Centre History

history

1995 to 1999

Warrenmount
Community Education Centre

1995

The Acorn Grows - Milestones along the Way

September 1995: Warrenmount Community Education Centre opens its doors to the first participants.

• The Centre is committed to an innovative approach to community-based adult education. This approach is based on a social justice perspective and is driven by the real needs of the local people.

• The Centre firmly believes that people's circumstances can be changed by people themselves.

• The Centre is above all a community of learners.

Teachers and participants interact and are interdependent. They contribute equally to the life of the Centre and the local community.

• The Centre's holistic approach caters for a wide variety of needs of individuals, acknowledging that there is no single route to learning and achieving.

• The Personal Development class with its link to the counselling function has made a major contribution in ensuring the staying power of participants.

Cionnach Shanks in his report identifies the key principles which underpin the Centre since the beginning:

The Open Door image is symbolic of the Centre's understanding of the reluctance of people to return to education. Initial anxiety is allayed by the Centre's "arm's length" approach to introducing participants to new opportunities.

The non-interventionist style employed by co-ordinator and tutors demands a sensitive touch, a knowledge of psychological processes and a belief in the inherent abilities of ordinary people.

The scope, content and structure of classes are important features of the process. The availability of both formal and informal courses offers non-threatening entry in the return to education. Participants forge their own connections in the transition to certification.

Premises: 2 classrooms; Counselling Room; 2 offices.

Participants: 16 adults.

Programmes: Personal Development; Individual Therapy; Support Groups; Literacy (one-to-one); NCVA (Foundation Level English and Maths); Counselling; Aromatherapy; Drama; Aerobics.

Networking: Home/School/Community links - through Primary and Secondary Schools; FAS.

Staff: Full-time co-ordinator; Therapist (part-time); 2 tutors for NCVA programmes; Volunteer tutor for literacy.

Management: Committee with Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer.

Funding: Congregation - committed to: Personnel, start-up funding and match-funding of additional grants accessed.

1996

"Don't tell people what they need. Listen to them"

Through consultation and dialogue the next faltering steps were taken. Qualitative data indicates that the Centre is having an impact in terms of increasing self-esteem, confidence, knowledge and skills. The impact of the Centre at an individual level is having a multiplier effect, in that many participants are involved in local community organisations, which in turn benefit from their increased level of skills. Children and grandchildren benefit from the increased capacity and skill level of the participants. There is little doubt that the Centre is providing a valuable and effective adult education service in the South West Inner City area. In the long term it has the potential for significant impact at a broader community level.

(Kelliher Report)

Additional Premises: Childminding facility; Drop-in Room.

Participants: 160 (7 of whom were men) 47 were awarded certificates.

Programmes: Computers*; Stress Management; Teen Parenting*; Family Self-esteem Group*; Lone Parents Programme; FAS Training Programmes under the CE Scheme; Management and Leadership Training; NCVA Elective Modules.

*Linking with Primary School

Networks: HSL Visitation Project (Primary & Secondary Schools); Early School-leavers Project; Mercy Family Centre; Francis Street Centre; SWICN; St. Teresa's Combined Community Group (St. Teresa's Gardens); St. Catherine's Combined Residents Assoc. (Meath St.); Connolly Centre for Unemployed.

Staff: Co-ordinator; CE FAS Supervisor; 2 creche workers; 2 receptionists/book- keepers; 2 caretakers; 2 child-care workers; Part-time Community Development Worker; Part-time sessional tutors.

Management: Interim Management Board.

Funding: Congregation - hidden costs (salaries); Dept. of Social Welfare - Women Lone Parents; CDVEC (Tutor hours); St. Stephen's Green Trust Fund.

Key Events: Open Day; Conferring of Certificates; Christmas Meal.
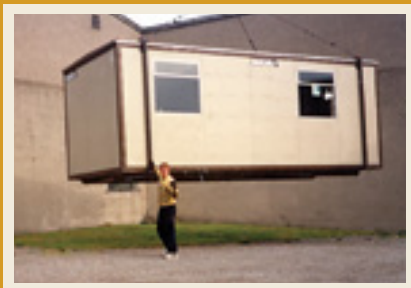
• A Community Development Officer is appointed on a part-time basis, to undertake research, and to liaise and establish working relationships with other community-based organisations.

