



Education Brief

COUNTY KILDARE VEC – ADULT & FURTHER EDUCATION NEWS

2010 Volume 1, Issue 2

Welcome to the second edition of our adult education Newsletter. As we near the end of the first decade of the 21st century, a decade that envisaged so much promise for adult and further education. In Ireland, the White Paper on Adult Education was published in 2000 giving a "commitment to a lifelong learning agenda as a relatively seamless progression through an educational continuum from the cradle to the grave, with open boundaries between the worlds of home/work/education". Also in 2000, the Lisbon EU Council meeting set the objective of making the European Union 'the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion' by 2010. In addition, the Council set the target of 12.5% of adults (25-64) participating in lifelong learning by 2010.



Ten years on, adult and further education has developed considerably, thanks largely to the personnel, resources and finance provided by the Government along with the vision of those who worked to establish adult education as a distinct professional educational service in Ireland. The lives of hundreds of thousands of adult have been changed significantly through the development of new skills and competencies.

Ireland may not have met the target set by the EU (it reached 7.1%) but adult and further education was never more important or needed in our current economic climate. In the coming years, VECs in conjunction with FAS and other adult education providers will see themselves returning to the original vision of the 1930 VEC Act with the provision of Vocational Education and Training (VET). Changes in thinking and working practices will be needed in order to achieve what the EU Commission describes in *A New Impetus for 2020 Strategy* which will require a need for "convergence in the roles of teachers and trainers: a trainer in a work-based setting will need more pedagogical competences and must play a supportive and mentoring role; while a teacher in a school will need, like a trainer, a good understanding of work practices". VECs have faced the challenges of previous recessions and have created programmes to meet the needs of the times. Kildare VEC adult education service, through its personnel and resources will meet the needs of our current challenges with new ways of thinking and working and who knows, we may reach the new EU target of 15% for adult participation in education and training by 2020.

Finally, I would like to thank all staff and personnel working in the adult education sector as well as those who work behind the scene administering programmes. Kildare VEC has a lot to be proud of what it has achieved in the last 10 years and the new VEC Education Plan (2011-2016) will highlight the thinking and the strategies that will be required of VEC personnel if it, as an organisation, is to respond creatively and effectively to needs of Kildare educationally, socially and economically.

Des Murtagh, AEO

Youthreach Athy

Fifteen Trainees from Youthreach Athy entered the Youthreach Art Poster competition 2010. All entries were sent to Limerick. The Title for the competition was "The only way is up" and each trainee was given the task of creating an A3 size poster using the above theme. All trainees involved enjoyed the process and are hoping that hard work, dedication and most importantly the enjoyment of creating a piece of original Art comes through in the final judging. Fingers crossed!!!!

Trainee Darren O'Rourke has successfully passed Three ECDL exams, in Word, Excel and PowerPoint. Congratulations from all at Youthreach Athy.

Another of our trainees James Roycroft is to be congratulated for his success as Goalie of the Athy Minor Football team who with James' help won the Kildare County Football Final in October.

Christmas craft ideas are already in full swing in Athy. Last years Christmas crafts were such a success that the trainees want this year to be even bigger and better. So... ho..ho..ho..

This year saw the end of what has been home to Youthreach for the past 21 years. Staff and Trainees were excited about the move and look forward to making their new premises as happy, warm and welcoming as No.2 Model Court has been.....



County Kildare VEC's Adult Education Guidance Service

The Adult Education Guidance Service has enjoyed a "shop front" presence in Georges Street, Newbridge for the past nine years. From small beginnings with one Information Officer in attendance, the service now is staffed by an Administrator, a Guidance Counsellor and a Guidance Counsellor/Co-ordinator. The premises has also improved over the years and now boasts an information library, computer resources/access for clients and individual interview rooms. Staff work hard to nurture the all important friendly atmosphere which encourages and reassures our more vulnerable clients.

Initially the service was tasked to provide support for participants of VTOS, Adult Basic Education and Community Education programmes and, over time, clients of the Education Finance Board were added to the target groups. Due to our prominent position in the town the service has always attracted a high number of enquiries from people looking for guidance before they made decisions about returning to education. Guidance for these clients is essential and so "pre entry" clients were also added to our target groupings.

