CARA FOCUS

NATIONAL NEWSLETTER

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2016 Inclusion Awards Shortlist

Me Too Campaign



Hyundai moves CARA up a gear

FOREWORD

The HSE are delighted to be working more closely with the CARA centre and look forward to developing this relationship over the coming years. This is a mutually beneficial partnership, as the work of CARA fits very well with the vision of Healthy Ireland, a place "where everyone can enjoy physical and mental health and wellbeing to their full potential, where wellbeing is valued and supported at every level of society, and is everyone's responsibility."

The National Physical Activity Plan, which was launched earlier this year, sets out eight thematic areas for action and the HSE has lead responsibility for a number of these actions. The health service has a key role in the promotion of physical activity, through ensuring greater awareness of the role physical activity plays in the prevention and treatment of disease, and in the creation of a healthy lifestyle. The health service is also responsible for the care and welfare of the whole population, and strives to reduce the level of health inequalities that exist for some of the more disadvantaged members of our society.

Our work with CARA aims to address in particular Action 29 in the National Physical Activity Plan: "Develop guidelines, support materials and referral pathways to promote physical activity for organisations providing mental health services and disability services."

We are supporting CARA to conduct a review specific to Health Promotion programmes and initiatives designed for people with disabilities. We look forward to receiving the recommendations that CARA will provide in relation to the development of guidelines, support material and programmes to promote physical activity for people with disabilities and, in particular, the learning we will achieve in relation to the experiences and challenges of people with disabilities and how we can develop a Health Promotion programme to help address these.

Whatever those challenges to being more active are, we know that it is important to overcome them as best we can. No matter what our starting point is, there is always another level we can strive for, another challenge we can set for ourselves. As the saying goes: "Life begins at the edge of our comfort zones." CARA are certainly leading by example from this perspective as they keep pushing the boundaries of what's possible and stepping out where no one has stepped before. We are proud to be partnering with CARA, and hope that the current review will provide us with the framework from which to best support people with disabilities to get active and stay active, and keep pushing through those comfort zones.



Dr. Ailis Brosnan, Health Promotion and Improvement, HSE

Dr. Ailis Brosnan

Health Promotion and Improvement, HSE

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Front Cover Image Provided by Tojo Lazzari (pg. 5).

Catching up with CARA



Niamh Daffy
Managing Director

Before we move into 2017 and into what will be the 10th year of the CARA Centre, I am delighted to recap on a few exciting developments which occurred throughout 2016, as well as taking a look at the year ahead.

The CARA Centre's aim is to increase sport and physical activity opportunities for people with disabilities. With a simple vision of 'Active and Healthy Lifestyles for People with Disabilities', we work in collaboration with key agencies throughout Ireland to increase awareness, increase opportunities and ultimately increase participation.

Through funding support from Sport Ireland and Dormant Accounts, we have continued the expansion of the National Inclusion Training and Education Framework while introducing Inclusive Fitness Training, Inclusive Adventure Training and Inclusive Physical Education Training and Support. In addition to the Framework, we have continued to impact on increasing sport and physical activity opportunities for people with disabilities through:

- Coordinating the Local Sports Partnership Sports Inclusion Disability Programme
- Supporting National Governing Bodies of Sport
- Recognising organisations who are making a difference through our National Inclusion Awards,
- Implementing the 7th year of CampAbilities Ireland and
- Continuing to advocate for increased awareness and access to sport and physical activity.

Early next year we will be launching our new strategy outlining the focus and direction for the CARA Centre for the next four years. The main approach which underpins what we do is that 'people are at the core of our work'. Most recently, CARA has embarked on a new venture specific to engaging more with people with disabilities, their families and carers. The 'Me Too' Campaign will be officially launched at our National Seminar for Inclusion on December 2nd and will signal the start of the CARA Centres planned focus on heightening awareness of the lived experience of people with disabilities in relation to participating in sport and physical activity. Over the 4 years of our strategy, The 'Me Too Campaign' will focus on the following:

(1) The facilitation of focus groups with people with disabilities throughout Ireland

(2) The design and implementation of a National Charter for Inclusion designed in conjunction with people with disabilities

(3) The development of a service-based awareness and education programme aimed at increasing awareness of the benefits of sport and physical activity for people with disabilities and pathways to participation opportunities

(4) Increased participation of people with disabilities within community based programmes

In line with our Me Too initiatives, the CARA Centre is delighted to have formed a new partnership with the HSE specific to promoting physical activity for people with disabilities. Focusing on the Healthy Ireland National Physical Activity Plan, we are compiling an in-depth review which will provide recommendations for creating greater physical activity awareness among people with disabilities as well as outlining effective referral pathways that will enhance opportunities to participate.

I am pleased to announce the new directors of the CARA Centre who over the coming years will provide guidance and support on the journey for CARA as well as ensuring good governance for our organisation. Our Board of Directors are: John Fox (Vice President Corporate Affairs IT Tralee), Dr Ailis Brosnan (Health Promotion and Improvement HSE), Dr Liam Hennessey (Director, Setanta College), Senator Martin Conway (Spokesperson for Disability and Equality), Pat Flanagan (Founder, CARA Centre/Lecturer IT Tralee), Matt Connor (An Garda Siochana), Leslee O Loughlin (HR Manager, Enterprise Rent-A-Car) and Niall O Flynn (RTE). We are extremely fortunate to have a Board of such dedicated people to guide, advise and support the future direction of the CARA Centre.

The team here at CARA recently said goodbye to Kate Feeney who worked with us for a number of years in the implementation of our training and education framework. Although Kate has moved on to pursue her career lecturing at Waterford Institute of Technology she is still very much connected to CARA in her role as one of our Disability Inclusion Training Tutors and voluntary role on our Camp Abilities Committee. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Kate sincerely for her dedicated work and to wish her well in all her future endeavours.



Mary Corry
Training and Education Coordinator

Just as one says goodbye, we were delighted to say hello and extend a warm welcome to Mary Corry who recently joined us as Training and Education Coordinator. Coming with a wealth of experience within both the sport and physical education sector, Mary will be responsible for supporting and guiding National Governing Bodies of Sport in enhancing awareness of and access to their sport for people with disabilities. In addition Mary will be developing a programme plan to impact on increased provision for children with disabilities within primary and post primary physical education.

Lastly, we would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the continued support from IT Tralee, Sport Ireland, Dormant Accounts, Hyundai Ireland, and the Department of Justice and Equality, without whose guidance and assistance we wouldn't be able to achieve our ambitious objectives. We look forward to the year ahead in continuing to work in collaboration, bringing organisations together to impact on increased awareness, increased opportunities and increased participation of people with disabilities in sport and physical activity.

On behalf of the CARA Team, I would like to wish you all a wonderful Christmas and a very Happy New Year

MeToo

What is Me Too?