• A portacabin is installed beside the Centre and is used as a child-minding facility for participants attending courses.

• Increased enrolment is indicative of demand. Courses certified by the National Council for Vocational Awards (NCVA) and the sponsoring of the Community Employment Scheme (CE) have helped to root the Centre firmly in the community.

• The Drop-in Room affords a welcome break. The chat and the "cuppa" and (dare I mention it) the cigarettes are life-savers!

1997

More participants, more courses and activities, and so more space is needed.

• The Nagle Hall, built in 1916 for the Children of Mary Sodality, is added to the facilities made available to the Centre by the Sisters.

• A larger and more sound-proof counselling room is acquired on the 2nd floor of the Main building, leaving the original room available for small group work.

• The increasing demand for counselling, personal development, parenting, family-esteem courses, stress management, tells it own story.

• As high-rise apartment blocks blot out the sun and sky in the Liberties, the soul cries out for colour, for life, for creativity. Art and Craft classes have sparked off delight, wonder, imagination. As Suzy Gablik says: "A life without colour is only half a life."

• The most important thing we can give a person is the confidence to be themselves. If they feel secure and valued for who they are, they will emerge as people connected with themselves and will not need targets for their own lack of self-worth, anger and fear. Not being connected means being alienated.

(Catherine Byrne: CEIFIN Conference 2004)

Personal Development Group   A Night Out

"The Art Class has opened up a whole new world for me. I have found a talent, that although I had secretly wished I had, I have now come to realise

that indeed I do have."

(Pauline Conlon)

"One of the Courses that sticks out in my mind is Personal Development. When I first went in to it, to say I was not very keen is an understatement.

But as the Course progressed, I realise just how much I was gaining. It has given me a feeling of self-worth and has boosted my confidence. It has also taught me to believe in myself and not to be afraid to go for what I want in life."

(Audrey Cullen)

Additional Premises: Nagle Hall - Counselling Room - Room for small group work.

Participants: 170 - 146 received certificates - 15 men.

Programmes: MI Approach to Learning; NCVA Foundation and Level I; Office Procedures; Crafts; Spirituality; CE Training Programmes.

Networks: Liberties College of Education (CDVEC); NALA; AONTAS; VISTA; STEM; Francis Street; Mercy Family Centre.

Staff: CE Project: Receptionist/Secretary; Assistant Secretary; FAS Supervisor.

Management: Interim Management Board Advisory Management Committee.

Funding: St. Stephen's Green Trust Fund; Conrad Hilton Trust Fund; Edmund Rice Trust Fund; Dept. of Social Community & Family Affairs.

1998

Introducing Multiple Intelligences:

• The Centre respects a whole variety of learning abilities and learning styles. It uses many approaches, formal and informal, explicit and implicit, individual and group, written and practical.

• The Multiple Intelligences Approach to Adult Learning has been a major influence in shaping and determining the development of programmes and classes in the Centre. Howard Gardner, who developed the Multiple Intelligences theory, saw clearly that there are many ways of being intelligent.

• The Centre respects this whole variety of learning abilities. It uses many approaches, formal and informal, explicit and implicit, individual and group, written and practical. Every effort is made to provide a range of programmes that will include all intelligences, for example Drama, Art, Tai Chi, Literacy, Mathematics, Gardening.

• The annual training for tutors in the Centre includes a slot on the MI Approach to Learning. The tutors, when preparing their work, look at the many ways of teaching, respecting each person's preferred way of learning. They work on the theory that individual learning strategies, based on learners' individual strengths, will enhance learning opportunities for students whose early education has been inadequate.
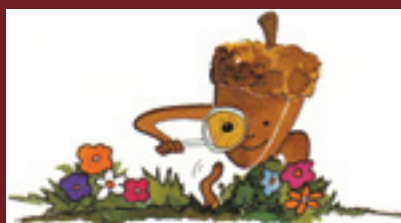
"It is not how intelligent you are, but how you are intelligent."

