



Education Brief

COUNTY KILDARE VEC – ADULT & FURTHER EDUCATION NEWS

2012 Volume 3, Issue 1

Welcome

VEC Amalgamations

The amalgamation of VECs from 33 to 16 and the establishment of Education and Training Boards (ETBs) was announced in June 2011 by the Minister for Education and Skills, Ruairi Quinn, TD. The Bill is being introduced into the Dail shortly and will see the merger of County Kildare VEC with County Wicklow VEC. The Minister, speaking in the Dail, said he is hopeful that the new Boards will be in place before the end of this calendar year. In the meantime, the Minister has appointed Mr Sean Ashe as CEO of County Kildare/Wicklow VEC. In addition, Kildare VEC has been appointed patron on two new 1,000 pupil second level schools in Naas and Maynooth along with additional building projects for new schools in County Kildare and County Wicklow.



I came across a message, purported to be a memo Apple sends to its new employees on their first day.

There's work and there's your life's work. The kind of work that has your fingerprints all over it. The kind of work that you'd never compromise on. That you'd sacrifice a weekend for.

You can do that kind of work at Apple. People don't come here to play it safe. They come here to swim in the deep end. They want their work to add up to something. Something big. Something that couldn't happen anywhere else.

Welcome to Apple.

Well done to all the staff of County Kildare VEC working through these uncertain times of change and transition, especially those working in adult education who swim in the deep end and want their work to add up to something big - the empowerment of adults and to bring about the transformation of individuals, communities, society and the county. Our life's work is making a difference and the evidence is in the pages of this newsletter.

Des Murtagh, AEO

SOLAS

The Minister for Education and Skills announced at the end of July 2011 the establishment of a new Further Education and Training (FET) Authority, named SOLAS. A SOLAS Implementation Group (SIG) was setup in August 2011 chaired by the Minister for Training and Skills. Over the past six months, two VECs (City of Cork and County Dublin) have been carrying out a scoping exercise to identify issues that will arise from the process of amalgamating FÁS training centres and staff. Additional transformative teams have been established between FÁS and IVEA (communication, finance, quality assurance, programme and curriculum development, data and statistics, HR and IT) that are planning the structures required for the new organisation and learning environment. Once legislation is in place towards the end of 2012, FÁS is to be disbanded and most FÁS training centres and training staff will be transferred to VECs. For VEC and soon to be ETB employees, a new beginning is enfolding for Further Education and Training.

Youthreach Athy

Winner of Craft Competition

Youthreach Athy scooped first prize in an All Ireland Youthreach Craft competition with their 3D creation Good Times. The piece of work is a clock or rather, as Youthreach Tutor Ciara O'Keeffe explained, "two clocks in one". The group gathered photographs from past events in Youthreach and put them on a wood background. They then used a jigsaw to cut out the design and painted it to produce a fully functioning clock. The ten students who worked on the project have an interest in woodwork as well as arts and crafts and are very proud of this project as are all in Youthreach and it's a fantastic boost in times of negativity.



Community Education

Coill Dubh Community Felting – Spring 2012

County Kildare V.E.C. has been running outreach classes in the Coill Dubh Community Centre for the past three years. This time it was a Felting class which ran for 6 weeks. At the end of the course, a Felting Exhibition was held and the local community were invited. The group made tea and cakes and displayed all of their Felting creations in the Community kitchen. The Primary school Principal organised for each teacher to bring along their class on the day. The tutor gave a talk to the children on where the wool came from, they then had a look at all of the creations, asked questions and received a treat afterwards. It was a great day for everyone and the group were delighted so many of the local community came to appreciate their crafts.

We are very pleased at how successful the courses were in the community and they could not take place without the co-operation of the Caretaker Brian and the Coill Dubh Residents Association.

Dolores O'Brien (retired VTOS Co-ordinator)

Dolores O'Brien set up a VTOS centre in Scoil Eoin Phoil, Green Lane, Leixlip in 1993 with a core student group of 21 students and a number of part-time staff. Over the years, Dolores built up the Centre to a group of 80 VTOS and 40 PLC students. This increase in size reflected the work, dedication and commitment she put into her work. It also reflects her rapport with the students because most new entrants learned about the Centre from word of mouth.

