traveller, traditional Irish and new arrivals to our shores with participants from many countries like the Sudan, Burma, Malaysia.

### The Garden Project

Every Thursday ten, sometimes fifteen gardeners gather in the beautiful South Presentation vegetable garden, clearing, picking, chatting, digging, planting, and generally enjoying each other’s company and the peace and tranquility of the place. A 12-week Gardening course begins shortly, funded by the Reception and Integration Agency to enable new arrivals and resident Irish learn from each other in gardening.

### Arts and Crafts

i2i Artists - Two community artists are working in the new space, carrying out art and craft projects with the community. They have decorated the art room and installed 2 potters wheels.

There is also the K & C group (Knitting and Crochet, which is knitting a beautiful quilt that will be auctioned off for a good cause! Three new members



*The Garden Project is one of a number of new initiatives to emerge from the We Made This design process*

*The User Led Design Process is described in We Made This. Copies are available from [info@presentation.ie](mailto:info@presentation.ie)*



## The User Led Design Process

Laughter, life, energy and creativity have returned to the old school in South Presentation, Cork. Always a hub of activity in the past, this building had not been used to its full extent in recent years. That has changed with a wide range of groups now using the newly refurbished community space.

The groups involved are on their way to creating something special – a place of welcome and hospitality, a space where ideas are valued and tested to see how

social needs can be met in new ways. The process is called community user led design.

To most people design is a logo or product that looks good and works well. But there is more to design than that. Design is a process for finding out what people need and then coming up with ways to make it happen. It’s about creating the environment for people to express themselves, and to bring forward ideas to solve problems.

This process is being used in South

Presentation Cork, with the working title of the “We Made This” project. It reached a significant milestone with the opening of the newly refurbished community space in what was formerly a boys’ school.

Local children celebrated International Women’s Day by making dreamcatchers, a great image for what South Pres is all about - catching dreams and inspiring the imagination!

from Moldova, Russia and Japan have recently joined the group.

### Adult Learning

As part of the Aontas Nationwide Adult Learning festival, a composting workshop was held for Green Learning Day. Senan Gardiner, Presentation Ireland’s Ecology Worker, delivered an excellent practical session on composting our waste and developing our own waste management strategy.

Patricia Keane, community development worker with ‘We Made This’ organised a programme of events for the Cork City Lifelong Learning Festival 2010 including Knitting /Crochet Demonstration, Cookery

Demonstration Open Garden Day with Guided Tours, & Playback Theatre workshop and performance.

### Welcome and Hospitality

“We Made This” is about creating a place of welcome. The kitchen is the heart of any home. We are delighted to have a new kitchen courtesy of Foroige and the Drugs Task Force. We are planning four international cook and share meals featuring the cuisine of the countries involved in We Made This to welcome new people and to celebrate our achievements.

*For more information: [info@presentation.ie](mailto:info@presentation.ie)*

# TRYING TO MAKE SENSE OF IT ALL

*And did you get what  
you wanted from this life, even so?  
I did.*

*And what did you want?  
To call myself beloved, to feel myself  
beloved on the earth.*

- LATE FRAGMENT, Raymond Carver

This short poem by the American short story writer Raymond Carver was the choice for his gravestone. Intensity and brevity were the hallmarks of Carver's style and of his life. If the inscription on our grave is meant to summarise our life's achievement, this poem does it magnificently for Carver.

Carver's poem is intensely personal yet with universal resonance. It invites us to reflect on what we really desire and on how we know ourselves as loved.

The choice of this poem then on an invitation to a conversation "to pool our hard won wisdom in difficult times" issued by the Presentation Sisters to colleagues, friends and indeed anyone who is searching after meaning, is particularly apt.

"What Really Matters?" is the working title for a remarkable process of small group meetings and conversations that happened around the country in the past few months.

"What really matters? What in these recession years is the source of our courage to live hopefully? Questions such as these are on the horizon of many peoples concerns especially those who have lost their jobs, struggling to make ends meet or appalled by the findings of the Ryan and Murphy Reports," said Sr Nano Brennan, organiser of the process.

*What really matters?  
What in these  
recession years is the  
source of our courage  
to live hopefully?*

Many are finding some practical answers to these questions, such as changing lifestyle, pooling ideas or resources or supporting those in even greater need."

Over the past few months, 13 groups with an average of eight members in each group met to consider such questions and share stories. This was followed by two seminars; one in the Nano Nagle Centre, Ballygriffin, Cork and one in Mt St Anne's Retreat Centre, near Portlaoise, on spirituality and the search for meaning.

"Good conversations have a ripple effect for good. They generate a sense of a shared journey and stories of the journey. They produce gems of practical wisdom which help us to see things more clearly and do things a bit better", said Sr Nano.

"Pooling our hard won wisdom is an important way of not only coping with our present reality but also growing through it.

"Good conversations are a support for younger people who are facing new situations; for parents who are struggling to accompany their children through times and situations

which are very different from their own and for older people who are trying to live the last phase of life meaningfully and with courage", said Sr Nano.

The conversations were open to people committed to their faith and to those who for a for a variety of reasons may be more distant from formal religion and Church but feel they want to hold on to

something precious in their spiritual inheritance.

The process appealed to people who feel a want, a need and even an unease which gives them a readiness to search.



The feedback from the conversations has been overwhelmingly positive. The organisers hope to build on this success and develop a network on issues related to spirituality.

For Raymond Carver, a spirituality with no inherent questions, no complications, is all artifice, no substance. He certainly was not an overtly religious person. However, in his last written piece he says:

"... try then, as you work out your individual destinies, to remember that words, the right and true words, can have the power of deeds. Remember too, that little-used word that has just about dropped out of public and private usage: tenderness. It can't hurt. And that other word: soul – call it spirit if you want, if it makes it any easier to claim the territory. Don't forget that either. Pay attention to the spirit of your words, your deeds."

(No Heroics, Please p. 225).

Good advice for all engaged in conversations for the search for meaning. To join in the conversation email: [info@presentation.ie](mailto:info@presentation.ie)

*By David Rose, director of Presentation Ireland.*