New Gardening Project:

The need to include "hands-on" modules became more and more imperative. Consequently, a plot of ground near the Nagle Hall was acquired in order to develop a gardening project.

A small Garden Shed, for the storage of gardening equipment was purchased and located on a site behind the Drop-in Room.

"Trust the process of the universe. The sun is there to nourish all Life. Water is there to quench the thirst. The soil is there to grow food. Trees are there to bear fruit. The moment a baby is born the mother's breast is filled with milk. The process of the universe is embedded in the life-support system of mutuality."

(Satish Kumar: Resurgence No.220)

The Gardening Project was a way of integrating the Schools, the Centre and the Community Employment Project. It was a way of 'modelling the concept of adults and children learning together. The link between the Centre and the Primary and Secondary Schools on the campus forms an important foundation for the work in the Centre. …Conversations with participants highlight not only the interest expressed by children in their parents' education but the cascade effect on family members.

(Shanks Report)

The role of educators … is in developing connected beings, individuals who are in touch with themselves, with the planet they live on and who respect all other human beings and creatures.

(Catherine Byrne: CEIFIN Conference 2004)

Addiitional Premises: Plot of ground for garden; Garden Shed.

Participants: 170 (including Men's Group of 9)

Programmes: Gardening Project; TEFL; Voter Education; Preparation for Work; Work Orientation; Career Information; Development of Multiple Intelligences Approach to learning.

Staff: Director; CE Project; Supervisor and Participants; Tutors; Community Development Officer.

Management: Board of Management; Advisory Committee.

Challenges: Target Group Penetration; Improving "goodness of fit" with the locality; Disabled access Information and publicity; Discernible community effects; Accommodation; Staff continuity; Stable funding profile

1999

Training for Transformation

Warrenmount Centre is committed to bringing about social change, influencing policies, structures and systems which affect the lives of people.

When the opportunity arose for the participants to train for transformation, it was eagerly taken on board.

Training for Transformation enables people to develop awareness and consciousness of their position in regards to social and economic change:

It helps them realise that they have a voice in the community. It awakens political consciousness. It supports and sustains the level of democratic participation in the Centre. It helps to increase the level of social justice in the locality through promotion of social activism.

Personal, social and political transformation go together because when we are free from fear and anxiety and at ease with ourselves, then we

are able to engage with the community around us and with society at large to bring about social and political changes to improve the lives of all.

(Satish Kumar: Resurgence No. 229)

Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL):

While the skyline of the Liberties is changing, so are the people. More and more immigrants are seeking a new life with us. People of different races, different languages, different beliefs, different cultures struggle to find identity in our midst. Language is one of the greatest blocks and everyday some new stranger makes her/his way through the Open Door, anxious to learn English. Once again the Centre approached the Sisters. "We need more room"! More space was made available on the 2nd Floor, and so the **TEFL Room** was born.

Computers:

Although computer technology requires considerable investment, it is a must, if we are to avoid further social exclusion of ordinary people in the catchment area. While Computers Studies have been on the agenda since the beginning, it was now time to introduce **Computers as a Tool for Learning.**

Are you computer literate? What do you know about **downloading, electronic banking, internet searches?**

Can you find rail timetables or even design your own **Web Site**? No one invention since the wheel has had the impact on our lives that the computer has had. In the past 20 years digital technology has changed our lives. In every job from farming to finance, knowing how to use the computer is essential. The computer classes in the Centre are some of the most popular:
- Computers for Beginners;
- FETAC foundation Level;
- FETAC Level 1

Are you exploring some social justice issue? Have you searched the WEB? Have you looked at the language learning options on the NET?

Can you help your children with their computer-based studies? Do you want to enhance your employment prospects?

Additional Premises: TEFL Room

Programmes: Computers as a Tool for (additional) Learning; Spirituality; Music Appreciation; Junior Certificate English; