

NEWS
IN BRIEF

MEP Clune raises Blue Flag

IRELAND South MEP Deirdre Clune joined pupils from St Joseph's Girls National school in Clonakilty last week to raise the Blue Flag to mark their participation in the Blue Star Programme. Now in its fourth year, the Blue Star Programme aims to encourage greater understanding and awareness of Europe and the European Union at primary level. Speaking in Clonakilty, MEP Clune described the programme as a great way to celebrate the diversity and inclusiveness of European integration. "The Blue Star Programme teaches our young people about Europe and encourages them to get involved. The girls in St Joseph's are a credit to their teachers and parents," she said. Mrs Clune was on a visit to West Cork and later met with business people in Skibbereen and held a clinic in the town.

Tour organisers sample area

A GROUP of top travel organisers visited West Cork last week, as guests of Tourism Ireland and leading Dutch tour operator Buro Scanbrit. Independent travel organisers – who book travel packages on behalf of their clients through tour operators like Buro Scanbrit – have become increasingly important for Dutch travellers, so the aim of this visit was to showcase Ireland to the travel organisers, so that when they return home they will be even more enthusiastic and better equipped to advise their clients about holidays here. The group's itinerary included an overnight stay at Actons in Kinsale and the next day, they visited Charles Fort and also enjoyed a boat trip to Garinish Island off Glengarriff. They also dined at Casey's of Baltimore.

Television festival for city

THE Fourth Annual Community Television Festival is taking place in Cork on Friday June 12th and Saturday 13th in Cork County Hall. The festival will showcase examples of community television in Ireland and provide a forum to explore issues of importance to the sector. It will also provide a space for learning and skills development for those involved in the sector in Ireland and for the wider community in both Cork city and county. Community television is television which is made by the community, for the community. It currently exists in Cork, Dublin and Belfast, and is broadcast in Cork on Channel 803 on UPC's digital cable package and streamed live on www.corkcommunitytv.ie. The festival is open to those involved in Community Television in Ireland and to anyone from the community and voluntary sector in Cork who is interested in finding out more about Community Television. For more email info@corkcommunitytv.ie

Short stories for UCC radio

A COMPETITION to celebrate 20 years of broadcasting at UCC 98.3FM is seeking short stories from the public. The competition is open to original short stories in the English language, of 3,000 words or less. These stories can be on any subject, in any style, by a writer of any age and of any nationality, living anywhere in the world. The recordings of the shortlisted stories will be performed by one actor, chosen from a panel of six which will represent all voices and ages. All copyright and ownership remains the property of the writer. The shortlist of 40 stories will be recorded for broadcast. The prize fund comprises: 1st prize €300; 2nd prize €200, and 3rd prize €100. More details are available from http://www.ucc.ie/en/983fm/carriedinwaves/

Education is the real key to keeping them safe online

During the summer holidays, our kids will spend more time online. Siobhán Cronin spoke to internet safety expert Ger Brick about how to ensure they stay safe on the web

MOST parents today are not aware of just how fast technology is moving.

Picture the scene: your son or daughter is in their room, innocently posting a 'selfie' on their Instagram, Facebook or Twitter page.

Within seconds, their location is known to an unscrupulous viewer – who can view your home's location, its GPS co-ordinates, and even a photo of it, if you are on Google Maps.

And no, this doesn't take some technology-proficient whizz kid or nerd to figure it out. You just need an app – and there are many available – and then load the photo on the app, and bam! you have the time and location of the photograph.

This is one of the exercises which internet expert Ger Brick uses in his presentations on internet safety for children.

He shows the kids how a photo taken of them in their

classroom, as an example, can be converted into an image of their location – down to the corner of the room – within seconds.

Think of the consequences of that information getting into the wrong hands. Your daughter and her friends have a 'sleepover' while you are away for the night. They let slip they are 'home alone' – and now the whole world knows.

In the background of the photo there is some nice jewellery, some valuable electronic items, or an expensive pet. Our kids' increasing love of 'sharing' online can lead to some serious consequences.

But a simple switching off of 'location services' on phones and other devices – something most parents are not aware of – can solve this problem.

It's just one of the many practical tips Ger gives to both parents and students during his information meetings.

Ger urges parents to watch the eerie but very useful 'Becky' video from the UK's web safety programme, which illustrates graphically how putting information online is basically the same as posting your information on a billboard outside your house.

Ger also uses video throughout his talks, showing the risks and dangers of posting personal information online. The programme also includes in-class exercises to engage the



The 'Becky' video illustrates graphically how putting information online is basically the same as putting it on a billboard

children and get them thinking about the need to conduct themselves safely and responsibly online. The underlying theme throughout the entire talk is the word 'Respect' and being respectful to others in the online world, just like in the 'real' world.

In the classroom, Ger facilitates a discussion with the children about personal information and which of the following pieces of information should you never post online: your real name, your phone number, your home address/school address, group photos, favourite video game, the weather, your email address, and your password.

The responses give Ger a good indication of the level of awareness in class, and makes children realise how much of their personal life should be 'shared'. Most importantly, Ger explains the potential consequences of sharing each piece of personal information. As adults, we teach our children what not to post on

GOLDEN RULES FOR KIDS ON THE WEB

- Respect others online always
- Think, before you text or post something
- Keep passwords secure
- Protect your privacy
- Never reply to cyberbullies

line, but often we neglect to explain why. Ger comments that there are two things you should never share in life: your toothbrush, and your password. What's more, you should change both of them regularly.