Students were always the number one priority for Dolores. She gave them support as well as challenging them as she guided them toward identifying their own options and making decisions. She firmly believed in life-long learning and could quickly spot strengths in all the students. Dolores also embraced and encouraged diversity and had a great sense of vision for the centre. She passed on so much knowledge, kindness, openness, sense of dedication and commitment, all of which have left their mark on staff and students. Her sense of creativity added greatly to the centre and we are where we are because of her vision. Every year students would return and inform us of their progress and thank Dolores for her help and support.

I have worked with Dolores since 1993 and have always felt her support and guidance. We have had great experiences over the years with staff and with students and now the staff and students wish her all the best for the future and a very happy retirement.

Eilis Clare



Older Voices

Following the successful roll out of Ageing with Confidence and Voices through Art programmes for older people in County Kildare, a clear need emerged for provision of artistic, cultural, social, and psychological supports for older people in the county. National Research and independent evaluations of both programmes showed increased self-esteem, confidence, well being and increased level of awareness of the ageing process along with changes they might wish to make to their lives. It also provided increased awareness of services and organisations in the community which may facilitate them to make that change.

Working together in partnership, County Kildare VEC Community Education Service, Cill Dara ar Aghaidh Teo and the HSE Health Promotion Service Dublin Mid-Leinster came together to develop a sustainable programme which would empower vulnerable older people to become actively involved in their communities. This initiative, Older Voices Kildare, works to build self esteem and community participation and help address social isolation which contributes positively to mental health. A significant outcome of the initiative has been the establishment of the engAGE Kildare forum which is a Countywide mechanism for older people. The forum was officially launched in February 2012 and has representation on Kildare Age Friendly County Alliance and Older Voices Kildare.

Older Voices County Kildare continues to work in partnership with the VEC as it has developed, which has allowed expansion to the suite of programmes available to older people. Currently Older Voices is involved in the roll out of the original programmes, Ageing With Confidence and Voices Through Art and the recent additions of the On TRAC programme, Leading for Change, Media Skills and facilitating creative approaches to working in residential settings.



*Michael Malone,
Kildare Co. Manager at
the launch of engAGE
Kildare*

*Some of engAGE
Kildare's 380 members
celebrating the launch*



*Participants of our
Voices Through Art
hard at "work".*

Refugee Programme (Naas)

A group of families from Sudan and Eritrea were re-settled in Naas in mid January 2012.

County Kildare VEC is responsible for the educational provision and is delivering 16 hours of tuition per week to the refugees in the Adult Basic and Community Education (ABCE) Centre in Jigginstown. The tuition covers English as a 2nd Language along with basic computer skills. Everyday skills such as the bank machine, the rules of the road, how to read timetables, do shopping, fill out forms, have been developed. Some of the Sudanese learners are taking part in additional courses such as Maths and Communications. They have been made feel very welcome by their fellow participants and these courses have been an excellent way of integrating them into Irish society.



The VEC's counselling and guidance service is involved in the course and providing support for the learners. The participants have also attended an adult career guidance session which they found most helpful along with a very enjoyable Art therapy session with Aoife Gaffney, the mid-region VEC's psychologist.

Eight members of the group took part in the St. Patrick's Day Parade and two members of the group have joined the local soccer club. The word on the ground is that Naas is very pleased to be getting new players. Their first training took place before the brief April snowfall and they experienced a biting Irish wind for the first time!! April was the first time that the Sudanese saw snow. Many in the group are also keen to join the local athletic club.

As a practical introduction to their new environment, the group visited the Curragh and Kildare Cathedral and Round Tower recently. The local tourist office kindly opened the Cathedral especially for them and they were made feel very welcome. Some of the group find Naas very quiet after the hustle and bustle of Tripoli. A remark frequently overheard is "Where are all the people"



County Kildare VEC works closely with the re-settlement worker in Kildare Leader Partnership to enable the group cope with everyday living in Ireland.