Service activity and client records are maintained on a database used countrywide by AEGI services and both NCGE and DES draw their quarterly data from this source. Daily statistics of all staff activity have been kept since 2003 and records point to the success of the Guidance service over this period.

Guidance Service Beneficiaries 2003 to date:	
Clients	3301
People met in Groups	4383
Groups met	255
General Public Enquiries	8319
Total	16,003

Our records reflect the wider changes society has undergone in the past nine years, particularly in terms of employment levels/trends. For example, in 2003, 71% of our clients were female and 29% male, current year records show a shift to 52% male and 48% female. Age profiles are also changing – in 2003 we saw 1% of clients in the 18-25 yrs bracket, this age group now represents 26% of our clients and is directly related to the numbers of unemployed young males following the collapse of the construction industry.

Adult Education Guidance provides a valuable service within County Kildare and it networks tirelessly with all other local service providers. Currently the service is engaged in a pilot collaborative guidance project with both FAS and DSP staff as part of the IVEA/ FAS/NCC programme. The challenges we face is to extend the service which is primarily based in the centre of the county, to the north and south and to play our part in an integrated education service provision for adults in this county.

National Ploughing Championships

Having reviewed the experience of 2009 and found it to be very positive, the four VECs – Kildare, Laois, Carlow and Wicklow, decided to venture to Athy once more. It was felt that the work done in 2009 had helped the move towards a national identity for the VEC and the initiative was rewarded when National Partnership Forum presented an award.

Last year, we bathed in the sunshine and beauty of Athy but this year there was a real need for the wellies and raincoats as the week progressed. This did not detract from the attendance which was up on last year (185,000) and the number of visitors to the stand was up and VEC staff were very busy over the three days.

The organising committee set itself some clear objectives for the event:

- To build awareness of the VEC brand nationally
- To provide information on lifelong learning opportunities
- To offer assistance and information on education grants and education guidance.

To meet these objectives:

- The staffing roster included people from Guidance and Grants each day who could deal with any specific queries.
- Promotional material was readily available with contact details for all VECs nationally.
- A survey was devised to gauge the awareness among the general public of the services provided by VECs.

The staff review of the event was very positive. They were delighted to meet colleagues from the other counties and to be part of a team / organisation at a national event. They were also glad to have the opportunity to meet the public and raise awareness of the education services provided by VECs. The survey was a great way of engaging people.



The good news for the Athy area is that the Ploughing Championships will be held there again next year when it will be an International event. A great credit has to be given to the organisers of this event who have brought it from local to International level. In another way, Kildare VEC in conjunction with Carlow, Wicklow and Laois has brought the VEC brand from local to national recognition.

Youthreach Graduation 9th September, 2010

Youthreach Leixlip opened its doors on the 9th of September 2010 to celebrate the graduation of a number of its students. The graduates received Certificates in General Vocational Learning (FETAC Level 4) and Certificates in General Learning (FETAC Level 3).

Lorraine O'Sullivan, Co-ordinator welcomed all guests to the centre. She also welcomed the guest speakers: Dr. Dermot Stokes, National Youthreach Co-ordinator. Mr. Des Murtagh, VEC Kildare Adult Education Officer and former Adult Education Officer, Mr. Noel Dalton. She thanked all students and staff for their continuous effort and hard work in making that day a reality. Lorraine said this was also a very special day as Youthreach is now in its 21st year of service.

Receiving Certificates in General Learning were Donna O'Donnell and Louise O'Brien.

Learners who received Component Certificates towards General Learning and General Vocational Learning were Zuhura Bago, Wayne Beardsley, Killian Carroll, Tadhg Doolin and Sarah Doyle. Michael



Brian Carey (above) awarded his Certificates in General Vocation Learning by Des Murtagh, VEC County Kildare Adult Education Officer

Edwards, Nadia Essalhi, Jennifer Fogarty, Jennifer Kenna and Martina Lawrence received the same certificates.

The following students were awarded their Certificates - Brian Carey, Ed Fay, Keren Jackson, Sean Lothian, Kieran Meade and Ciaran Molloy; each of these received Certificates in General Vocation Learning.