'Me Too' is a project where we are engaging with and listening to people with disabilities, in relation to sport and physical activity.

Why Me Too?

We want to truly capture the voices of people with disabilities, to fully understand and appreciate the impact sport and physical activity has on their daily lives.

Awareness

Multimedia Campaign

To officially launch the 'Me Too' campaign, we've embarked on a multimedia campaign where we listened to the voices of people with disabilities, explaining in their own words, the importance of sport and physical activity in their everyday lives.

Consultation

Nationwide Focus Groups

To accurately capture the voices & lived experiences of people with disabilities in terms of participating in sport and physical activity, we will be carrying out focus groups throughout Ireland, to gain a better understanding of the barriers, solutions and impact sport and physical activity has on the lives of people with disabilities,

Commitment

National Charter for Inclusion

From information gathered via focus groups, a National Charter for Inclusion will be developed. We will ask organisations to sign up to and adopt this Charter, and commit to be inclusive of people with disabilities in their organisation/club.

Education

Awareness & Educational Programme

As part of the National Physical Activity Plan, an education and awareness programme will be developed specifically for people with disabilities, on why and how they can participate in regular physical activity. This will be developed and rolled out through the support and assistance of the disability services nationwide as part of a health promotion campaign for people with disabilities.

#MeToo **www.caracentre.ie/me-too** **Coordinated by:** CARA

THE POWER TO MAKE YOU FEEL GREAT

Tojo Lazzari



– Can you tell us a little bit about yourself?

I grew up in County Clare, but would call counties Mayo and Leitrim my home as I work and live in both. I had an accident in 2010 when I crashed my motorbike into a tractor and, as a result, I lost my right arm above the elbow. I'm now a paratriathlete and an adventure sport enthusiast. I love the outdoors, nature and exercise. I'm still fairly new to triathlon but I can tell you I'm hooked for life!

– Was there a light-bulb moment or defining moment in your life that go you involved in physical activity and/or adventure recreation?

Yes, growing up I had no direction and wasn't interested in any kind of physical activity. I really just lived for the weekend and the party. It was just by chance that when I was around fifteen years of age I was invited on an expedition with the Scarriff Youth Club and St. Petersburg Adventure Centre. The four day trip consisted of camping, canoeing and hiking in Connemara. I only went as some of my friends were going but I truly had an amazing time in the elemental Irish weather and I truly felt alive for the first time. It was such a challenge, but I loved that feeling you get after such a physical and mental challenge, and the sense of accomplishment after it's been completed.

After the trip I enrolled on an outdoor pursuit's course at Lough Allen Adventure and doing this course really changed my life and opened a door for me. It gave me a purpose in life, a passion and the confidence to take on new challenges.

– You have sampled a few different sports and physical activities. Can you tell us a little bit about those?

My whole life had become adventure sport orientated. Kayaking was my biggest passion, but I was a keen mountaineer and threw myself at any and all adventure sports I could. Kayaking became my reason to get up in the morning and took all my attention and focus throughout the day!

I was enrolled in the first year of GMIT Castlebar's Outdoor Education Course when I had my accident. I had just turned 21 and I thought my life was over as, no matter how hard I tried, I knew I wouldn't be able to kayak at the level I had previously.

I was really lucky that I was a student at GMIT at the time because on the course you get to sample a wide variety of activities. I managed to heal up over the summer, learn to write with my left hand, do my repeat exams and make it into the second year.

I tried canoeing, snorkeling, free diving, caving, rock climbing, sailing and snowboarding. I would have just assumed that I wouldn't be able to do these activities, but because I had the push from being on the course, along with being surrounded by people who shared the same passions as me, I was able to get back in the game and participate in these activities at a good level.

It was when I became proficient in the outdoor activities again that I stopped feeling disabled. All my confidence and independence was back and I felt good, but there was still a huge gap in my life because, without kayaking, I still felt quite empty and not fully recovered from the accident.

Then one day, out of nowhere, I just decided to start running. I had never ran before and I don't know why I started, but I just started to run most days and after a while got quite good and even started to participate in local races.

In my search for a new sport to give me the same feelings the kayaking used to do I ended up visiting the University of Limerick, with the help of GMIT and Paul Ryan, a sports development officer. I got the chance to meet the Paralympic teams that were preparing for the 2012 Paralympic games, and try my hand at some of the sports. I had a go at the javelin, shot put and discus, but it was when I met Cathal Miller and the team of Para-cyclists that I knew I really had to give the cycling a go. It took over a year to get a prosthetic arm for cycling so, in preparation, I started to go to the gym. I did High Intensity Training workouts and spin classes, but when I finally got the arm and started cycling the feeling of emptiness that I had experienced disappeared and the passion I once felt for kayaking was replaced with a new love for cycling.

– Can you tell us about your current sport(s) and your journey to get to where you are in it now?

Last year was the first year that I started to take my training seriously rather than just for fun and to keep fit. I really wanted to improve and I really wanted to win. I had a meeting with Eamonn Tilley, the Irish Para Triathlon coach, at the start of the year. I said to him that I really wanted to compete for Ireland in triathlon and he gave me an opportunity. I was able to race for Ireland in four international competitions this year, bringing home a gold and a bronze medal, which was the proudest moment in my sporting career so far.

– Who is your 'hero' and why? (sporting or otherwise)

I have many heroes and role models that I look up to and I am inspired by them all. I couldn't just pick one person but the list would include my team mates, my coaches, my family, friends, and everyone with a "difability" who shows resilience, courage, and passion. It's "when you participate in sport that the focus shifts to the ability" rather than the disability and I do feel that the focus is changing.

– What's next for you in terms of sporting events and/or goals?

I have a lot of goals and aims I hope to accomplish in the coming years, but for next year I hope to train hard and race even harder. I want to make the transition to become a real contender in the international triathlons. I have a long way to go and a lot of training to do, but I will do my best and just enjoy the process.

– If you had one bit of advice or wisdom to bestow onto people with disabilities who are considering getting physically active or competing, what would that be?

I would suggest just to get out there and give everything and anything a shot. It can take a while to find an activity you really enjoy but, even so, becoming active and doing exercise has so many benefits and really has the power to make you feel great. There are a lot of people and organisations who would love to help. Just make contact and see what happens

INCLUSIVE ADVENTURE ACTIVITIES TRAINING



Recent funding from the Dormant Accounts via Sport Ireland has enabled CARA to engage with a number of organisations and individuals working in the Outdoor Adventure sector throughout Ireland. A working group was established to assist in the design of an Inclusive Adventure Activities Training workshop. An online survey was conducted to gain insight into the current provision and practice for people with disabilities within the outdoor sector. 90% of respondents said that they would be interested in receiving Disability Inclusion Training specific to the Outdoor Adventure area.