Youthreach Leixlip

Youthreach All-Ireland Five-a-side Football Tournament

Astropark, Coolock - March, 2012

In March, eight students and two tutors attended the Youthreach All-Ireland five-a-side football tournament held this year in Coolock. The complex has twelve pitches and our centre played in four competitive but enjoyable matches. There were teams from as far as Cork, Limerick and Donegal, so it was a good opportunity for students from different regions to get to meet each other. All matches were very competitive with good participation by all Youthreach teams and a friendly atmosphere prevailed through most of the competition. Following the matches, students and tutors were invited to part take in some refreshments. Overall it was a good experience for students to meet others on the pitch and the occasion was professionally organised with good amenities, referees and catering.

Our thanks to all involved and we are already in training in anticipation of the next competition.

Youthreach Progression

As part of Youthreach Leixlip's continued efforts to encourage progression and promote PLC courses with our final year students, the centre is very happy with the success to date. This year, the students have applied for PLC's in Ballyfermot, Crumlin, Dunboyne and Collinstown. The most popular courses are Hair & Beauty, Childcare, Hotel & Catering, Legal & Dental Secretary, Business Studies and Television and Digital Film. To date, students have been invited for interviews and there is already success at this level. There is also one student hoping to start in VTOS in September. In the current economic climate, progression is being strongly encouraged within the centre. This interest amongst the students has been brought about through the hard work of the centre staff and the essential career advice from the VEC Adult Guidance and Psychological Services.

KILDARE ABE/BTEI

Photographic Exhibition and Sale

A Literacy and photography exhibition has captured the imagination of students and the public. The literacy and photography teams from HSE/EVE Harvest Centre and Kildare Adult Learning Centre launched a very successful photographic exhibition earlier this year.



This initiative is a result of a 'Literacy Through Photography' course run in HSE/EVE Harvest Centre by the Kildare Adult Learning Centre. A large number of Harvest Centre members have taken photographs of local points of interest involving nature and still life shots. The exhibition was open to the public over a three-week period during January and February.

All proceeds from the sale of the photographs were donated to St Brigid's Hospice and the Kildare Animal Foundation.



Athy VTOS

The Teamworking group in Athy VTOS took on the project of designing and making a garden for everyone to enjoy. The group is also publishing a magazine.



Art is one of the Award areas covered in the Centre and people are busily putting all their work together for the Assessment process.

Overall, it is a busy time of the year and a most enjoyable one. The centre is currently doing Programme Development to roll out the new combination of Awards for September 2012.



NIGHT CLASSES

(St. Conleth's Community College)

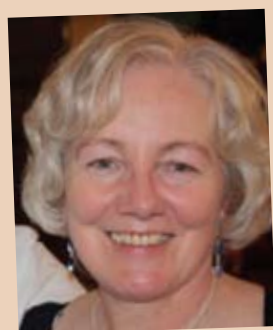
2011-12 has been a challenging year for the delivery of night class in St. Conleth's Community College and these challenges have led us to critically examine all aspects of Night class provision in the school.

At the end of each term, extensive evaluation of night classes is carried out on procedures, course content and suggestions that will allow improvements to the service. Having received feedback indicating that there was a shortfall in the evening class provision after Easter (term three), a small selection of the more popular courses were offered which were very well received by learners. By increasing the amount of courses provided, there has been a greater uptake this year. Short weekend courses were also run and these were very popular. An intensive Train-the-Trainer course was ran over 3 consecutive weekends. County Kildare VEC assisted in advertising this course using the VEC social media sites and the interest generated was huge. Feedback from learners on this course showed that there is a demand for weekend courses resulting from learners increased work commitments during the week.

With the economic downturn having an effect on the numbers attending evening classes, it was very important to think "outside the box" when developing courses. Changing times has required the organisation of self-financing courses for local groups, active retirement art courses and Train-the-Trainer courses for local employment companies. The response has been very positive and there has been an increase in the amount of local groups approaching St. Conleth's to organise courses and tutors for them. Another significant change has been the development of a Woodturning training course for teachers and this was successfully run over 3 days during the February midterm break.

Changed times, changed thinking has allowed our school to offer a more comprehensive Nightclass programme and we look forward to a creative 2012-13 in which we will endeavour to respond effectively to the needs of the learners and the communities around Newbridge.

