



# Cork Celebrates

# LIFELONG Learning

## AWARDS 2024

November 28th  
Millennium Hall,  
Cork City Hall.



Comhairle Cathrach Chorcaí  
Cork City Council



**cetb**  
Board of Technical Education  
Ollscoil Chorcaí  
Cork Education and  
Training Board



**UCC**  
University College Cork, Ireland  
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh



**MTU**

Ollscoil Technolaíochta na Mumhan  
Munster Technological University



ADULT CONTINUING EDUCATION AT UCC



CÚRAM SLÁNTE POBAIL  
**CORCAIGH CIARRAI**  
**CORK KERRY**  
COMMUNITY HEALTHCARE



**NAPD**  
National Association of Professional and Technical  
Qualifications



Cork City  
**Childcare**



Leading and Learning



**Cork Chamber**  
Advancing business together



**The Echo** **Echo LIVE.in**



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## Welcome to the Cork Celebrates Lifelong Learning Awards 2024

We are pleased to present the Cork Celebrates Lifelong Learning Awards 2024, an opportunity to recognise and celebrate the incredible breadth of learning happening across our city.

This booklet showcases the many award categories and highlights the remarkable efforts of individuals, groups, and organisations contributing to lifelong learning in Cork. The judges always enjoy reviewing the nominations, which provide insight into the diverse and impactful ways people are engaging with learning.

From community projects to workplace initiatives and personal achievements, the range of learning represented this year reflects the dynamic and vibrant learning culture in our city, a UNESCO Learning City since 2015. These awards are a celebration of that work and a recognition of the people driving it forward.

Thank you for joining us to honour the contributions and achievements of all our nominees. We hope you enjoy learning more about their stories.

Denis Barrett Cork Learning City Co-ordinator  
Catherine Sheahan Cork Learning City Team  
Norma Browne Cork Learning Neighbourhoods Co-ordinator  
Karen Duke Cork Access Network Co-ordinator



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# EARLY YEARS AWARD

## **Mairead Davis, Bright Beginnings Preschool**

Mairead Davis is celebrated for creating a warm, inclusive environment at Bright Beginnings Preschool, where education and play come together to help every child thrive.

A kind and inspiring leader in Early Years Education, Mairead's dedication enriches the lives of children, families, and colleagues, fostering a lifelong love of learning.

*Nominated by Celine Horgan.*



## **Grace Walsh, Dolly Parton Imagination Library**

Grace Walsh is being honoured for her outstanding work in coordinating and delivering the Dolly Parton Imagination Library in Cork. Her energy, enthusiasm, and unwavering commitment to ensuring no child is left behind shine through in her daily efforts to bring the joy of books to children. Grace's dedication has made a significant impact, fostering a love of reading and learning in young minds across the community.

*Nominated by Aoife Ní Chonchúir.*



# PRIMARY LEVEL AWARD

## **Colleen Forsythe, Deputy Principal, St. Columba's Girls National School with Facility for Deaf Children**

Colleen Forsythe is an inspiring leader at St. Columba's GNS, and a proud member of the DCU Changemaker Network. Over the past five years, her classes have actively participated in the citizenship program 'My Big Friendly Guide to EU', bringing engagement and awareness to students.

With over 43 years of dedication to the school, its pupils, and the wider Douglas community, Colleen is a beacon of positivity, kindness, and enthusiasm. Her commitment has made a lasting impact on countless lives, both in education and the community.

*Nominated by Louise Roche.*





# SECONDARY LEVEL AWARD

## **Barr na gCnoc** **Terence MacSweeney Community College**

Barr na gCnoc is an innovative community partnership coordinated by Professor Pádraig Ó Macháin, Ionad na Gaeilge Labhartha, University College Cork, in collaboration with Principal Phil O'Flynn and staff at Terence MacSweeney Community College, Knocknaheeny.

Established in 2017, this partnership supports the Aonad Gaeilge in the school, where all subjects are taught through Irish from first year to leaving certificate. The initiative encourages students to embrace the Irish language in a fun, engaging way, using it as a social enabler and a tool for empowerment within the school and wider community.



*Nominated by Adel Coleman.*

## **MTU STEAM Team**

The MTU STEAM competition is a dynamic exhibition showcasing the creative work of Traveller students from across Cork city and county, connected through MTU's Access Service.

