

## Youth & Sport

## Arts & Culture

## Health & Welfare

## Irish Language

### Dear Readers,

Welcome to this year's final issue of The Spark, featuring a selection of National Lottery funded projects and organisations.

Christmas is a time for family and the home but many people do not have a safe place to call home. **Focus Ireland** raises vital funds to support families, children, young people and adults who are homeless or in danger of losing their home.

Being in hospital is always hard for children, but especially difficult at Christmas. **Children in Hospital Ireland** provides fun and activities to some of Ireland's sickest children in hospitals across the country.

Overleaf we look at some more fantastic Lottery funded organisations:

The **Ballinlen Arts Foundation** in rural Co. Mayo, an internationally innovative, community-based residency programme for artists;

**Na Píobairí Uilleann**, the Society of Uilleann Pipers, who are helping to share the sound of Ireland around the world;

And the **Port Garda Youth Project** who have made a DVD to promote positive mental health.

On behalf of the National Lottery, may I wish all our readers a very happy Christmas and New Year.

**Nuala Kane**  
Public Relations Officer

## Sponsor A Star

Christmas is all about home and family. However, not everyone has a home and sadly over 800 children and their families have become homeless this year. Focus Ireland is working hard to support these families along with many single people and couples. Miriam O'Callaghan teamed up with Focus Ireland recently to launch its annual "Sponsor a Star" campaign which aims to raise over €250,000 through businesses sponsoring a star on the Focus Ireland Christmas tree at the top of Grafton Street dedicated to people who are homeless.

She said: **"I met some of the families who have become homeless this year when working on the special Prime Time report and as a mother I have to say I found it heart-breaking that in this day and age in the region of 20 children have lost their family home every week so far this year."** Miriam added: **"I am appealing to the business community to dig deep this year to help Focus Ireland support families and all people who are homeless and the thousands more who at risk of losing their homes this Christmas."**

Companies can sponsor a star by contacting Aileen at Focus Ireland on **01-8815900**.

Focus Ireland is grateful to receive a grant from the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, which is directly funded by the National Lottery, especially since the demand for the charity's services increased by 25% last year. This funding is vital to ensure Focus Ireland can be there for people who need support.



RTE's Miriam O'Callaghan supports Focus Ireland's Sponsor a Star campaign

## Bringing Smiles to the Faces of Child Patients

For 45 years Children in Hospital Ireland (CHI) has provided fun and activities to some of Ireland's sickest children in hospitals across the country – with welcome National Lottery and Dept. of Environment, Community and Local Government assistance.

CHI promotes the welfare of sick children, supports their parents and families and, each year, dedicated, vetted and trained PlayWell Volunteers deliver over 40,000 hours of play and recreation to child patients.

Being in hospital is always hard for children, but especially difficult at Christmas.

To learn more about how you can help CHI make hospital a happier place for children this Christmas and into the future, see [www.childreninhospital.ie](http://www.childreninhospital.ie)



CHI volunteers Lisa, Anne Marie, Joyce, Margaret, Luke & Gemma

## Sharing the Sound of Ireland



A young uilleann piper

Na Píobairí Uilleann (NPU), the Society of Uilleann Pipers, aims to establish the music of the uniquely Irish uilleann pipes as a major art form around the world. Lovers of Irish music can learn how to play the uilleann pipes with NPU who also provide training, tutorial and archive materials on their website and via an App for iPhone and Android called "Moving Cloud".

In Ireland, NPU has a dedicated PipeCraft centre to train people in the very highly skilled craft of uilleann pipe-making, and provides weekly instrument tuition, especially to young people. In association with Ireland's National Music Education Programme, Music Generation, NPU gives performance music education in schools

and youth centres, demonstrating the instrument, discussing its history and giving children the opportunity to play. Na Píobairí Uilleann receives National Lottery funding distributed by the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

**"Funding ensures that the craft of Uilleann pipe-making is well embedded in Ireland, and that people get the opportunity to play the pipes and have access to instruments. Thanks to this funding, Na Píobairí Uilleann enriches the lives of people around the world and in Ireland through the music and culture of the Irish pipes,"** said Gay McKeon, CEO, Na Píobairí Uilleann.

## Art Inspiration in County Mayo

The Ballinglen Arts Foundation is an internationally innovative, community-based residency programme for artists and arguably the best of its kind in the world. Located in the village of Ballycastle on the sea coast of North Co. Mayo, Ballinglen attracts artists from Ireland and abroad to live and work in its unique and inspiring environment, to help them develop their individual work.

Ballinglen also provides educational opportunities to the local and wider community through art exhibitions, school classes, print making classes, artists' studio visits, gallery tours and an art library.

**"Our schools programme offers children the opportunity to meet and learn from world-class artists and participate in art workshops. Running for almost 20 years, 5,000 students have participated, and thanks to Lottery funding, we are able to continue to provide this excellent free of charge programme,"** said Una

Forde, Managing Director, Ballinglen Arts Foundation.

The Ballinglen Arts Foundation receives a National Lottery funded Arts Council grant. For more information see [ballinglenartsfoundation.org](http://ballinglenartsfoundation.org).



Children participating in a workshop at Ballinglen Arts Foundation

## Help Is There



Port Garda Youth Project launch mental awareness DVD

Every year the Port Garda Youth Project in Portarlington, Co. Laois raise awareness of an issue affecting young people in the locality. This year, with the assistance of National Lottery funding, a DVD entitled H.I.T – Help is There, was produced to help tackle the issue of suicide and self-harm among young people, promote the importance of positive

mental health and well-being and highlight the various supports available.

**"We knew that making a DVD about this sensitive and important topic would require adequate funding to ensure that it was made to the highest standard. In 2013 we made an application for a National Lottery grant and they in turn provided the essential funding for the completion of this DVD,"** said Lorna Bermingham, Youth Justice Worker at PORT Garda Youth Diversion Project. The DVD was launched in October 2014 in conjunction with Laois Mental Health Awareness week.

**"We hope that by making this DVD it will highlight the issues surrounding suicide, provide relevant and up to date information on the supports available and motivate young people to utilise these supports available to them when they are faced with challenging times."** finished Lorna.