Snapshot



MARY CAMPBELL

Q Name
A **Mary Campbell**

Q Hails from
A **County Donegal**

Q Role in Co Kildare VEC
A **VTOS Co-ordinator**

Q Worked in Co. Kildare VEC
A **16 years**

Q The house I grew up in
A **Ballyshannon, Co. Donegal**

Q When I was a child I wanted to be
A **A travel writer**

Q You wouldn't know it but I am very good at
A **Singing**

Q You may not know that I'm no good at
A **Accounts**

Q I drive a
A **Toyota Corolla**

Q A book that changed me
A **Dance of the Dissident Daughter by Sue Monk Kidd**

Q The person who makes me laugh
A **My Husband**

Q My life philosophy is
A **There is a crack in everything that's how the light gets in**

VTOS NEWBRIDGE

The birth of the website

A group of second year Business Studies students in VTOS Newbridge was given the opportunity to take on a new module in the Business course called e-Business Studies. The students decided to do this module because it looked interesting and challenging. They were fascinated by the module content and what the subject entailed.

As the classes began, aspects of e-Business, e-Commerce, m-Commerce and Biometrics were examined in conjunction with the beginning and growth of the Internet. The influence of the Internet on peoples' lives, how it has changed the way people shopped online and how men and women capitalised on the power of the Internet were studied. The Internet had made millionaires if not billionaires and some of the examples discussed in class related to men like the late Steve Jobs (Apple) and Jeff Bezos, creator of Amazon. Technology is developing at a rapid rate and that is both fascinating and frightening at the same time. The hunger of the group to learn more has developed.

The FETAC course descriptor for e-Business entails two assignments of the students' choice and one project, 'The Big One'. The project could be an individual choice or a group exercise. The Newbridge group decided to create the VTOS Newbridge website. Many things went wrong but with feedback from other students and staff it was finally completed and ready to be launched. The feedback from students was really the key because they had fresh eyes, ideas and thoughts on what they would like to see on the site as well as material that would entice students to visit the site. The end result was a website to be proud of and which will hopefully entice further students to take part in the VTOS course.

Adults reading about returning to education might think 'I could not do this'. Two years ago, the students who completed the course would have thought the same. The ethos of VTOS is about what you can achieve with learning new skills, gaining confidence and a belief in yourself.



Newbridge VTOS Teamworking & Appreciation of Irish Culture Project

Photographs showing some of the students and a sample of work produced by Newbridge VTOS students at their recent Chill Dara Inar gCroithe exhibition to show cultural, tourist and historical aspects of County Kildare



ATHY BTEI/ABE

Silver Surfer

Violet Nolan is 90 years of age and still interested in learning about computers. On the occasion of her 90th Birthday, Kildare Adult Learning Centre proudly presented their Silver Surfer with a Certificate of Achievement for her contribution to Computer classes during the past five years. Violet, who suffers from Parkinson's disease, started with a basic computer course five years ago and has never been deterred. Violet has progressed and completed a FETAC Level 3 Certificate in Computer Literacy and a Level 4 Certificate in Information Technology. She regularly uses Facebook and she is shortly starting a Digital Photography course and is also known to have given 'induction' lessons to seniors in the Day Care Centre before they attend the Kildare centre to learn computers. She believes familiarity with the computer is very important. Violet is an inspiration to all in the VEC centre with her positive attitude and energy.



FETAC FACTS

FETAC Assessments

FETAC External Authentication took place in the final weeks of May. In all over 3,000 learners were assessed and received FETAC certification in August.

In total, there are 15 FETAC Centres throughout the county, including PLC and Adult Education Centres. There were 619 Major Awards and 4,532 Minor Awards at Level 3 to Level 6 presented for assessment and certification in the following areas:

- Art, Craft Design
- Business Studies and Information Technology
- Child Care
- Community Care
- Pre Nursing Studies
- Horticulture
- Equine Studies
- General Studies
- Sport and Recreation

LEIXLIP ADULT LEARNING CENTRE

News update from a busy centre ...

Six tutors from the Leixlip centre completed their FETAC Level 5 Occupational First Aid course and received their certificates recently. Congratulations to all on their success and it is great to have people with a qualification such as First Aid in the centre.