This collaborative initiative brings together the MTU Traveller Education Team, MTU Science for Life Officer, MTU Arts Office, and the Cork Traveller Interagency Group. By blending Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics, the project inspires participants to engage in creativity, problem-solving, and critical thinking, while celebrating their unique perspectives and talents.

*Nominated by Róisín Ormond.*



# YOUTH IN COMMUNITY LEARNING AWARD

## EIL Intercultural Learning's Explore Programme

The EIL Intercultural Learning Explore programme offers fully funded scholarships designed to empower marginalised groups and individuals by breaking down barriers to lifelong learning. Through experiential learning, intercultural experiences, global education, critical reflection, community action, and active global citizenship, participants are equipped with the tools to effect meaningful change.

By encouraging inclusivity and collaborating with local organisations, the Explore programme not only supports personal growth but also inspires participants to drive positive change within their communities.

*Nominated by Adam Peerbux.*



## Féile Fearann Rí

Féile Fearann Rí is a vibrant trad and folk music festival rooted in Cork city's northside, Farranree and Hollyhill. Launched in June 2023, the festival enjoyed another successful week in June 2024, with exciting plans already underway for 2025!

This community-driven celebration is presented by Creative Tradition in partnership with Music Generation, Musical Neighbourhoods, local schools such as Scoil Íosagáin and Scoil Aiséirí Chríost, Farranree Parish, Cork City Libraries, and community groups like The Kabin Studio.

Coordinated by festival director Dr. Jessie Cawley (Creative Tradition), Féile Fearann Rí is a remarkable example of lifelong learning in action, creativity, cultural pride, and community spirit.

*Nominated by Claire Layton.*

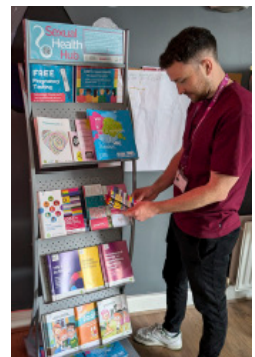


## The Hub Initiative, The Sexual Health Centre

Provides tailored sexual health education and resources to young people aged 12-25, including those from marginalised or minority backgrounds. Working with Youthreach, YMCAs, UBU Projects, and other youth organisations, the HUB addresses critical topics such as consent, relationships, LGBTI+ issues, and body image.

Since 2020, the initiative has offered free sexual health resources, period products, and condoms (17+), along with culturally sensitive workshops tailored to group needs. With active social media engagement and plans for a dedicated website, the HUB fosters inclusion, health, and informed decision-making.

*Nominated by Juan Fonseca Burgalin*



# FURTHER EDUCATION AWARD

## Cope Foundation Training Centres

Cope Foundation Training Centres empower individuals with intellectual disabilities to overcome barriers to education, employment, and social inclusion. Offering QQI-accredited courses at Levels 1-3, the centres deliver programmes in life skills, literacy, personal development, horticulture, and more.

Learners engage in national projects like Gaisce and the Green Campus Initiative, furthering skills in inclusive settings and promoting community involvement. Tailored supports enable learners to achieve Major Awards, boosting confidence and aspirations.

Through partnerships with organisations like MTU and Coláiste Stiofáin Naofa, learners access mainstream education and work placements, building CVs and preparing for further education or employment.

*Nominated by Paul Sherlock*



## Cultural & Heritage Studies Course Cork College of FET, Tramore Road Campus

Since its inception 34 years ago, the Cultural & Heritage Studies course has offered a transformative learning experience, combining archaeology, folklore, local history, and the arts. Open to students aged 17 to 70+ from diverse educational backgrounds, it has empowered over 1,000 graduates to pursue further education and careers in heritage and cultural sectors. The programme features engaging lectures, practical workshops, and field trips to heritage sites, offering hands-on, real-world experiences. Partnerships with organisations such as UCC, MTU, and Adult Literacy Services enhance its impact.

Initiatives like the 2022 Cork Learning Neighbourhoods Taster Course attracted students from many different communities, including Ukrainian students, further enriching the programme. Graduates have become tour guides, entrepreneurs, and heritage professionals, contributing to cultural institutions across Cork and beyond. The course continues to serve as a shining example of lifelong learning and heritage appreciation.



