

Youthview: A PAGE ABOUT YOUTH ISSUES BROUGHT TO YOU BY DONEGAL YOUTH COUNCIL

Young Movers present 'Paint Me Green' art exhibition

BY MARIE DUFFY

All roads lead to the Regional Cultural Centre in Letterkenny this Friday for the 'Paint Me Green' art exhibition.

The free exhibition features work by members of the Young Movers Environmental Group which is made up of young people from Letterkenny aged between 15 and 17 years of age.

Alongside the 30 photographic images, will be other art exhibits including a life size cow made from Donegal Creameries milk cartons, a sound installation and a wish tree.

The night will begin at 7.30pm and will also include a short presentation by the group, refreshments and live music.

The aim of the exhibition is to showcase some wonderful art by young people, but ultimately to raise awareness of environmental issues in a fun and creative way.

The Young Movers Group is made up of ten young people who have been meeting every Thursday since October to discuss creative and innovative ways in which they can raise awareness around environmental issues.

The group is supported by the Health Promotion Department in the HSE, and Donegal Youth Council who wanted to be involved in a project which would encourage environmental awareness and social partici-

pation amongst young people.

One person to lend support to the group is Ann-Marie Crosse, Eco Health Promotion Officer in Health Promotion. She believes it is important that young people are informed about local and global environmental issues.

"The environment is the most important issue of our time. We wanted to get the message to people in Donegal that if we don't look after our natural environment then we have nothing", she said.

"There is this perception that young people are always up to no good, and don't care less about the environment.

"But I would disagree strongly with this attitude. Young people do care, but need to be given a little direction and help in understanding the issues."

Ann-Marie believes that in order to help people understand the importance of the environment, it is necessary for society to re-connect back into nature.

"It seems like we have never been more connected with each other with our state of the art technology and everything else. But in fact we are worse off than before, as we have lost our connection with nature."

In fact nature's power has never been so evident with recent natural phenomena such as Hurricane Katrina, the Haitian earth quake.

Locally people in Ireland have also

suffered at the hand of Mother Nature with unprecedented rain and snow having devastated homes throughout the country. Not to mention the difficulties for farmers and fishermen affected by depleted stock and failed crops.

However, it is not until travel and commercial activity is affected, such as with the Icelandic Volcano, does it receive warranted attention in the news.

The Young Movers believe that they key to environmental awareness lies with the education of young people, and there is evidence to suggest they are right.

The group conducted a survey with young people from schools in Letterkenny around environmental issues, and found that there is little if any environmental education in schools.

ILLEGAL DUMPING

Not only was there little education, but young people were unaware of things like local recycling facilities. So it was no surprise that illegal dumping is a huge problem in Donegal.

"Young people are at the fingertips of everything. In order to move things forward we need to give them the tools to create change, and that is what we are trying to do with the Young Movers", said Ann-Marie.

"We cannot blame young people for their lack of awareness as they



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are the products of a detached world.

"One of the major aims of the exhibition was to help the Young Movers reconnect with nature, but to also encourage the general public to do so too."

The group was encouraged to connect with nature by forming a sense of place with their natural environment. This was encouraged through photography sessions in places like Glenveagh National Park and Ards Forest Park.

This allowed them to form a sense of pride in their cultural her-

itage, and recognise the beauty of Donegal.

Young Movers are also involved in a unique cultural and environmental exchange project with young people in Norway.

The aim of the project is to allow the young people to learn about each other's culture, but also to discuss how issues such as youth participation, and the environment are dealt with in each country.

The Norwegians have already visited Donegal for the first part of the exchange, and the Letterkenny group will visit Norway in June.

During this visit the group have been granted a special permit to visit the glaciers and to witness global warming firsthand.

Aoife Mc Rory aged 17, said the group cannot wait to visit Norway. "We were a little worried before the Norwegians arrived as we didn't know what they would be like. But they are all great and we got on so well.

"We have learned so much about each other's culture, and it was interesting to see how environmental issues are dealt with by both countries. Young people from Norway are taught about the environment from the age of four so they do have a huge advantage on us, but we're trying to change this."

To find out more information on the Young Movers Environmental group contact Marie Duffy on 0876372344 or email marieduffy2@gmail.com

The night will be a great family night out, and is particularly aimed at other young people who may be interested in learning more about the environment.

Paint Me Green Exhibition- Regional Cultural Centre Letterkenny, May 21st 7.30pm



Young environmentalists with Pat the Cope Gallagher, MEP, Janet Gaynor and Ann-Marie Crosse, HSE at Gartan.