The VTOS / PLC Open Day was held in March and the Adult Literacy Organiser was invited to attend. It was a busy day which provided the opportunity to meet some of the students, the VTOS / PLC tutors and to promote an integrated approach to the prospective students.

FETAC has taken up a lot of time in the Leixlip Learning Centre recently with training sessions to be attended, getting to grips with the new assessment process and delivering the modules. There is also a lot of work taking place around the review of the FETAC Quality Assurance (QA).

In April, the centre hosted the oral Irish examination for the first time. The students were very well prepared for the exam but the centre needed a tape recorder and 'tapes'. How times have changed, in a recent clean out, it was decided that tapes were now obsolete and were dumped. There was a scurry to source the tapes for the exams. After some trawling in our homes and a visit to the Argos website tapes were located. A lovely lady arrived on the day to carry out the exams and to our surprise, she was armed with a bag of tapes but the lesson learned by us was 'never throw out anything'. Back to the starting point and more importantly, she was delighted with the standard of the students and very encouraging that they should continue their Irish studies.



Well done to all students and their tutors who received certification, FETAC, Leaving and Junior certificates. It was a very busy and anxious time for students and tutors.

Three tutors from the centre attended the NALA Tutors' Forum in Dublin. The event is free for adult literacy tutors. The theme of this year's forum was on keeping adult literacy students actively involved in the learning process. There were speakers from Ireland and Scotland, as well as seven different workshops to choose from. The presentations looked at building on students' connections with family, work and community as well as transformative learning theory. Among the workshops were integrating literacy into other subject areas and building everyday numeracy into adult literacy provision.

Two maths tutors have been attending training to up skill on Project Maths. This was provided by Drumcondra Education Centre. Project Maths involves the introduction of revised syllabuses for both Junior and Leaving Certificate Mathematics. It involves changes to what students learn in mathematics, how they learn it and how they will be assessed. Much greater emphasis will be placed on student understanding of mathematical concepts, with increased use of contexts and applications that will enable students to relate mathematics to everyday experiences.



ADULT LITERACY ORGANISERS

The Adult Literacy Organisers' Forum 2012

The Adult Literacy Organisers' forum was held in Tallaght, County Dublin recently and County Kildare VEC was represented by the three ALOs. The theme of the conference was 'A Vision of Adult Literacy and Basic Core Skills under the new LETB Structures'.

The main issues discussed were:

- *managing and influencing change*
- *models of international best practice in adult literacy*
- *the integration of literacy and numeracy into VEC Further Education courses*

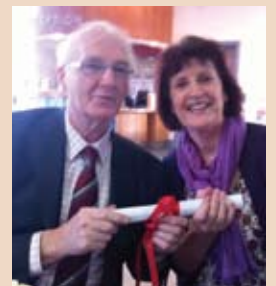
Among the key outcomes of the discussions and presentations was that at a time of change, the needs of the citizens should be to the fore rather than efficiencies alone. The importance of growing awareness of literacy issues among all adult education tutors and the need to integrate literacy and numeracy into all programmes and subjects was highlighted. The challenge is in framing priorities and supporting those change makers and to try to see change as an opportunity rather than a nuisance.

The issues identified which will need to be considered by VECs are the need for careful planning and consultation with the people concerned in the change, to understand and get to know the priorities of the other agencies. There is also need to use a variety of media to improve awareness of literacy issues and promote the service available and to create an integrated service model and approach.

Mary Faughnan, Pat Bennett and Imelda Carroll

EDO Retirement

Brendan Dunning retired at the end of February 2012 after 36 years of work with Kildare VEC. Over the past couple of years, Brendan has worked closely with the Adult Education Service.



Since retiring and being a Guidance Teacher, he has volunteered to work with the Adult Guidance Service two mornings a week. We thank him for his long contribution to education.

The picture shows Brendan with Bernie Byrne marking the occasion of his retirement in the Riverbank Theatre, the exact location of the original St. Conleth's Community College where Brendan began his VEC teaching career in 1976.