## Fighting Blindness & Cork College of FET – Douglas Street Campus

The Touching Art Project is celebrated for its innovative approach to arts education, making the arts accessible to individuals with visual impairments. From 2023 to 2024, the project has shown a deep commitment to lifelong learning by using tactile exploration to engage participants with art in ways previously unavailable to them.

Led by skilled artist Krzysztof Rosa, the workshops guide participants in creating their own artworks, creativity, independence, and self-expression. This initiative provides a unique sensory experience, empowering visually impaired individuals to connect with art through touch.

*Nominated by Marta O'Connor.*





# FURTHER EDUCATION AWARD

## Boxing Clever Group

The Boxing Clever Group is made up of individuals in recovery from addiction who demonstrated remarkable commitment by completing this transformative programme. Despite facing significant personal challenges, they embraced a structured environment requiring both physical and mental engagement.

Through determination and teamwork, participants not only improved their physical fitness but also achieved QQI Level 4 in Health-Related Fitness and QQI Level 5 in Community Addiction Studies. For many early school leavers, this was their first positive educational experience, with some even progressing to part-time courses at UCC. This journey highlights their resilience, growth, and dedication to rebuilding their lives.



***Nominated by Brenda O'Connell.***

## Cork College of FET, in partnership with the Traveller Visibility Group (TVG) addresses systemic educational barriers facing Travellers.

Identifying a need for skills-based training for Traveller men, the college launched welding programmes at its Bishopstown Campus, reflecting Traveller heritage in traditional trades.

Staff completed Traveller Cultural Awareness training to ensure an inclusive environment. In 2023, participants successfully completed ARC Welding, followed by a MIG Welding course. Held every Friday, these programmes provide culturally relevant pathways, fostering skills, empowerment, and access to education for Traveller men while breaking down barriers and celebrating their heritage.



***Nominated by Niamh Gaine***

# HIGHER EDUCATION AWARD

**Collaborative work in Prison Education: University College Cork, Munster Technological University, Cork Education & Training Board & The Dillon's Cross Project**

**The Cork ETB Education Unit at Cork Prison** demonstrates a strong commitment to lifelong learning through innovative partnerships with UCC and other organisations like MTU, HSE, and Cork City Council. Programs such as UCC's 'Inside Out' unite imprisoned students with university peers, exploring themes like criminal and social justice through creative assessments, including artwork and podcasts. This initiative has helped 10 learners graduate in 2023/2024 and has featured work in Spike Island exhibitions, breaking down societal barriers. The UCC Visual Thinking program, active since 2017, encourages creative responses to discussed topics, promoting cultural dialogue through annual exhibitions. Similarly, the UCC/HSE Addiction Studies program, launched in 2022, supports students affected by addiction through flexible, accredited learning, with plans to expand to Dillon's Cross Project in 2024.



Together, these initiatives promote social inclusion, intergenerational learning, and community empowerment, addressing challenges like addiction and marginalisation while inspiring future generations.

***Nominated by Lorraine Higgins***

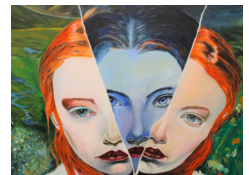
**The MTU Cork Prison Lecture Series** is a groundbreaking initiative within the Irish Prison Service, providing transformative education to those in custody. Since 2017, in collaboration with MTU, IPS, and IASIO, the program has engaged 301 participants, many of whom have progressed to further education, apprenticeships, and employment. Participants shape their learning by selecting lecture topics. In 2024, 77 attendees participated in 18 lectures on subjects such as Artificial Intelligence, Apprenticeships, and Higher Education Pathways, with the program addressing barriers like literacy and learning differences. The series has inspired the Open Door Pop-Up Restaurant, offering additional training and employment opportunities. By unlocking potential and reducing intergenerational offending, this initiative showcases the transformative power of education in creating safer and more inclusive communities.



***Nominated by Christine Nolan***

## **Adult Continuing Education, UCC - Cork Prison Addiction Studies Programme**

ACE has been promoting inclusive education for over 75 years. One example is the Cork Prison Addiction Studies Programme, launched in March 2022 by Dr. Robert O'Driscoll and his team. The program supports prisoners who have often been excluded from traditional education systems.