In May 2016 a sub-group came together for course development over two days. CARA also engaged the services of John Crosbie, who has travelled this road in the UK, to share his knowledge and expertise from working in the Calvert Trust and the Institute of Outdoor Learning. John played a pivotal role in guiding and challenging the group to decide on the approach and content that would be developed in more detail by the various individuals in the group.

A date for the pilot of a one-day training course with an element of pre-course online learning was set for June 2016. The pilot was delivered by Tomas Alyward (IT Tralee) and Ciaran Murphy (Irish Sailing Association) at the Cappanalea Outdoor Education and Training Centre in Kerry. Course participants on the day included outdoor instructors, club members, managers, commercial operators, occupational therapists, disability service staff, parents of children with disabilities, adults with disabilities, carers and support workers. A lengthy evaluation of the pilot workshop followed with the next stage being the delivery of a second pilot with Kinsale Outdoor Education Centre in December 2016 allowing for any final tweaks to be completed. In early 2017 we will identify and train tutors, who will be deployed to deliver the finalised version from March 2017.

Another positive development in the outdoor sector is that a number of outdoor/adventure NGB's have recently been awarded Dormant Account funding via Sport Ireland for projects that target increasing participation of people with disabilities in their sports/activities. An element of this funding is also directed towards the development of training and education of their clubs, tutors, coaches/instructors and volunteers, which will undoubtedly bring about more awareness, more opportunities and more participation of people with disabilities throughout their organisations. CARA looks forward to working with and supporting these NGBs in the role out of their projects in the coming year.

The benefits of participating in outdoor adventure activities are the same for everyone; to gain a sense of achievement or challenge, to exercise and keep fit, to socialise and make friends, or quite simply for the fun and enjoyment of taking part.

It can be as simple as getting outdoors and going for a walk or getting into a canoe and paddling on the water. Getting more people with a disability leading an active and healthy lifestyle can happen in outdoor adventure environments too.

MASTERING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Catherine Burgess MSc.



Catherine Burgess MSc.

For people with disabilities, the simplest of tasks require planning. A day out, going for an evening of socialising, or taking a well-deserved holiday all require careful planning and research. The concept of spontaneity in many instances is a no-go area. This careful research and planning also extends to the area of keeping fit.

Personally I am new to the world of physical disability. I was carefree and totally oblivious to the world of disability until I was diagnosed with Primary Progressive MS in 2006. A whole new world opened up to me and, in some instances, it was not a pleasant experience. Every wheelchair user will, at some time, have had the experience of having people speak to them in a childlike manner or be told that they are great for doing a task that would never be commented on if they were able bodied. At times this can be upsetting and disheartening, especially if it is accompanied by a tight uncomfortable smile and some arm rubbing.

At first I never explored the idea of exercise as an option for me, as I felt that door was firmly shut. In 2013/14 I undertook a masters in NUI Galway in Health Psychology, and I began to fully understand the importance of physical exercise for mental as well as physical health. Rates of depression in people with MS are significantly higher than for those of the general population, and this has been found to be the case across all physical disabilities. Research into physical exercise and depression has shown that, in many instances, regular exercise is more successful than anti-depressants. By acquiring this knowledge I had an epiphany - there must be a gym in my location that caters for people with physical disability! So, I began the research in haste.

My first port of call was to a well-known nationwide gym that was located in Waterford. I rang the gym and they told me to come in for a chat and they assured me that they could cater to my needs. A friend of mine, who was a member of this gym, got me a five-day pass, so I had nothing to lose. My initial meeting went very well and I was able to inform the staff member of what my capabilities were. He said he would do up an exercise programme based on the information I had provided. I returned the next day and was met by a different member of staff, who greeted me by saying "I wouldn't say you were ever in a gym before". I was very hurt but I cheerfully replied that indeed I had been in a gym before, as I hadn't always been like this. I went through the motions of doing the programme that had been designed for me but it was totally unsuitable. I never returned to that gym again.

In 2015, a year after the negative experience of trying to get active, my daughter was working close to a local gym and she informed me that she had seen some guys in wheelchairs enter the gym on several occasions. While I am not a wheelchair user, my mobility is severely limited. A few weeks later I plucked up the courage and paid a visit to Peak Fitness Gym in Waterford. I was met by a friendly and helpful staff who seemed to truly understand my needs and what I was willing to achieve. My goals were small. I wanted to improve my upper body strength, as falling over had become an occupational hazard, while getting back up was a mammoth task. I also wanted to have some control over weight gain although this was not a primary concern. I found Peak to be a place where I felt comfortable and "normal". I felt like everyone else there, and you cannot put a price on that feeling.

INCLUSIVE FITNESS



2016 saw a very exciting and busy year for Inclusive Fitness with the rollout of our Inclusive Fitness training course and tutor support network in early February. The uptake of the course has been very strong, with keen interest from leisure centres big and small.

This has been a great lead into the many programmes and projects we have planned for the coming months, and into 2017.

In December we will see the first set of UFIT Mentors being trained and coached as part of the globally-recognised UFIT (Universal Fitness Innovation & Transformation) Programme. The UFIT Programme is an initiative and toolkit developed by the UNESCO Chair in Inclusive PE, Sport, Recreation and Fitness, based at IT Tralee and is being lead and rolled out by the CARA Centre. The programme is a strengths-based approach to transforming the way the fitness sector engages with and provides opportunities for people with disabilities through its services. In line with the CARA National Training and Education Framework, the CARA Centre will be rolling out the UFIT Managers Programme in early 2017. Following the mentor training in December we will have a national network of UFIT mentors that will help to deliver the programme and work closely with leisure centre managers and community based disability organisations and providers.

2017 will also see an exciting, fun-packed week in April when we roll out our FIT4All programme. The Fit4All programme is a National Awareness Week that is aimed at increasing the awareness of the benefits of physical activity and fitness to individuals with disabilities. It also aims to increase the opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in fitness and leisure centre based activities.

The programme aims to raise awareness of disability and demonstrate effective actions to improve attitudes towards people with disabilities amongst fitness professionals, leisure centre managers and fitness instructors.

As part of the Fit4All programme, we will work closely with leading organisations in the disability and fitness sector to enhance awareness and to build competence in the services that they provide, but also to increase the awareness of disability in these sectors at both community and national level.



The CARA Centre will lead and coordinate the national awareness week and will work in close cooperation with the Local Sports Partnerships, Sports Inclusion Disability Officers, the national network of leisure facilities and professionals, and our Inclusive Fitness Training working group partners.

Throughout the Fit4All week, we will be inviting leisure centres around the country to get involved in promoting their programmes and classes to individuals with disabilities, while also encouraging them to invite individuals with disabilities into their facilities. We will be highlighting centres and programmes of good practice and showcasing where fitness for individuals with disabilities is working. The main Fit4all day will showcase a fitness master class, hosted by a number of fitness instructors with varying levels of disability, held in one national hub. This master class will be targeted at all individuals, especially individuals with intellectual, physical and sensory disabilities.

Over the next year we will also be developing our National Leisure Centre Accessibility Standard, called iFit, which will provide leisure centres and their customers with a quality assurance mark to the level of access their centre provides. The standard will encompass a number of areas, including access, training and education, fitness equipment, marketing and promotion etc. and will set the minimum and maximum standards they must achieve in order to achieve the iFit standard.

If you would like more information about Inclusive Fitness Training or any of the above please contact Brenda on 01 6251160 or email on brendaodonnell.cara@ittralee.ie

UFit universal fitness innovation & transformation

Universal Fitness Innovation and Transformational Programme



Coordinated by:

CARA

The Universal Fitness Innovation and Transformational (UFIT) programme is a movement for Social Change that involves capacity building of key stakeholders working in the Fitness Industry.

The UFIT Manager Programme is designed and delivered using 3 online sessions and 1 face to face session with your designated UFIT Mentor. The programme equips managers with the knowledge and tools to inclusivize their fitness services.

The programme is aimed at Fitness and Leisure Services, Leisure Group Owners, Centre Managers, and Duty Managers.

The UFIT manager programme will facilitate managers in:

READY	1. Understanding of the UTMF Model 2. Understanding and embracing the concept of UniversAbility 3. Appreciating the benefits of Inclusion
STEADY	4. Examine the centre's current practice 5. Form partnerships with local disability services 6. Help develop an Action plan to align with current practice
GO	7. Integrate UFIT Goals to achieve an Inclusive Approach 8. Implement and Continuously review UFIT in your Centre 9. Help your centre to become advocates for inclusive Practice for Individuals with Disabilities

HOW DO I APPLY FOR THE PROGRAMME?

You can contact the CARA Centre Inclusive Fitness Coordinator on **inclusivefitness.cara@ittralee.ie** or **01 6251160**

UFIT designed by:

UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

uniTwin TRALEE UNESCO Chair "Transforming the Lives of People with Disabilities, their Families and Communities, Through Physical Education, Sport, Recreation and Fitness"

Course Certification

Each UFIT Programme Trainee will receive a UFIT certificate to acknowledge completion of the programme.

Course Resources

The programme is delivered using 3 online sessions. You will receive a face to face meeting with your designated UFIT Mentor. The bespoke programme is delivered to facilitate the setup of any fitness centre in the context of its community and will be delivered with a strong collaborative approach.

Cost of Course

The programme costs €350. This gives you unlimited and lifetime access to the UFIT Portal which provides you with access to your online training course handouts and resources and to the UFIT Explorer resource detailing valuable information about the different disabilities.

CARA NATIONAL INCLUSION AWARDS

Presented by CARA Centre

The CARA National Inclusion Awards has shortlisted a number of its many applicants for this year's awards. These include a great spread of organisations and people doing exceptional work in the area of inclusion and really having a positive impact on the physical activity and sporting lives of people with disabilities in Ireland.

LOCAL SPORTS PARTNERSHIP AWARD

Limerick Sport Partnership

Sligo Sport & Recreation Partnership

LOCAL SPORTS CLUBS AWARD

Carrigaline United AFC (Cork)

Esker Celtic Football Club (Dublin)

Killarney Celtic Football Club (Kerry)

PRIMARY SCHOOLS PE & SPORTS AWARD

Ballycar N.S (Clare)

St. Francis N.S (Louth)

Scoil Eoin Phóil II Naofa (Offaly)

SECONDARY SCHOOLS PE &SPORTS AWARD

Gaelcholáiste an Phiarsaigh (Dublin)

John the Baptist Community School (Limerick)

THIRD LEVEL PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND SPORT AWARD

Dublin City University

University Of Limerick Sport Arena

ADVENTURE PROVIDER AWARD

7th Wave Surf School (Sligo)

Mullaghmore Equestrian Centre (Monaghan)

Pony Tales Stables (Kerry)

LEISURE / FITNESS CENTRE AWARD

Aura Leisure Centre Dundalk (Louth)

Kildare Sports & Leisure Facilities Ltd. (Kildare)

Leisureland (Galway Salthill Failte) (Galway)

NATIONAL GOVERNING BODIES AWARD

Football Association of Ireland

Tennis Ireland

Triathlon Ireland

This year, with the support of Hyundai Ireland we have introduced an 'Best Overall Winner Award' which is an award given to the applicant that has the most impressive application across all the category winners.
Winners to be announced at our National Seminar for Inclusion on December 2nd 2016.

Coordinated by: CARA

Funded by: Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform / An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt, Comhionannais agus Athchóirithe Dlí

Proudly supported by: sport ireland

IN GREAT SHAPE WITH REBEL WHEELERS CORK

Orla O Brien



On 29th December 2006, aged two-and-a-half, Cormac was admitted to Cork University Hospital. After days of blood tests, scans and repeat scans, we were told the devastating news that Cormac had a permanent brain injury, a rare complication which can occur post-chicken pox. After months in CUH and a ten month stay in the National Rehabilitation Hospital (NRH) in Dun Laoghaire, we were transferred to the care of Enable Ireland in Cork.

It was at Enable Ireland that I first saw the notice for Rebel Wheelers Multi-Sports Club. Our first few visits to the club did not go well, so we decided to take a break and, after nearly a year, we decided to try again. The Club were looking for new leaders so I suggested to Cormac that I put my name down for training. He was thrilled as his Dad was coaching rugby with his younger brother. Over the coming months, Cormac settled into the Club and really looked forward to his Saturday mornings.

Rebel Wheelers is a sports club for children with a physical disability. It was founded in 2008 by two parents who wanted their children to participate in sport, but found that mainstream clubs couldn't or wouldn't facilitate them. The Club encourages all children with a physical disability to come and try out a range of different sports in a safe, fun environment. Many of our children have progressed to playing sport at a competitive level. Alan Dineen, one of the first children to join the Club, now competes for Ireland in wheelchair rugby. A number of our athletics team have represented Ireland at international events (IWAS games). Cormac is part of the junior basketball team who train weekly and travel the country to participate in the IWA National Junior Basketball League.

Last year, the Club rolled out a new initiative with ten of our children. The program was designed to incorporate three key areas - wellbeing (mindfulness), nutrition and fitness (strength and conditioning and movement). This type of program had never been rolled out before for a group with a physical disability.

For Cormac, the initiative was a great success as it has seen him grow in confidence and develop a keen interest in fitness.

The last ten years have not been easy, as life for a child with a physical disability can be challenging. As well as dealing with the physical aspects (Cormac has had surgery and multiple rounds of Botox), they also have the emotional baggage to deal with. There have been times when Cormac has felt isolated and upset at not being able to keep up with his peers. However, being part of Rebel Wheelers and participating



in sport has been a positive experience for him. He has learned that he can achieve his dreams – it may take a longer, alternative route but nothing is impossible if you believe in yourself.

My advice to any parent of a child with a disability is that you have to look beyond the disability and don't let it define your child. Surround yourself with people who have a positive outlook on life. Don't be afraid to let your child make mistakes – that's how all children learn, irrespective of their ability. Yes, there will be bad days when life just seems to be so cruel and you feel completely overwhelmed. I've been there and expect that as the teenage hormones kick in, I'll have many more of those days. Having people to talk to is vital. That's where clubs like Rebel Wheelers play a vital role. Parents who would have felt isolated have the opportunity to build friendships and offer advice and support to one another.

Cormac is now a happy and healthy twelve-year-old. He plays basketball with the Rebel Wheelers team and also goes to the gym twice a week. The quiet little boy who wouldn't try anything back in 2009 has now completed treetop adventures, been canoeing with his friends and made me cry by insisting that I go on roller coaster rides and far too many scary water slides! This week, he had an assessment with his physiotherapist and, instead of the usual muscle tightness and spasticity, we were told that Cormac is now in the best shape he's ever been. All those long hours in the gym and on the basketball court are paying off!

RUNNING FOR CAMP ABILITIES

Robbie Darcy



– Can you tell us a little about Aaron?

As a toddler Aaron was always very bright, loved to read and do all the other activities that kids of that age would do, but as he got older it got a little tough for him. He sees his friends who are able to ride a bike, or cross the street, or even play out on the road, and that can be hard for him. I remember one time we were in Wexford and Aaron and his friends were playing "kick the can" and Aaron was caught first so he had to be "on" next, but to my amazement he told all the other kids: "My eyesight isn't as good as yours so it's going to be hard for me to see you all hiding" and one of his friends said: "I'll be on for Aaron". It was lovely to hear that from his friends, as it showed me that, regardless of his disability, he was very much welcome.

– What sport or physical activity does Aaron participate in?

Aaron plays soccer for Jobstown Celtic Under-11s, loves jumping on his trampoline, and is an eager Pokémon hunter!!!

– Why is sport or physical activity important for Aaron?

The whole social aspect to sports is amazing for Aaron. The sense of camaraderie and friendship he has with his Jobstown Celtic team mates is fantastic. They are a really friendly and mischievous bunch which is superb. They have some laughs, mostly at my expense because I'm their coach!!

– Describe Aaron's camp Abilities experience. Has anything changed for you or for Aaron since he came to Camp?

Camp Abilities was a game changer for Aaron. He had never been away on his own before and was really nervous about going. On the drive down from Tallaght he was constantly complaining about a sore tummy and that he wasn't well enough to stay for a week, etc., but within minutes of arriving in Camp he settled right in. Since being in the camp Aaron has got so much more independent and confident and isn't afraid to try new things or experiences. General day-to-day life became easier for Aaron after camp. He now does everything himself, from washing, dressing, and even on some very rare occasions he might do some chores!!!



– Why did you decide to run the Dublin Marathon this year?

I decided to do the marathon this year to raise funds for Camp Abilities and, also, at thirty-seven years of age I needed to prove to myself I'm not aging!

– What advice would you have for other parents of children with vision impairments?

I would tell them not to worry, embrace the change, and avail of the services that are available to you in the schools. The earlier the child gets familiar to using their aids, etc., the better. You will get people staring and the odd time passing a comment but rise above it. Sometimes it's other people's ignorance that is a disability.

CREATING A VISION THROUGH PARTNERSHIP

Over the last number of months, the CARA Centre has been busy engaging with Vision Sport Ireland on a new development which has resulted in both organisations joining together to recruit for the position of a **Sports Development Coordinator**.



The successful candidate will be a key deliverer of Vision Sport Ireland's objectives as well as a specific focus on the term planning and implementation of Camp Abilities Ireland.

If you are interested in this position please download and submit the relevant application form located under the Job Opportunities section on the CARA Centre website - www.caracentre.ie

Closing date for applications is 12.00 noon GMT on Friday 9th of December 2016. Provisional Date for Interviews is the week of the 19th of December.

VISION SPORTS IRELAND

CARA

CampAbilities Ireland

A funfilled 5 day residential sports and recreation camp for children with vision impairments

10th – 14th April 2017



If you are interested in participating in this camp
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Doireann Ni Mhuircheartaigh at **066 7144245** or email **Doireannnimhuircheartaigh.cara@ittralee.ie**

Check out www.caracentre.ie for more details.

CATHERINE'S VISION FOR SUCCESS

Catherine Walsh



It is hard to believe that, thirty years ago on a Sunday afternoon in Santry Stadium, what seemed an insignificant event opened a door for me, not just to explore my love of sport but to push my boundaries as a competitor.

While I had grown up surrounded by sports and had spent my young life around track and cross-country events, this was different as I was getting a chance to race and not just be an onlooker.

I had prepared for the event as best I could and my race plan was simple: go out hard and try and hold on. It was 600m and I got caught within 20m of the line, finishing second. I was delighted with silver, as were my family and team. It taught me that hard work pays off and I really enjoyed the experience of racing. Inside, the spark was lit.

I continued to train with my club and tried most events in track and field and enjoyed most of them. I also started to take part in athletic events for the visually impaired.

In 1990, at the age of sixteen, I got my first international "call up" for the World Athletics Championships and travelled with a team which had a great mix of experience and young athletes.

My next goal was to qualify for the Barcelona '92 Paralympic Games. I completed my Leaving Cert in 1991 and won 2 medals at the European Championships, so I was improving and moving in the right direction.

The next move was to relocate to London to study Physiotherapy, which was a big move away from my support network. In my first week one of the GB athletes I had competed against, who lived close to my college, introduced me to her club, Highgate Harriers. There were many distractions and it was hard to keep up the consistent training, but I made the Paralympic team and have done so for the subsequent six occasions.

In the first four Games I competed in athletics, where the Pentathlon was my most competitive event. Unfortunately, a few months out from the games in Athens, the event was removed from the programme and I spent a very stressful time trying to qualify in other events, but eventually it worked out and I got to the Games.

Although I had no intention of going to Beijing, in 2007 I was invited to cycle with the Irish squad. To be honest I wasn't mad about the tandem (actually I found the speed and lack of control a bit terrifying) but the squad were so positive, and I was enjoying the new challenge so much, that I persisted (or they persisted with me). We made the team for Beijing 2008 to compete in the track and road tandem events and I was Ireland's first female Para-cyclist.

With new motivation, and another year of training, greater success followed so, by the time we were going to London 2012, we were going there as medal contenders and came home with a silver and bronze.

After the Games it was difficult to regain focus and commitment to the time we had to spend away at competitions and training camps. I decided to give it another year and then decide about Rio but, following much contemplation, I decided to retire in 2013.

Sitting on the couch doesn't suit me so I started running again, and revisited my earlier idea of trying a triathlon. I had to start thinking about how I could survive the swim element of the event. Finally, the day came in 2014 and I was standing in Skerries in my wetsuit, not knowing what to expect. I hardly put my head under the water but enjoyed the event.

Being visually impaired and training and competing at a high level has had its challenges. I could not have done all this without support and help from my family and friends, coaches and teammates, and in particular my guides from cycling and triathlon, in particular Fran Meehan, Caroline Ryan and Joanna Hickey.

Along my journey there have been amazing days and disappointments but on reflection it's not the medals but the journey and the friends you make along the way that really count. In Rio I got to represent Ireland in the first ever Para-Triathlon at the Paralympic Games. It was a tough job to even qualify for the event, but if one person heard about or saw me race in Rio and thought "I want to try that" it was worth all the effort and that was the result I was hoping for.



A MEMORABLE EXPERIENCE IN RIO

Liam Harbison, CEO Paralympics Ireland



Forty-eight of Ireland's finest athletes headed to Rio in late August primed for the pinnacle event of their athletic careers - the Paralympic Games.

The build-up was marred by political uncertainty, recession, security concerns and the dreaded Zika Virus. Just three weeks before the start of the Games, the organising committee announced a series of budget cutbacks, resulting in greatly reduced service levels.

Dismal ticket sales were also a major concern, which was regrettable following the ground-breaking London 2012 Games.

The pre-Games environment was tested by the IPC's decision to suspend the National Paralympic Committee of Russia, following the McLaren Report. However, the exclusion of the Russian team was good news for Tipperary paracyclist Peter Ryan and his pilot Marcin Madjeski, who received a reallocated place to compete at the Games.



Following four years of planning, the budget cuts meant Paralympics Ireland had a week to come up with new plans. The support team were phenomenal as they set about ensuring the athletes' Games experience was memorable.

By the time the Irish athletes reached the athletes village from their holding camp in Uberlandia everything was in place, and the team set about achieving their medal target of eight.

While not necessarily winning medals, who will forget the incredible feats of 14-year-old Nicole Turner, reaching five finals, and her appearances on the Jamie & Niki Show (you have to visit Paralympics Ireland's Facebook page to see this!), Phil Eaglesham's success in just getting to Rio and his own campaign for mental health awareness (#philsbeard), and the great performance by Ireland's first para canoeist Pat O'Leary.

The ultimate accolades though go to those who reach the podium. Jason Smyth (T13 100m) and Michael McKillop (T37 1500m) proved unbeatable once again, securing gold medals at three consecutive Games.

Athletics was to prove particularly fruitful for the Irish team, especially for Cork women in the discus. The Rebel threesome of Orla Barry (F57 silver), Niamh McCarthy (F41 silver) and teenager Noelle Lenihan (F38 bronze) all secured precious medals for Ireland.



The cycling squad had a stunning Games, securing five medals. Limerick's Eoghan Clifford claimed bronze in the velodrome and then won an amazing gold medal in the C3 Road Time Trial. Unknown to us at the finishing area, the chain on Eoghan's bike came off in the middle of the race and, but for the quick feet and fingers of mechanic 'Beggsy', that medal could have been lost. Two days later that chain was to be Eoghan's undoing as it came off again as he sprinted towards the line, and his third medal, in the road race.

Colin Lynch (C2) won silver in the time trial, having missed out on a London medal by a mere .07 of a second. The efforts he had put in and the sheer relief, joy and happiness were evident as the tears streamed down his face on the podium.

Further drama ensued as Katie George Dunlevy and her pilot Eve McCrystal secured gold in the tandem time trial. The tandem pair followed up with a silver medal in the road race two days later.

The swimming venue was electrifying. Ellen Keane, at 21 years of age competing in her third Paralympic Games, fought down the final 50 metres of the SB8 100m to secure a bronze medal.

The Games ended with Ireland having secured eleven medals, finishing an impressive 28th place on the medals table. Many of the great performances from the younger athletes indicate a bright future for the Irish Paralympic Team. However, because of a greater level of investment by governments into Paralympic sport, I fear we will not be in a position to sustain the success of London 2012 and Rio 2016 unless similar investment is made in Ireland.

Ultimately the Rio Games proved a great success. 2.2 million people witnessed spectacular sport from the latest group of global Paralympians.

I'd like to congratulate every team member for their immense contribution to the success, along with their families, clubs and governing bodies. I'd especially encourage all young people with disabilities to get active in physical activity, and you too could be gracing Paralympic podiums one day. Watch out for our Paralympic Sport Expo, supported by Mondelez, at the National Indoor Arena at the National Sports Campus on January 14th, where you can meet members of the team and try out a range of Paralympic sports.

HYUNDAI MOVES CARA UP A GEAR



In October CARA was delighted to announce the delivery of two new vehicles sponsored by Hyundai Ireland through the local dealership, Adams of Tralee. The new Hyundai Tucson and i30 vehicles will be used to increase the impact of our work throughout the country in facilitating active and healthy lifestyles for people with disabilities. Managing Director for the CARA Centre, Niamh Daffy, acknowledged the "importance of the continued sponsorship from Hyundai Ireland that has facilitated CARA to grow since the start of our partnership in 2011".

The vehicles will be used to increase promotion and awareness of the CARA Centre, facilitating our work in implementing the National Inclusive Training and Education Framework, coordinating the Local Sports Partnership Sports Inclusion Disability Programme, as well as heightening awareness of the National Inclusion Awards and Inclusive Fitness developments.

The CARA Centre is located at the Institute of Technology Tralee, with a satellite office at the National Sports Campus, Dublin. Commenting on the launch, Dr Oliver Murphy, President of the Institute of Technology Tralee said: "On behalf of the Institute I would like to sincerely thank Hyundai and Adams of Tralee for their ongoing support of the CARA Centre and helping the Centre to continue its work in advocating for and promoting sports among people who wish to make sport part of their lives, irrespective of their disability. The Institute, along with our partners at the CARA Centre, is committed to achieving equal opportunities for people with disabilities with respect to participation opportunities in sport, physical activity and physical education."

The link between CARA and Adams of Tralee is a long standing one. Their ongoing vehicle support for Camp Abilities Ireland, a national sport and physical activity camp for children with vision impairments, coupled with the provision of a minibus in 2010, is an indication of their commitment to the work of the Centre. Des Adams of Adams of Tralee said: "We are delighted to support the excellent work of the CARA Centre in facilitating access to and awareness of sport and physical activity for people with disabilities in Kerry and throughout Ireland".