Ger also gives concerned parents a step-by-step guide to what happens if they engage the gardai after an incidence of cyber bullying. He also makes the point that it's worth remembering that your child could be the bully, just as easily as being the victim.

If the threat is taken seriously, the gardai will help you track the origin of messages, and speak with the account holder. They can also seize

computers, laptops, phones, etc.

It's important to remember that even deleted messages and photos can be retrieved, and the more serious cases will probably involve contact with the Garda juvenile liaison officer.

Ger usually holds a parents' information meeting after meeting the students. He gives parents practical information on phone settings and monitoring devices, right down to answers to the simple questions – like how to change the privacy settings on Facebook.

There are great parental software packages available

now. For a small yearly fee, they can monitor your child's web usage, limit it to age-specific sites, and even limit the time they are allowed on the web. Ger gives his opinion on which ones are best, and what exactly they will do for you.

In short, Ger explains that we all need to think before we post anything online. And parents need to educate themselves if they want to be able to deal with issues as they arise. After all, you wouldn't give a child a car and tell them to drive it, if you didn't know what was involved yourself, would you?

Ger Brick was recently a guest of Abbeystreury National School in Skibbereen, where he spoke to children and parents. Ger delivers Cyberbullying and Internet Safety talks nationwide, delivering classes to over 5,000 pupils in more than 90 primary schools this year alone. He can be contacted at inetsafetalk@hotmail.com or 087 6624930



Ger Brick: educates pupils and their parents on safety

Rescue centre is on the move

BY JACKIE KEOGH

SKIBBEREEN Animal Rescue is on the move, and it's looking for support.

Anita Douglas founded the Skibbereen Animal Rescue Centre to care for abandoned dogs, cats and ponies, at Skeagh, outside Skibbereen, 20 years ago.

However, because that farm is no longer available for use as a rescue centre, Anita confirmed that she will be relocating to a friend's property on the outskirts of Ballydehob before the end of June.

Over the last two decades, Anita has saved the lives of hundreds of badly treated and neglected animals – all of which she has done on a voluntary basis.

"People are very kind," said Anita, "without their support I would not have been able to meet the centre's ever-increasing food and vet bills."

The centre's precarious financial position did improve somewhat when Anita opened a charity shop – The Skibber-



Anita Douglas and her rescued horses

een Animal Rescue Charity Shop – at North Street, Skibbereen, five years ago.

"Week-in week-out, people generously donate unwanted clothes and household items for sale in the shop and the proceeds have gone a long way to meeting the bills," said Anita.

But now the centre is facing a different kind of financial pressure. Anita said: "There will be a lot of additional costs involved in relocating the centre. For example, we now have

to build kennels that comply with the standards set down by the Department of Agriculture.

"This is going to be an expensive exercise. It will cost an estimated €20,000 to accommodate 45 dogs because the new pens will have to have proper drainage and a separate sewerage system.

"All the pens will have to have a concrete base with just two to three dogs per pen, and they will have to have a 10ft run outside every unit."

Anita said the move to the two and a half acre site near Ballydehob would also necessitate the erection of a 7ft security fence around the perimeter to ensure that the dogs are kept on site. That alone could cost in the region of €6,000.

Apart from the kennels, Anita is determined to build a cattery for the 27 feral cats that are currently in her care. Although not as expensive as the kennels, Anita estimated this project will cost an additional €5,000.

"What we are looking for is voluntary help to clear the site; voluntary builders; the use of a small digger; donated fencing; and money – all donations, regardless of size, would be most welcome," she said.

Anyone who would like to support the project can call into the shop at North Street, Skibbereen, or send a cheque by post to the Skibbereen Animal Rescue at Skeagh, or use the centre's Paypal account, which is sarc@live.ie.

FG's new youth officer Wayne is on a recruitment mission

BY JACKIE KEOGH

A NEWLY elected youth officer for Fine Gael in Cork South West is on a recruitment drive.

Beara-based Wayne O'Sullivan, who took up his duties in March, said he would, in the coming weeks and months, be travelling the entire constituency to speak to, and recruit, new members for the Fine Gael party.

Wayne, who is very passionate about history and local politics, said he would be encouraging people 'of all ages' to speak about their concerns and issues. But he also sees his appointment as a means of 'bringing young, enthusiastic people who have fresh, new ideas and opinions' into the Fine Gael fold.

"I believe that if you really want to change the future, you have to inspire young people and get them involved in the democratic process," he said. "We need to engage young people, and

take an interest in what is important to them, their priorities, and their attitudes."

The youth officer told *The Southern Star* he believes it is 'imperative that young people become politically involved if they are to have a say in their own future.'

He claimed: 'Young people's feeling of exclusion from traditional ways of influencing the political decision-making process has led to a society that is sadly lacking in a youth presence.'

"If we remain detached," he added, "we will allow the same old politics to preside. Young people's disengagement from political participation has long been a cause for concern and I strongly feel it is about time we addressed this issue."

Wayne said that if you want to become a member of Fine Gael, or discuss any ideas or issues, you can contact him on 086 2121456.



Wayne O'Sullivan: on a mission to recruit for Fine Gael in West Cork

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