Using UCC's learner-focused approach and Universal Design for Learning, the course makes content accessible and includes creative assessments, like artwork to reflect learning. So far, 45 students have completed the non-accredited course, and 19 will take the accredited module in 2024. The program covers addiction from psychological, social, and personal perspectives.

Plans for the future include offering the course to prisoners' families and expanding it across Ireland.

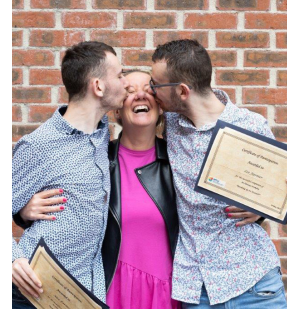
***Nominated by Patricia McGrath***

# HIGHER EDUCATION AWARD

## MTU and Cope Foundation Advocacy Workshops

This year marks a decade of collaboration between MTU and Cope Foundation, providing free Advocacy Workshops for individuals with varying learning abilities. Each year, 22 students, aged 18 to 65, learn self-advocacy skills and how to advocate for others. The workshops combine lectures with hands-on, small-group learning, fostering peer collaboration and reporting back to larger groups.

Graduates celebrate their achievements at an annual graduation ceremony with certificates presented by the MTU President. Many continue to join the Cope Foundation Advocacy Council, applying their skills in real-world advocacy. Participants also explore additional MTU modules, including music, art, adapted physical activity, and communication skills.



These workshops build confidence, enabling students to travel, shop, and live independently, promoting social inclusion. They also support pathways like the Ability@Work programme, with MTU employing graduates. Future plans aim to expand offerings into a broader certificate program, reflecting students' enthusiasm for lifelong learning.

*Nominated by Margaret Linehan*

## UCC Plus, MTU Access, Trinity Access Programmes as part of College Awareness Week.

The College Awareness Week 'TY Challenge' promoted lifelong learning by empowering students to explore diverse routes to higher education. With 21 projects from 8 counties and 70 participants, it united students, teachers, and universities to support equity in education.

Mentoring by undergraduate Access students at MTU Cork provided peer support and showcased future opportunities. By targeting DEIS schools, offering financial support, and utilizing digital platforms, the challenge promoted inclusivity, social equity, and digital skills.



The initiative inspired students from disadvantaged backgrounds to pursue higher education with confidence. Through real-world learning and collaboration, it helped break down barriers to access and encouraged aspirations for lifelong learning.

*Nominated by Molly Dillon-Leetch*

## MTU School of Humanities and Access Office

In June, 14 mature students from underrepresented backgrounds in higher education received their "Building Social Connections" certificates at MTU's Bishopstown campus. This innovative program, held both on campus and at Blackpool Library, was designed to build confidence and address barriers for participants from diverse groups, including the Travelling community, the homeless sector, individuals with disabilities, and those recently released from prison.



Students were selected through a competitive application process, submitting personal statements detailing their motivations. The trauma-sensitive module combined practical and theoretical learning, emphasising community, connection, and self-belief. Creative assessments encouraged every student to succeed, with content tailored to individual needs. Feedback highlighted the program's life-changing impact, with students describing newfound confidence and the desire to pursue further education. Due to its success, MTU is offering follow-on modules, enabling students to build credits and continue their lifelong learning journey.

*Nominated by Prof. Margaret Linehan*

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## WORKPLACE LEARNING AWARD

### Cork College of FET-Bishopstown Campus and the Cork Electronics Industry Association.

The ILM Leadership and Management Programme, delivered by Cork College of FET - Bishopstown Campus, is tailored for CEIA network companies. Launched in 2021, the program was co-designed with member companies to address the need for developing future leadership talent. Supported by the SOLAS Skills to Advance initiative, it awards graduates an ILM Level 4 Certificate in Leadership and Management.



The curriculum covers leadership qualities, mental toughness, communication, and strategic thinking, empowering participants to drive impact in their organisations. The program also creates valuable networking across CEIA companies, including Apple, Dell, Intel, and Boston Scientific. Nearly 100 learners, including those from minority groups, have participated, with strong demand leading to the addition of a follow-on Diploma programme. The programme exemplifies successful collaboration between education and industry, supporting lifelong learning and Cork. The fifth cohort begins in October 2024, further enhancing this impactful initiative.

