



Denis Matthews competing in the National Ploughing Championships.

Longford man ploughs, throws the shot putt and walks 4k - after a heart transplant!

Why Denis is a merry ploughman

Watching Denis Matthews compete in the National Ploughing Championships in Carlow last September, it was hard to believe that just a little over a year ago he had undergone a major heart transplant operation.

However, the Longford man, who attends the horticulture programme at NTDI's Dawn Learning Centre and is an enthusiastic ploughman, is proof positive of the success of the transplant operation.

Determined that the operation wouldn't slow him down, Denis returned home from the Mater Hospital just 19 days after the operation, and only a few months later was back indulging his lifelong passion for vintage ploughing, competing with distinction at the County Longford Ploughing Championships earlier this year which ensured his entry in the National Ploughing Championships in Carlow.

However, it's not just on the ploughing field, but also

the playing field, that Denis excels. Earlier this summer, Denis was one of 500 people who competed at the European Heart and Lung Transplant Games in Dublin, the first time that Ireland has hosted the event. The Games were officially opened by President Mary McAleese in her capacity as patron of the Irish Heart and Lung Association.

Denis competed in two events, the 4km walk and shot putt, and admits himself that he had no real medal aspirations going into the Games. He said that taking part was not only 'a bit of fun', but also a valuable means of highlighting what a transplant operation has meant to him and how it enabled him to enjoy a much better quality of life than he had before.

Denis is, therefore, understandably keen to raise awareness of the need for donors and he regularly fundraises locally for the Heart and Lung Transplant Association.

For many it's a talent they never knew they had. But the artists of NTDI and RehabCare are winning many admirers for their work among art aficionados.

Two highly successful art programmes have turned up some extraordinary creative talent in different Rehab Group services.

Their titles – Illuminations and New Dawn – evoke inspiration, but not as much as the gifted participants of RehabCare and NTDI's latest art programmes.

Literally hundreds of service users from centres around the country have earned the appreciation of art lovers after putting their work on display at recent exhibitions

The two-day New Dawn exhibition, staged by artists from RehabCare centres in Stillorgan and Ballyfermot incorporated close to a hundred individual pieces of artwork including a wide range of oil paintings, pastels, watercolours, ink and pencil drawings, as well as cross-stitch and photography.

A large crowd of art aficionados, colleagues, friends and family gathered at Dun Laoghaire Town Hall for the official opening of the art exhibition by Cathaoirleach, Niamh Bhreathnach. Sponsored by Dun



A Gallery of

Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council and Tesco Ireland, the exhibition was part of RehabCare's commitment to the arts. Under an innovative arts programme, artists at Park House in Stillorgan and Kylemore Life House in Ballyfermot have worked closely with clients, supporting them as they explored their creative abilities using a wide range of media.

"Artists, Majella Burns and Tim Lloyd, have brought the clients on an inspirational journey allowing them to discover and develop their creative potential," says Catherine Slattery, Regional Manager, RehabCare. "All of the clients were encouraged to play an active role in select-





Left: Artist Natalie Mooney, a client with RehabCare Park House in Stillorgan, is joined by her parents at the official opening of the New Dawn art exhibition at the Town Hall, Dun Laoghaire.

ing the subjects and direction of their work. The result is a very strong and exciting exhibition, and one which all the clients are very proud of.”

Among the artists displaying work at the exhibition was John Colbert, a client with the RehabCare resource centre in Park House, Stillorgan. “I began taking art classes in Park House with Majella a number of years ago following my stroke. It was something completely new to me, I hadn’t touched a paint brush since my school days. But I found it really relaxing and therapeutic too. Majella encouraged us to try different forms of media and to see what appealed to us. I have three pencil

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Stars

RehabCare regional manager Catherine Slattery with artists at the opening. Picture left opposite: Liz Lawless (right) from Tesco Ireland, one of the sponsors of the event, pictured enjoying the art exhibition with a friend.



Mick Coughlan, NTDI introduces the judges at the official opening of the NTDI art exhibition.

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drawings on display in the exhibition, and it really is a fantastic feeling to see your own work on display in such an impressive venue.”

