



*Pictured above: Students from St Mary's College in Rathmines, Dublin, join Niall Breslin and Justin Ryan (back row, left to right) from The Blizzards, comedienne Maeve Higgins (third left) and Sophie Merry of You Tube's "Groovy Dancing Girl" fame at the launch of headsup.ie*

# HeadsUp Blazes a Trail as Innovative New Website Launched



**T**HERE WAS A REAL BUZZ OF EXCITEMENT IN Temple Bar for the launch in November of the new interactive website for HeadsUp, Rehab's mental health promotion project. A throng of onlookers, including students from St Mary's College in Rathmines, Dublin, had gathered to see Graffiti sensation, Maser, put the finishing touches to a headsup.ie graffiti wall on display in the windows of Filmbase. With chart-toppers The Blizzards and comedienne Maeve Higgins lending their support, and Sophie Merry of You Tube's "Groovy Dancing Girl" fame doing some funky moves to entertain passers-by, the event really caught people's imagination.

HeadsUp is an initiative targeted at improving young people's mental well-being with the overall goal being

to reduce suicide amongst the 15-24 year age group. Up to 500 people die from suicide in Ireland annually, a significant proportion of these being young adults. The website has been developed with the direction of a panel of youth advisors and will enable young people to find out about mental health issues, promote positive mental health and provide information and support. The site includes a host of cutting-edge features including Mind Gym with lots of interactive games, Self Help modules and "Art from the Heart", along with discussion forums, information on support services, well-being tips, fact sheets, reviews and competitions.

Dublin-based graffiti artist, Maser, has been painting for over 12 years on the Irish and international graffiti scenes, including New York, Copenhagen and London, and his artworks reflect a common theme of social consciousness.

Maser was very keen to get involved in the project and wrote an article for the website revealing how the death of his best friend from suicide affected him deeply. For him, the exhibit was a way to connect with young people in a language that they understand. "Young people appreciate street art. Graffiti is the art of a generation and a positive art form that young people can associate with. I am delighted to have been able to use this medium to let people know about headsup.ie, a very worthwhile and necessary project for young people in Ireland today."

So how difficult was it to put the "wall" together? "Once we had worked out the design, having initially done some loose sketches and building it up from there, it took about three days to actually paint the piece in studio. First I gave the plywood panels an emulsion base, then sketched up the drawing on a large scale, before filling it in with warm colours to give it a more friendly and inviting feel. Then I set about deconstructing it to give it that graffiti effect and adding in some of the smaller elements."

Collette Ryan, HeadsUp Project Manager, says, "Eight out of ten 15 to 24-year-olds use the internet, and with [headsup.ie](http://headsup.ie), we are providing young people with the facility to share their worries, difficulties and stresses. In addition to providing information on support services, [headsup.ie](http://headsup.ie) will promote positive mental health and mental health awareness through its extensive Self Help modules, games and forum discussions."

Separately, HeadsUp recently launched a nationwide writing competition in association with the *Irish Independent* with the top prize of a Dell laptop and the opportunity to have the winning article published in the paper.

The competition on the topic "Head wrecked – what's going on in my head?" sought to give budding young writers the opportunity to enter an article addressing difficult life issues that affect young people or which impact on their mental health.

"A lot of young people struggle with financial difficulties, sexuality issues, drugs, stress and relationship problems," says Collette Ryan, "and it is important to recognise

these struggles and deal with them in an appropriate manner. The aim of this writing competition was to encourage young adults to write and to explore how they are feeling and, in so doing, lift the burden of silence and share and learn from each others' experiences." ■

**A selection of entries will be featured on [www.headsup.ie](http://www.headsup.ie)**

### HeadsUp Text Expands to include College Support Services

Headsup Text, the text support service operated by Rehab and supported by Meteor, has just expanded its offering to include a list of student support services available at 26 colleges nationwide. The extension means that national help and support services are now available with local on-the-ground services in colleges.

The new service was launched to coincide with the Union of Students in Ireland's Mental Health Awareness Week, which took place during November. Details of the participating institutions include Ireland's leading universities – Trinity College Dublin, University College Cork, University College Dublin, NUI Galway and the University of Limerick – as well as the Institutes of Technology and other colleges and institutes of education.

HeadsUp Text is a free and confidential 24-hour service which gives access to helpline numbers and support services to young people in difficulty on a range of topics, including relationships, alcohol, drugs, suicide, teen issues and mental health. As a result of this development, students will now, at the touch of a button, be able to access services that are available on their own college campuses, including students' union offices, college counsellors, chaplaincies and access offices.

The text service is open to all mobile phone users on all networks by simply texting the word HEADSUP to 50424 and selecting the "Student Services" option.

Anthony Muldoon, Welfare Officer, Union of Students in Ireland, says, "Going to college brings huge changes to students' lives and sometimes these can be overwhelming. The inclusion of student services on Headsup Text gives students another opportunity to find help on their campuses when they need it. Student services are there for students and have their interests at heart. Help is at hand for any student who needs it."



*Pictured above (left to right): Niall Breslin and Justin Ryan of The Blizzards at the launch of [headsup.ie](http://headsup.ie), the new interactive website for HeadsUp, Rehab's mental health promotion project for young people aged 15-24 years. A special graffiti wall designed by Maser, Ireland's best-known graffiti artist, was unveiled to mark the launch of the new website.*