"The world in which we are living is uncertain for a lot of people," said Mr. Murtagh. "There can be days that are dark, but on these days, take out the Cert and look at it and know that you have achieved a national certificate, awarded by the state. Youthreach has been this country's principle national response to provide those who left school early with the knowledge and skills required for further education, training and employment".

In his keynote address Mr. Stokes stated "I always enjoy coming to (Youthreach) centres because coming into them reminds me why we are doing this. "We have a duty to raise

the standards of education for people and not just for young people".

Leixlip Youthreach founder, Noel Dalton stated "The big task for Youthreach is to believe something better about yourself. "When you believe in yourself, you have created a true revolution."

Also awarded with their Certificates in the same group were Simon O'Donoghue, Michael Ryan, Siobhan Donnelly, Halima Suleimnsn, Mark Thompson, Charlene Tola, Tom Walsh and Lukas Zvingilia.

Past student, Eimear Crehan also spoke of her very positive experiences in Youthreach. Eimear has just completed her Masters in Youth work from N.U.I. Maynooth. She thanked Youthreach for helping her achieve her goals in education.

Kenn Davis from Songcraft spoke about the process of developing the Youthreach CD & DVD. The students of Youthreach Leixlip created four songs. He said that the young people really enjoyed this experience and it helped to develop their creative and musical talents. Kenn said the "young adults at Leixlip Youthreach were a treat to work with. They broke through their barriers and showed great interest and willingness". He said "they also found their creative sides and revealed a thoughtful, intelligent and at times funny side to their characters". Finally, to bring an end to the graduation Kenn showed the D.V.D to the Youthreach guests. These songs can be viewed on youtube.



Dr. Dermot Stokes, National Youthreach Co-ordinator.

Snapshot



PAT BENNETT, ALO

- Q Name
A PAT BENNETT
- Q Hails from
A DUBLIN
- Q Role in Co Kildare VEC
A ADULT BASIC EDUCATION ORGANISER
- Q Worked in Co Kildare VEC
A 28 YEARS
- Q The house I grew up in is in
A TERENCE
- Q When I was a child I wanted to be a
A HAIRDRESSER
- Q You wouldn't know it but I'm very good at
A SET DANCING
- Q You may not know it but I'm no good at
A SINGING
- Q I drive a
A FORD FOCUS
- Q A book that changed me
A THE BODHRÁN MAKER, JOHN B KEANE
- Q The person who makes me laugh
A MARY FAUGHNAN
- Q My Life philosophy is
A 'TO THINE OWN SELF BE TRUE'

Doing the Leaving Cert as an Adult

Betty says...

In June this year I sat my Leaving Cert English exam. As I sat in the exam room I felt a huge surge of excitement when I opened the exam papers to realise how much I knew about the questions I was been asked. The time flew by as I was removed into a world of English literature "my new found love". To me, sitting the exam that day was one of the best experiences of my life as I was there because I really wanted to be not because I had to be. I had no nerves to deter me, I was just hungry to start writing.

I was very pleased with my results but to me the climax of my course was the day I sat the exams. All this is thanks to the wonderful ladies at Leixlip VEC

Nothing ever seems to be a problem the support and encouragement they offer by first class who are all the tutors are wonderful people, especially Eithne Reynolds who was my tutor and was with me every step of the way.

Now that I have returned to adult education I don't think I would be able to walk away from education as it has become part of who I am. As a mother I found that my participation in education has had an effect on my children and they understand education to be a lifelong experience that has to be enjoyed. Also the friends that I have made in class have been a wonderful support during the year, and I am really looking forward to starting back in September.

My advise to anyone who has been thinking about returning to education is to take that first step because once you do there are so many kind people available to help that you will wonder why you left it so long. To do the Leaving Cert English and Maths was a great achievement for me. I left school early with no exam under my wing. The tutors were fantastic and without their help I could not have done it. Marie and Eithne have the patience of a saint. Their knowledge and understanding - what can one say, I just would not have done it. What I got out of it, besides the exam,



Lucy says...

My reason in writing here is to tell anyone who is thinking of doing Leaving Cert. Maths the benefits I received here in the centre.

My name is Lucy and I decided to go back to maths for a lot of different reasons. The main one was to prove to myself I could do it. I had done my Junior Cert maths and I was happy with my result. This gave me the push I needed to go on. The great teacher, Marie, I couldn't have done the course without her. The friends I have made. It is not just going to class, we also have a bit of fun. The second reason is to be able to help my little girl if she needs help when the time comes.

