

# Portlaoise Students are Golden Achievers

**C**ONGRATULATIONS TO FOUR STUDENTS FROM National Learning Network Portlaoise who recently received gold An Gaisce awards from President Mary McAleese. The four students – Kate Gannon, Aileen Gardiner, William Lawlor and Fraga Veighey – received the prestigious award in a ceremony in Dublin Castle. This isn't the first time that National Learning Network students from Portlaoise have been presented with the accolade – Kevin Bambrick from Abbeyleix also achieved gold in 2006.

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*Pictured: Former National Learning Network student Kevin Bambrick from Abbeyleix with his gold President's Award.*

The awards work on the basis of a personal challenge set by the participants. To earn the award, activities in four categories – skill, community, physical and adventure – must be completed. To get their gold medals, the group members took part in a range of activities.

They learned computer skills and office procedures for the skill challenge. For the community challenge, the group did 60 weeks' work placement. Kate worked in the Sacred Heart Nursing Home in Kilkenny, where her 101-year-old grandmother is a resident, and Aileen helped out in the library where her mother works. William worked in the Parish Office and Fraga helped out in the health centre where her colleagues presented her with a gift for receiving her award.

For the physical challenge, they took part in a variety of sports, including bowling, soccer, badminton and basketball, with Fraga participating in events with the Irish Wheelchair Association. According to Kate, the adventure challenge was the hardest. The group completed an 80km hike over four days in the Slieve Bloom Mountains and stayed in a hostel for three nights.

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For more information on the President's Award, visit [www.gaisce.ie](http://www.gaisce.ie)