The new vehicles will help drive CARA forward in achieving its objective of increasing the participation of people with disabilities in sport and physical activity.

HYUNDAI DISABILITY AWARENESS TRAINING

As part of our partnership with Hyundai Ireland, CARA delivered two corporate Disability Awareness Training days to 24 staff working within the Hyundai dealership network across Ireland in July and August, at Hyundai Ireland headquarters in Dublin.

The course provided participants with an awareness and understanding of disability, from a historical and modern-day perspective, including a policy, legislative, social and personal context. It was delivered in an interactive way, with videos, individual and group reflections, worksheets and discussion points. The course also included strategies for managing mental health and self-care, which are all important components.

All staff and dealerships were presented with a certificate of attendance.

'Thank you for the very informative course. I was amazed at the different situations of dealing with people with a disability and how easy it was to diffuse the awkwardness' – Testimonial from a course participant.

A MARATHON AMBITION FOR DARA

DARA O'CONNELL

My name is Dara O'Connell from Reens Pike, near Ardagh in County Limerick. I was born on 25th February 1998 in Penza, Russia and, together with my brother Jimmy I was adopted and came home to Ireland in June 1999. I am currently in Catherine McCauley School in Limerick city and will take my Leaving Cert Applied in June 2017.



Sport plays a big part in my life. I am a big fan of Gaelic football and, as my Dad is from Tralee, I am a Kerry supporter. We are season ticket holders, so the season starts in February and could take us to Tyrone or Monaghan or Donegal, and hopefully ends in Croke Park on the 3rd week in September.

I would love to play Gaelic on a regular basis but, unfortunately, the GAA is not as proactive in promoting the sport for all opportunity that the FAI is currently doing. I was delighted when the Special Schools ran a Gaelic football blitz between the provinces as I got to line out for Munster and run out onto the pitch in Croke Park in September this year. I was so proud and it was one of the best moments ever.

I also love basketball and I have been very lucky to get to play at the National Basketball Arena in schools finals for the last two years, finishing as runners up, and I hope to bring home a winners medal in 2017.

I am a big fan of Kieran Donaghy and loved meeting him recently when he helped me with one of my school projects.

I play the sport of Bocce in Special Olympics and represented Munster in the Ireland Games in 2014. I love going to training every Tuesday evening and we have great fun. I am also training up as a referee, and although I have to take an exam before I can referee, I reckon I can get to the World Games one way or another.

Special Olympics is very important to me and my friends, and all my family participate either as referees or in coaching. Taking part in competition is great, but sometimes having fun is more important, and I know that some of my friends in the Club don't mind at all about competition.

I like to keep fit and so I started running a few years ago, and now I run with my Dad and my brother. After doing a lot of 5ks and 10ks I ran my first half marathon in June 2015, and I have managed to do four more since then, knocking fourteen minutes off my time in the process. My ambition is to run the Dublin City Marathon and I will join a Club to train properly for that.

I hope to complete my Leaving Cert Applied in June 2017 and I then hope to complete a course called Employer Based Training with the National Learning Network, before I open up my own business in dog kennelling and dog grooming. This is what I hope to do as a career.

I am studying for the driving theory test at the moment, and would love to be able to drive on my own, and maybe one day drive in the Circuit of Munster Rally.



FROM PARTICIPANT TO COACH... A CAREER IN SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

KEITH NULTY



– How did you develop an interest in sport and physical activity?

I suppose I got a start when I was younger playing football and doing karate. My mam used to bring me to loads of clubs to do the karate and the football, and then I just ended up dropping the football because I wanted to start on the karate and concentrate on that more than the football. So that's how I really got an interest in sport, because of my mam bringing me around to different clubs.

– Karate seems a lot harder to get into than football. Are facilities a lot harder to access than football?

No, it's not harder to get into. There was a Club really near to where I lived when I was growing up near Whitehall. A friend of my mam's lives near there and the coach knew her and my mam said that she'd bring us all the way up there.

We live near Kilbride, which is out near Meath and my mam ended up bringing us all the way out to Whitehall which is about half an hour, forty-five minutes away, and that's how I got started in the karate. She ended up wanting my brother and sister to join, she didn't end up thinking about starting me, you know? I told her that I wanted to join and she was like: "No, you're not going to join.", and I was like: "I am!", because I always wanted to do karate.



In my head it was a dream, but she was saying: "Ah, you won't be able.", but I told her: "I am going to be able." The coach didn't think he'd have anything for me to do but my mother said just let him do whatever the others will be able to do. Eleven years later I'm still in there.

– Have you encountered any challenges in participating in sport at an elite level, or in going to college?

I'm at an elite level now, normal competitions like Portmarnock or the Meath Open or anything like that, it just comes naturally to me, but nationals or internationals, the British Open or the World Cup, I get SO nervous! No one can talk to me, you know what I mean?



Sometimes I nearly forget my moves but then they come back to me. That's what kind of gets to me. I don't like competing at a high level, like international level, but lower levels like Portmarnock or the Meath Open, I really like competing at them because there's less pressure on me. In college I really don't like doing the rock climbing because I injured myself a few times when I was doing it. I know it was only a small thing but I grazed my hands a few times doing it.

– Where do you see yourself in ten years?

Probably after I leave IT Tralee I see myself as a coach, working with people with disabilities, doing any type of sports, whether it could be teaching them football or karate or anything like that. Any sports really.

I'd try to get into the HSE as well, working with St. Michael's House, or the Spina Bifida Association, or something like that. That's just a few organisations that I wouldn't mind being with, but I'd like to be a coach. Sports is definitely my thing – I love it!

I love this course that I'm on, because I never did water sports before. It's a new thing for me. Before I came here I wouldn't even get into the water, and I never got dirty before, being honest! I never done supping before and then yesterday I tried supping for the first or second time and it's mad! I enjoyed it but it's mad! I was afraid of doing it in case I injured myself but it was an assignment as well so I had to do it.

– Would you have a message for someone with a disability who has never accessed sport, or didn't start from a young age like you, and maybe doesn't know how to go about it?

I suppose I would just say, try everything and don't let your disability stand in your way.

ON THE ROAD TO RECOVERY

MIKKI JAMES

Back in 2011 I weighed in at an impressive 19 stone and was suffering from severe depression, which was not helped by my excessive mass. There were many chances missed of jumping on the bandwagon of "healthy lifestyles" television programs that I had promised I'd embark on, and the fact that I had missed the start of them left me with little to no motivation to start at a later date.

Basically the excuses kept rolling by and my motivation to get started on any exercise routine was lacking. However, this all changed in 2012 when I took up cycling as a means of transport.