YOUTHREACH NAAS

NAAS YOUTHREACH PROJECT WITH KERDIFFSTOWN HOUSE, ST VINCENT DE PAUL HOLIDAY HOME.

This project aimed to alter the perceptions of young people towards the elderly in their communities and also to give the elderly a chance to meet, work alongside and appreciate the many good qualities of young people.



This volunteer project was organised by the Centre Special Educational Needs (SEN) coordinator Niamh Kelly and Pat Tracey, the manager of Kerdiffstown House Holiday Home. The aim was to create a space for the elderly to share their historical stories, music, creativity and laughter, deriving from a long and varied life, with our young Youthreach students who are at the beginning of life's journey. Often older people do not have an opportunity to communicate with young people in their community and at times live in fear of them. This project aimed to encourage positive attitudes between the two groups and to develop respect for the elderly and an appreciation of their life skills.



Each guest was paired with a student who took responsibility for looking after them for the day, they worked together in painting, music and photography workshops and then socialised over the sharing of a meal. The Students presented each guest with a CD of them performing during the music workshop, their finished painting, a bird feeder and seeds to take home with them. Each feeder was inscribed with the name of the elderly person by their paired student.

The students also took their guests bowling and arranged a portrait photo shoot for them in the centre and these photos were presented to them by their student friend in Kerdiffstown House. The guests also spent time with the students teaching them how to crochet, knit and play lawn bowls.

Another element of the project involved Youthreach students bringing to Kerdiffstown House a selection of woodcraft items made by them, including plant holders, window boxes and a variety of garden accessories. They worked alongside the guests potting plants, window boxes and a range of other plant items for indoor and outdoor use.

In truth, the students really enjoyed volunteering. It is hoped that the Vincent de Paul will benefit from further volunteering initiatives by them. The students offered them an energetic alternative to their usual trips and a chance to participate in creative projects alongside young people in and outside the centre.



Louise - student: *"It was one of the best experiences I've ever had. It was lovely to work with older people. You can learn a lot from them. I found something I would love to be involved with after Youthreach"*

Christina - guest: *"I was very impressed by the age difference and communication between the young people and us."*

Eileen - guest: *"This project has been the best thing since sliced bread. I hope it continues. Thanks to everyone, I hope you enjoyed your time with us. You did us proud. Keep up the good work."*

HORTICULTURE IN NAAS YOUTHREACH

In Youthreach Naas, spring is here again and it's time for students to be out planning the garden. Last year was a great success for the horticultural project, with vegetables on the daily menu.

So far this year, students are germinating seeds, weeding and planting raised beds, and learning the theory of practical horticulture.

The garden has brought great enjoyment to the students and staff. This helps to create a more interesting environment. Students have remarked on the wonder of seeing potatoes grow and the sweet taste of fresh organic peas. We are all looking forward to harvest time.





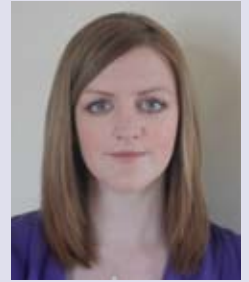
Here are some photos taken at our SEN exhibition / FETAC awards night. Lots of parents and guardians turned up to cheer as Des Murtagh, AEO with Kildare VEC, handed out FETAC certificates to the delighted and very proud students.

Psychologist/Counsellor

Aoife Gaffney has joined the team of Elish Tansey and Orlaith McManus as Psychologists/Counsellors. Aoife will work with students and staff in the mid region of Kildare, while Elish continues in the northern region and Orlaith in the southern region.

ICT Specialist

The Adult Education Service welcomes Pamela Coyne as an ICT Intern under the JobsBridge programme to Kildare VEC. Over the nine months, with the assistance of Pamela, the Service hopes to roll-out an improved ICT support structure for staff that will have benefits for students, improving communication and more effective learning through ICT. Some of the projects in hand are the roll out of Moodle, SharePoint, VEC staff emails, e-learning, wikis and the development of new websites.



Services

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Athy	ABE	Imelda Carroll	059-8633270	imeldacarroll@kildarevec.ie
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Athy	Youthreach	Ellie Reddy	059-8638412	youthreachathy@kildarevec.ie
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