But a bit of advice I would give you is - do at least a half hour of homework every day and do your exam paper when you are ready for them. I know with children, housework and life in general it is hard to find time for yourself but you should make it. The reward is worth all the time you put in especially when you see your result.

So Good Luck in whatever you do and remember, don't be hard on yourself when taking this time for yourself. You deserve it.

was belief in myself and to me wonderful people that no words can describe. All I can say is thank you to everyone in the centre. You all make a brighter day for me and everyone else that attended there. I have just one more thank you to Mary on the computers and Una for her tutoring in the Junior Cert English and History a big thank you because that is where it all began.

Tony says...

Ah - the Leaving Cert. The very mention of it is enough to make you blank. But I was actually looking forward to it. You see, I am what they call a 'mature student', a fancy title for an older person. I sat for my Leaving Cert years and years ago. I passed but just about. In the intervening years I developed a great love of reading and found myself wanting to know more and learn more about my favourite subject - English.

Why not, I thought, re sit my Leaving Cert English and perhaps go on and do a degree. Heady thoughts!! And so I found myself, every Tuesday night, in the Leixlip Adult Learning Centre. Boy was I impressed! This is a wonderful place, a place of learning, knowledge and humour for those who wish to avail of its welcome. People can learn on a one to one situation or in a class setting, anything from computers to language, painting, maths and a host of other subjects. The teachers or tutors in today's idiom are second to none for their patience, humour, hard work and dedication to the subject in hand. It was to this environment that I trotted off every Tuesday and I made sure I didn't miss one.

People would often say to me 'aren't you great'. My response was always the same, this was pure pleasure. That's what the Leaving Cert meant to me, pure enjoyment. To think that I, at my age, can return to learning and re-sit an exam and perhaps progress further is a wonderful thought and certainly gave me great confidence. Thank you Leixlip Adult Learning Centre.



Kildare VEC Awards Night

County Kildare VEC held its Awards and Presentation of Certificates night in the Osprey Hotel, Naas on November 2nd last. Nearly 300 people gathered from the north to the south of the county to receive their Certificates having completed VEC courses over the last 12 months. All were delighted to receive an award, particularly those who had completed the two Youthreach programme in Naas.

Course certification was offered for adults through FETAC at Levels 3 to 5 as well as Junior and Leaving Certificate subjects for those who returned back to education without having completed their Leaving Cert. The FETAC courses included IT, child and healthy care,

community studies, horticulture and well as communications and maths.

All the learners were congratulated by the Adult Education Officer, Des Murtagh and the certificates were presented by the Chairperson of the VEC Board, Cllr. Willie Callaghan who spoke of the dedication of so many adult learners and the expertise of the VEC tutors and co-ordinators. He also highlighted the great work being done by the VEC for adults in these economically challenging times.

For further information on all VEC services and to view all the photos from the Awards Night, check out www.kildarevec.ie



Kildare Traveller Action

Kildare Traveller Action (KTA) is a voluntary organisation committed to the development of the Traveller Community in County Kildare. It is based in Naas but its work covers the whole of the county. It was formed as Kildare Traveller Network in 2000 and is a partnership of Travellers and Settled people.

The following agencies are represented in either a Director or membership capacity: HSE, Kildare Youth Services, Kildare Leader Partnership, Kildare VEC, Dept. of Social and Family Affairs, Athy Travellers Support Group.

KTA has two full-time and three part-time staff, one of whom is based in Athy. It is operating to a four-year Strategic Plan 2006 - 2010. Under this plan, KTA runs a number of projects and activities including women's development courses, work with young people, research projects, dealing with the media, working with state agencies to improve services in such areas as Traveller accommodation, health, education etc.

Since 2005, with support of the Community Education Service of Kildare VEC, KTA has been able to run a range of community-based educational and development programmes with Traveller women. These courses have taken place in Maynooth, Leixlip and Newbridge/Naas. A number of learners from these courses went on to take part in a three year Primary Health Care programme, training to become Community Health Workers with the Traveller community.