I hadn't been on a bike in a good number of years and the idea sounded good at the time. I bought a second-hand mountain bike for a song and spent as much again on spare parts to get the bike roadworthy.

The first cycle trips out involved so much suffering that I just wanted to give up, yet I persevered with my quest. Over time the investment into a new bike saw me spending more time out "on the saddle" and going to places that were new and challenging.

I completed my first Ring of Kerry cycle in 2012, having also completed a number of other charity cycles. This was fast becoming a part of my life that I had never realised was possible, giving me new outlooks to friendships, challenges, and most of all to my mental and physical wellbeing. Something would happen when I got on the bike that made me feel like I was at one with the world around me.

The beautiful landscapes of Kerry were beckoning for my discovery, with the journey to these places filling my every moment with challenges of hills and the unpredictable weather that is found in the Kingdom.

Connecting with nature and appreciating the moment at any given time aided my recovery, as too did the fact that I was getting fitter and losing weight. There were times that were tough going, but nothing in this world comes without a sacrifice. The simple answer was that I kept going and by pushing myself that little more I could appreciate the end result and my achievement.

In recent times I have commenced the Sporting Chance course in the National Learning Network, Tralee. This course allows me to learn more about the different aspects of fitness and to gain qualifications that can see me become a gym instructor.

What I put into my training is to empower and encourage others to give their best and to just give it a try. I can think of no greater pleasure than being a part of seeing others achieving and gaining the results that improves their physical and mental wellbeing. My life as it is today is far beyond what I could ever have imagined and it is important to remember that every journey starts with one step.



CREATING CAREERS IN SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

A Sporting Chance - Kevin Smith



Students from the Sporting Chance programme at National Learning Network Tralee were recently involved in organising a highly successful 'Wellness Day' at the Centre. The day was organised to celebrate NLN Tralee being awarded the Amber Flag from Suicide Aware for promoting positive mental health in their Centre. The 'Wellness Day' was a hugely successful student-led initiative which involved a variety of activities and talks. Among the most successful events was the design of a Wall of Hope, which displayed artwork promoting positivity, as well as a 'Positive Affirmation' display and 'Small Things Matter' tips.

Other activities included guided meditation and open art sessions, team-building exercises and talks on equality and wellness. Students from all courses did a fantastic job in decorating the Centre brightly, which led to an upbeat and positive vibe throughout the day.

Many of our students have experienced mental health difficulties so it is really positive to see the way they have led this campaign. The Amber Flag initiative aims to encourage colleges to promote and actively bring about a culture change in the promotion of positive mental health within the education system and other organisations. It is hoped that further events will be held in the lead up to Christmas, culminating in the Centre's 'NLN's Got Talent' in December!

NLN Tralee received more good news when they were announced as a winner in the KBC 'Bright Ideas for Better Communities' competition. Their idea of an outdoor gym has been awarded funding by KBC Bank and will lead to the installation of five pieces of outdoor equipment in the coming weeks. This will provide further opportunities for participation in physical activity within the Centre.

The Sporting Chance programme in Tralee is open for applications right throughout the year. The course covers a wide range of modules and qualifications including a QQI Level 5 Major Award in Sport, Recreation and Exercise, ITEC Diplomas in Gym Instruction and Sports Massage, National Pool Lifeguard Qualification (optional), Swim Teaching and coaching qualifications in a variety of sports. An individual approach ensures the course can be completed at a pace suitable to the specific needs of each person, with supports provided in a number of areas where required, including literacy, communication skills and confidence building. The course duration is up to two years. No course fees apply and the majority of course participants receive a Solas training allowance and are also entitled to an accommodation allowance if travelling from further than 20 miles away.

If you are interested in applying for the course or receiving further information, please contact NLN Tralee at 066 7122533 or email kevin.smith@nln.ie.

PEOPLE MAKING A DIFFERENCE'

MARK BARRY



I was born in Dublin in 1974, the middle of three brothers. I am married to Amanda, whom I met through the NRH. When I was younger I wanted to pursue sports journalism but, after I graduated from Waterford I.T., where I studied Business Studies in Recreation/Leisure Management, in 1996 and worked abroad and in Ireland, I started to realise that I really wanted to follow a career path in an area that had served me so well personally, so sport & recreation and the inclusion of people with disabilities became something that I resolutely believed in.

I went on to work with children and adults with physical and developmental disabilities in Anchorage, Alaska during my first summer after college and that left a very positive impression on me in terms of what and where I wanted to work going forward. I subsequently went on to work in the fitness industry for just over four years in West Wood, Leopardstown and then worked again with people with disabilities in Enable Ireland in the area of supported employment, which again had a very big impression on me and opened my eyes to the work of others in the Disability Sector.

I have been involved in IWA-Sport and disability sport in general since the age of seven. Sport has been the mainstay of my life since then and I'm hugely grateful to my family and friends for allowing that ambition to grow as I became older. I also volunteered on many occasions as a teenager and in my early twenties after college in many sports events for children and adults with a physical disability.

My title within IWA Sport is Sports Development Officer and I'm located predominantly, but not exclusively, in the eastern region of Ireland. My role consists of establishing and maintaining avenues and opportunities for people of all ages with a physical disability to become involved in sport and recreation. I'm in my role over thirteen years now and I really enjoy working with other individuals and organisations in creating opportunities for children and adults with a physical disability in sustaining their involvement in sport and recreation. These are simple enough goals but, if and when it works, you realise that you were part of something that might not have existed if the work wasn't put in by all involved.

One aspect of my role within IWA sport that I am particularly proud of is our Annual National Rehabilitation Hospital Spinal Sports Championships, which in 2017 will be celebrating its fifth year. In 2016 we had over fifteen disability inclusive sports on offer for between forty and fifty patients, most of whom have only recently acquired their physical disability. My goal is that this NRH Spinal Championships will continue every year and provide access to disability and mainstream sport for new patients and out-patients in the future. The atmosphere and willingness of participants, volunteers and agency staff before, during and after the Championships is very humbling and hugely encouraging. For me, it's also where the grassroots and groundwork starts for some of our future Paralympians.

Looking to the future, I would like to see disability sport and inclusion progress to where we probably don't pay any heed anymore to the word "inclusion". That day is still some time off, but as long as we're striving to make it happen and making a good impression on the next generation that will participate, work and volunteer in the Disability Sport Sector, then we're doing a good job. I've never really thought too far ahead as the work around disability, sport and inclusion is ongoing and there are many success stories in Ireland but also many benchmarks and standards that we should do our utmost to achieve. To that end, we have an amazing volunteer base and dedicated staff in the Disability Sector that stretches the length and breadth of the country, so the future is very bright and it augurs well for the coming years.

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