*Nominated by Niamh Gaine*

**Shannon Vale Foods** is being recognised for its exceptional commitment to supporting employee education and a culture of lifelong learning. Through its encouragement, employees Regina Cezario, Noel Cabrera, Pedro Pereire, and Dorin Boboc have advanced in their educational pursuits, demonstrating the impact of the company's dedication to personal and professional development.



*Nominated by Emma McCarthy*



# ADULT COMMUNITY EDUCATION AWARD

## Sample-Studios

One of Ireland's largest artist studio with over 130 members from 22 nationalities, supporting creative careers through affordable workspaces, residencies, and award-winning education programs. The Studios of Sanctuary initiative, launched in 2021, provides mentorship, training, and professional opportunities for migrant, refugee, and asylum-seeking artists, breaking barriers and promoting social inclusion. Successes include a South Asian Kite Festival attracting 4,000 attendees, a documentary on direct provision touring internationally, and a Kyiv artist who built a thriving career in Ireland.



***Nominated by Aoibhie McCarthy***

## SHEP (Social and Health Education Project)

Celebrates 50 years of empowering communities through inclusive education and personal development since its founding in Cork in 1974. Between 2022-2024, SHEP expanded its community education efforts, adapting to COVID/post-COVID challenges by offering hybrid and online courses to reach marginalised learners.



In 2024, SHEP introduced key initiatives, including managing the Horticulture Long-Term Training Initiative (LTI) at Ardfoyle, reflecting their commitment to sustainability and lifelong learning. They also organised their first Erasmus Plus-funded adult learner exchange, enabling 11 learners to participate in a weeklong program in Slovenia, many traveling for the first time.

SHEP supports marginalised groups, such as unemployed individuals, people with disabilities, Traveller women, and those in direct provision, through outreach and tailored training. Their experiential, non-assessed learning model ensures accessibility for all. Collaborating with partners like Cork ETB and Mercy Ministries, SHEP continues to champion lifelong learning and social inclusion.

***Nominated by Sheila Kelleher***

## Jean O'Donoghue

Jean's unwavering determination has transformed her lifelong struggle with literacy into an inspiring journey of success. As a founding member of the Traveller Visibility Group (TVG) and a dedicated community advocate for nearly 20 years, Jean discovered she had dyslexia and began receiving tailored learning support.

In the past three years, under the guidance of her tutor Sascha Roos, Jean has progressed from learning basic letter sounds to fluently reading accessible adult books. Her incredible story was highlighted in RTE's documentary *Lost for Words*.

Jean's literacy achievement has empowered her personally and professionally, making her a role model within the Traveller community. Her growing confidence continues to inspire others, showcasing the power of perseverance and learning at any stage of life. Jean's ultimate dream - to enjoy the works of Agatha Christie.



***Nominated by Sascha Roos.***



# ADULT COMMUNITY EDUCATION AWARD

## Cork Counselling Services

This not-for-profit charity and social enterprise has been offering accessible counselling and professional training in Cork since 1982. As Munster's longest-standing IACP provider, it delivers a four-year degree-level counselling program in partnership with Coventry University for students aged 23 to 70. The program combines classroom learning with hands-on practice in its busy city-centre clinic, ensuring students gain supervised experience while supporting the community.



From 2022 to 2024, 25 new counsellors graduated to meet growing mental health needs. Last year, the organisation provided over 3,000 counselling hours to 400+ clients, addressing issues like anxiety, grief, addiction, and abuse. Partnering with agencies such as Tusla, HSE, and TVG ensures equitable access to services.

*Nominated by Hugh Morley.*

# ACTIVE RETIRED LIFELONG LEARNING AWARD

## Cyber Safety @ MTU

The Cyber Safety research team is working to make Ireland safer for older adults navigating the digital world. They've partnered with 248 older adults, 34 digital educators, and advocacy groups to create resources like a cyber safety card game, a simple guide, and an e-learning course. Their website includes a Support Near Me tool to connect users with local services, helping older adults feel more confident online.

With cybercrime costing older Irish adults around €1 billion a year, the team is addressing a critical need for better online safety. Programs like the Library Cyber Safety Champions and collaborations with Age Action and Healthy Age Friendly Homes improve digital literacy and tackle issues like elder abuse. As they grow to support other vulnerable groups, the goal remains a digitally safe and inclusive Ireland, where everyone can enjoy the benefits of the online world securely.

*Nominated by Melanie Gruben*



## Cork Academy of Music Irish Group

The Irish Music Group is an open, inclusive community music ensemble that welcomes people of all ages, backgrounds, and skill levels. Meeting weekly, the group practices a variety of songs in both English and Irish, promoting community connections and the Irish language.

The group supports all abilities, adapting music to each participant's skill level. Members range from beginners to experienced musicians, and everyone has the chance to suggest songs. Their regular public performances are a wonderful opportunity for members to showcase their talent and celebrate their progress.

Made up mostly of retired individuals, the group includes people from many cultural backgrounds, fostering friendships and connections. Weekly rehearsals provide a welcoming space for creativity and learning, benefiting both members and audiences through the joy of shared music.

*Nominated by Billy O'Callaghan*



**Maureen Cullinane** is at the heart of the Kabin community, bringing incredible energy, creativity, and passion to everything she does. Whether it's performing at gigs, taking part in workshops, or sharing her poetry, original songs, and even rap recordings, Maureen always gives her all. She's a true supporter of Irish culture, promoting the Irish language, playing traditional music, and working with younger members on projects like the short Irish-language film *Mo Cheol Thú*.

Maureen's willingness to try new things and step out of her comfort zone makes her an inspiring role model for all ages. Her warmth and love for learning encourage everyone around her. She keeps Irish music and culture alive while showing that creativity and community involvement have no age limits.

*Nominated by Garry McCarthy.*



# EXCEPTIONAL ENDEAVOUR AWARD

## Collette Wolfe

Six years ago, Collette Wolfe couldn't read or write. Now, she's in her second year of a Youth and Community Work degree at UCC, having completed QQI Level 5 courses and written two books about her life and her daughter's experiences. After losing her daughter to suicide caused by severe bullying, Collette has devoted her life to helping young people and families in need.

Her own experiences have given her a deep understanding of the struggles others face. Collette works closely with the Traveller and migrant communities, Youthreach, and local groups, sharing her story to inspire and support others. She strongly believes in education as a way to overcome challenges and encourages people to return to learning.

Despite facing personal difficulties, including dyslexia, Collette uses available supports and proves that education is for everyone. Her work changes lives, brings people together, and shows incredible strength and determination.

***Nominated by Damian Butler***

**The Stone Carving and Horticulture Group** has overcome the challenges of homelessness to take part in lifelong learning and create impressive projects. Through weekly classes, they have built stone walls for a national contest, created public art sculptures, and maintained a sensory garden in homeless accommodation.

Despite facing difficulties like addiction, mental health struggles, and trauma, the group has embraced learning about Irish heritage, creating projects like standing stones and bee hive huts. They've also gone on trips to places like the Aran Islands and Valencia Slate Quarry to expand their knowledge.

Their work challenges stereotypes about homelessness and has been recognised for contributing to Cork's culture and heritage. Guided by Cork Simon's values of inclusion and diversity, the group encourages teamwork and supports each other, making a positive impact on both participants and the wider community.

***Nominated by Fiona Hagenson***

**The Dillon's Cross Project (DXP)** supports children and families facing challenges in education and social life. In 2023, DXP ran a successful Summer Camp for teenagers and children affected by family imprisonment or disadvantage. The camp included activities like sports, arts, music, and trips to places like West Cork Secrets, giving children opportunities to grow, work as a team, and try new experiences.

Learners and local teenagers helped run the camp by preparing meals and leading activities. This gave them a chance to build confidence, learn leadership skills, and work together. They also completed child protection training to ensure a safe and supportive environment.

DXP also organises fun events throughout the year, like Halloween parties and Christmas celebrations, bringing families together and building stronger community connections. By offering these programs, DXP helps children and families overcome challenges, grow, and create a more supportive community for everyone.

***Nominated by Lorraine Higgins***



# EXCEPTIONAL ENDEAVOUR AWARD

## The Cork Foyer

The Cork Foyer supports young people aged 18–25 who are homeless or at risk of homelessness by offering safe housing and opportunities for personal and educational growth. Residents can participate in up to 19 hours of weekly training, helping them develop skills for independent living, improve career prospects, and build confidence. Training, delivered in partnership with ABLES and CETB, includes cooking, personal development, literacy, and career preparation.

The Foyer also features a Garden Project, where residents and service users from disadvantaged groups engage in horticulture, grounds maintenance, and café work, fostering community connections and practical skills. By adopting the Foyer Federation's Open Talent approach, staff help residents overcome challenges like early school leaving, empowering them to discover and develop their talents.

With strong partnerships and a resident-led approach, the Foyer fosters belonging and self-reliance. In 2024, it earned the NYCI Silver Award in Health Promotion, with work ongoing to achieve Gold status.

*Nominated by Julia Seitz*

**Fahmeda Naheed** embodies lifelong learning, transforming herself from a marginalised woman into an inspiring community leader. She is a volunteer, public speaker, writer, and project initiator, using her creativity and skills to create inclusive learning spaces. As co-chair of the Cork Three Faiths Forum, she organises events like Earth Day celebrations, interfaith dialogues, and cultural cooking activities.

Fahmeda is also the founder of the Irish Pakistani Community of Cork and a Cork City Council Volunteer Award winner. She is part of the Network of Ethnic Minority Abuse Observatory and helps organise awareness campaigns. Additionally, she hosts Let's Integrate on Cork City Community Radio, promoting cultural and social integration.

Despite personal challenges like health issues and racism, Fahmeda's resilience and dedication inspire women to achieve their full potential.

**Siobhan O'Dowd** is an exceptional advocate for lifelong learning, playing a key role in organising the Lifelong Learning Festival in the Ballyphehane and Togher communities. Her dedication, determination, and ability to unite diverse stakeholders—including disability services, schools, youth groups, older people, Travellers, and musicians—have made the festival a resounding success year after year.

Siobhan encourages participation from all ages and backgrounds, showcasing that learning has no barriers. Her efforts ensure the festival celebrates creativity, inclusion, and community spirit, smiles, applause, and recognition for everyone involved.

A true leader, Siobhan inspires open collaboration among the Education Network, making each festival more impactful. Her work has empowered participants, building their confidence and encouraging them to embrace lifelong learning.

*Nominated by Grainne O'Connell*





# LIFELONG LEARNING NATIONAL IMPACT AWARD

**The Spark** is a remarkable story of how creativity and community can change lives and make history. Born from workshops run by The Kabin Studio's Kabin Crew and Lisdoonvarna Crew, this high-energy song and music video started as a youth project for Rhyme Island, led by Garry McCarthy (GMCBeats). Children aged 8–12 from Cork and Clare poured their hearts into writing and recording the song, proving that barriers like background or location mean nothing when it comes to talent.

Funded by Creative Ireland, the project brought free workshops to refugee children in Lisdoonvarna and Cork youth in Knocknaheeny. **The Spark** quickly became a global phenomenon, racking up over 1.5 billion TikTok views and securing a spot on the Grammy longlist for Best Dance/Electronic Recording and Song of the Year.



But **The Spark** is more than just a global hit—it's proof of the magic of The Kabin Studio. For over a decade, The Kabin has empowered young people through music, removing barriers and giving everyone a chance to shine. Now signing with RubyWorks and transforming into a charity, The Kabin is expanding its life-changing work.

**The Spark** is not just a song—it's a movement, a triumph of creativity, and a beacon of hope for the power of community.

*Nominated by Claire Layton*



# INSPIRATION IN LIFELONG LEARNING AWARD

## The Ballyphehane/Togher Arts and Crafts Initiative (BTACI)

The people behind this initiative have truly been Inspirational in their lifetimes, and have caused a ripple of lifelong learning, that turned into a wave, connecting communities across Cork and beyond, that has reached as far as Taiwan and UNESCO. BTACI is a volunteer-driven community group in Cork dedicated to preserving and teaching traditional crafts. Established over two decades ago, BTACI offers weekly classes where nearly 300 women of all ages learn skills such as sewing, knitting, and crochet. These sessions not only impart practical abilities but also foster social connections and cultural continuity. BTACI collaborates with local schools, like Maria Assumpta Primary School, to teach students these crafts, emphasising their cultural significance and practical value. The group has also partnered with artists and healthcare institutions on projects like "The Amulet," which involved creating amulets for premature babies at Cork University Maternity Hospital. Their efforts have been recognised nationally, including receiving the Outstanding Volunteers' Award at the National Volunteer Awards and by their selection by UNESCO as the European example of best practice for a Research based case study in 2023.