In 2010, Kildare Traveller Action has been running two programmes with the assistance of Kildare VEC:

Newbridge Women's Group: this group, consisting of 15 women, meets on one evening a week and takes part in activities and courses identified by the group itself. Among the activities are a Beauty course run by a VEC tutor, personal development workshops, and a health and fitness programme. At present, group members who have expertise in particular areas are giving classes to the rest of the group. This helps to build confidence and skills and a sense of ownership within the group. This project is being run in partnership with Newbridge Family Resource Centre who provide the venue for the group. It is planned to run further courses with the help of the VEC Back-to-Education Initiative.



Brigie Lawrence, Bridget Cawley, Winnie Stokes and Bridget O'Brien

Young Traveller Women's Group: this group is in its early stages and consists of a small number of young women from the Maynooth area. They left school early and are seeking employment. Some have been in, or are currently attending, Youthreach. KTA engaged an Outreach Worker, funded by Kildare VEC, to engage the women in a programme that would provide space to discuss issues that are relevant to them and explore options for their future. Weekly activities have included hair and beauty workshops, discussions and outings. It is planned to expand the membership of this group to surrounding areas and place a focus on leadership skills and progression to further education/employment opportunities.

In all of its work, KTA aims to achieve confidence-building, learning of skills and progression to further opportunities in education, training and community development. Focus is placed on development of leadership skills. Kildare VEC has been very instrumental in enabling KTA to make significant progress in reaching these goals.



VTOS Athy

VTOS Athy had its Awards Ceremony on Thursday Nov. 25th in the Carlton Abbey Hotel, Athy.

It was a great night celebrating the achievements of students receiving their Certification for this year at FETAC (Levels 3-5). People will also be receiving their ECDL Certificates, NUIM Psychology Certs.

This year 11 people went on to Third Level from VTOS in Athy (24 people left this year).

With all that is happening in the country at present, it is good to note that some of the people who are coming to our services (and in greater numbers), to avail of the opportunity to return to education are continuing on to Third Level. Several people have gained employment this year. For all of them, the increase in confidence at a personal and a professional level is incalculable.

In 2010, out of 24 students who left VTOS, 11 people went on to Third Level education - to Carlow College, IT Carlow, IT Carlow Wexford Campus, Mater Dei and NUIM.

As well as this, over the past few years, 3 VTOS Athy students have been awarded Student of the Year in their colleges - Christy Lawler and John Wall 2010 and 2009 respectively in Carlow College, and Patrick O'Connor in Dundalk IT. We are very proud of them and delighted to hear of their success.

Athy Adult Learning



President Mary McAleese with her husband, Dr Martin McAleese and Ann Quinn and Annie Delahunty representing County Kildare VEC Basic Education Service at a reception in Aras an Uachtarán.

Photo courtesy of Áras an Uachtaráin



VTOS Leixlip

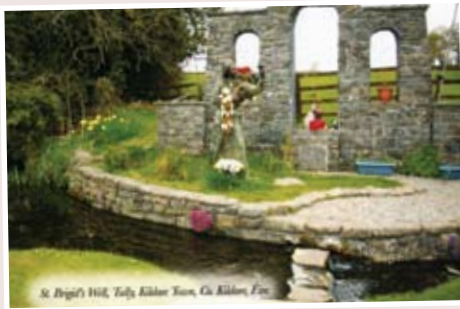
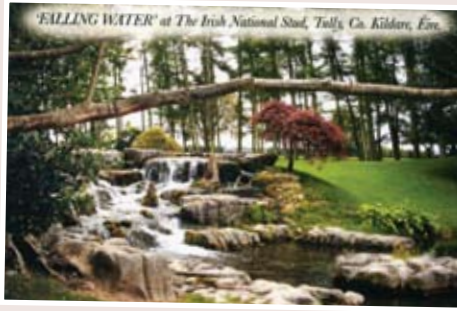
Left to right: Michael Gounden, Adeshina Akinbulejo, Constantin Melega, Bernie King, Benoni Varzaru and Paul Bracken.

These were some of the students from Leixlip VTOS/PLC who joined in the "Wear a Jersey Day" for Goal and raised a total of €119.23 for GOAL.



Postcards created by the Literacy Through Photography team.

EVE Ltd., Harvest Centre, Kildare Town. Tel: 045 522537



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County Kildare VEC Adult and
Further Education Newsletter