Fellow Park House artist, Natalie Mooney, agrees. “It’s really great to be here this evening. I feel very proud that my artwork is on exhibit. I’ve been taking art classes in Park House for the past few years and it’s been a really wonderful, liberating experience. I discovered talent that I never knew I had. It’s something I really enjoy, and I look forward to continuing painting, long after the exhibition is over.”

It wasn’t just clients from RehabCare Park House who were celebrating the success of the exhibition, Paul Heffernan, a client with RehabCare in Ballyfermot, was delighted to see his work on display at the exhibition, and was thrilled with the sale of two of his paintings within an hour of the exhibit opening. Paul, who has only been taking art classes for the past year, is full of praise for his instructor Tim Lloyd. “Tim has taught me so much. I really love the painting. It’s so relaxing, I even practice at home.”

The gym in Roslyn Park College was transformed into an impressive art gallery for three days recently with the arrival of the ‘Illuminations’ art exhibition, which



Winner of the Illuminations Art Exhibition, Anna O’Neill (centre), pictured with Finola McTernan, arts development officer, NTDI, and Dr Senan Mullins, chief executive, Rehab Foundation.

celebrated the creative talents of artists with disabilities from around the country.

The exhibition showcased many of the entries submitted in the NTDI Illuminations Art Competition, which was initiated to promote and celebrate artists in the European Year of People with Disabilities. Over 300 entries from artists located throughout the country were received for the competition, which was sponsored by the Rehab Foundation and had a generous award fund of €10,000.

Helen O’ Donoghue, Senior Curator at

the Irish Museum of Modern Art’s Education and Community Department and Artist, Rhona Henderson had the difficult task of judging all entries in the competition. Each submission was assessed on a number of criteria including the standard of artwork, the development of ideas and processes, career motivation and further training potential.

Following an interview and final assessment process, Anna O’Neill from Dublin was unanimously chosen as the winner of the overall award worth €5,000. Anna learnt of her success in the competition the



Above: David Doyle, from Roslyn Park College, with Helen O'Donoghue, senior curator at the Irish Museum of Modern Art. David was named joint runner-up in the Illuminations Art Competition.

Artist and Illuminations competition judge, Rhona Henderson, left, with Carmel Leavy, joint runner-up in the competition.



same morning that she received a letter informing her that she had secured a place to study Fine Arts at the Dublin Institute of Technology, Mountjoy Square. Carmel Leavy from NTDI's Dawn Learning Centre in Longford and David Doyle of Roslyn Park College were named joint runners-up and each received an award fund of €2,500 to help further their creative development.

The four finalists were named as James Collender and Cathy Denne Bolton from Dublin, Hugh Mc Veigh, Longford and Sean Healy from Bantry. In addition to getting the opportunity to view some of the

best artistic talent from within the Rehab Group, visitors to the exhibition at Roslyn Park College were also given the opportunity to take part in a number of workshops in areas as diverse as graphic design, computer programming and photography. And for the large crowd of art-lovers, family members and friends who attended the official opening of the exhibition, there was another special treat as members of the college's Performing Arts class performed a short drama written specially for the occasion. Speaking at the official opening of the exhibition, Finola McTernan, arts develop-

ment officer, NTDI, said: "Over the past decade, NTDI has implemented a number of exciting national and international programmes in relation to the arts. The quality and success of projects such as Art Reach, the innovative artist-in-residence programme, spurred us on to develop the 'Illuminations' competition as a means of recognising and showcasing the creative talent from around the country. We are delighted that the Rehab Foundation sponsored award fund, worth €10,000, will enable our talented winners to further their personal and creative development."

There's a lot to learn

'Educate for Inclusion' is the first cross-category disability awareness programme ever developed for Irish schools. Devised by Rehab, it consists of eight lessons on CD-ROM, which explore all of the big issues relating to disability.

Now available to all transition year students, 'Educate for Inclusion' is a superb opportunity to increase your pupils' knowledge and awareness of disability issues.

For full details of the programme contact the programme co-ordinator
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about disability



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