# ROLL OF HONOUR 2024

- Ability@Work, Cope Foundation
- Adam McEvoy
- Adult Continuing Education, UCC - Cork Prison Addiction Studies
- Programme.
- Ballyphehane community garden horticulture course
- Barr na gCnoc
- Billy O'Callaghan
- Blossom4life
- Boxing Clever Group 2023/2024
- Bright Beginnings Montessori
- CDYS The Hut Youth Project
- Colleen Forsythe
- Collette Wolfe
- Cope Foundation - Lifelong learning Training Centres
- Cork Academy of Music Irish Group
- Cork College of FET Douglas Street Campus and Fighting Blindness -
- Collaborative Project
- Cork College of FET-Bishopstown Campus - Traveller Welding programme
- Cork College of FET-Bishopstown Campus and the Cork Electronics
- Industry Association
- Cork Community Gardens Network
- Cork Counselling Services
- Cork ETB Teachers and UCC lectures in acknowledgement of the various collaborations within the Education Unit, Cork Prison and the
- Dillons Cross Project.
- Cork Foyer
- Cork Simon Community, Stone Carving and Horticulture Group
- Cultural & Heritage Studies, Cork College of FET
- Cyber Safety @ MTU
- Dorin Daniel Boboc
- EIL Intercultural Learning
- Fahmeda Naheed
- Farahnaz Haidary
- Féile Fearann Rí
- Garda Kate McCarthy
- Gay Project
- Gay Project: Drag School with Mia Gold
- Grace Walsh
- Inclusive Dance Cork
- Irish Tree Explorers Network
- Jean O'Donoghue
- Joan Denise Moriarty School Of Dance John Keane, RIP, Foróige
- Karina Healy Kaylna Choir Kieran Healy
- The Lantern Crochet Ladies Group
- Lifetime Lab @ Old Cork Waterworks
- Literacy and ESOL Tutors in Cork City ETB services
- Maureen Cullinane
- Mayfield CDP
- Moving Age, Farranree FRC
- MTU and Cope Foundation Advocacy Workshops
- MTU Cork Prison Lecture Series
- MTU School of Humanities and Access Office
- MTU Traveller Education Team- Leanne McDonagh and Breda Hogan, MTU Science for Life Officer-Roisin Ormond, MTU Arts Office and the Cork Traveller Interagency Group.
- Noel P Cabrera
- Pedro Pereira
- Regina Cezario
- Sample-Studios
- Sexual Health Centre
- Sexual Health Centre - The HUB Initiative
- Siobhan O Dowd
- Teaching and Learning Unit, MTU
- Temitope Ogwu
- The Dillon's Cross Project
- The Social and Health Education Project CLG
- The Spark by Kabin Crew and Lisdoonvarna Crew
- Theatre Making & Citizenship Cork - Older Adult Group
- UCC Plus, MTU Access, Trinity Access Programmes as part of College Awareness Week
- Welcome English Language Centre

# A BIG THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR CATEGORY JUDGES...

Willie McAuliffe - Chair, Cork Learning City  
Ide Dwane - Cork Lifelong Learning Festival Committee  
Naoimh Frawley - Cork Chamber  
Patricia Magee - Belfast Learning City  
Ciarán Lynch - Cork Education and Training Board  
Paul McSweeney - University College Cork  
Phil O'Flynn - Terence McSwiney Community College  
Christine Nolan - Munster Technological University  
Natasha Dromey - University College Cork  
Martin Dineen - Cork City Council  
Yvonne Lane - Limerick Lifelong Learning Festival  
Deirdre Cotter - Cork City Childcare  
Barry O'Connor - Cork Access Network  
Abby Langtry - Dublin Learning City  
Patricia Looney - Cork City Libraries  
Phil O'flynn - Terence McSwiney Community College  
Mick Finn - Cork Education and Training Board

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UCC  
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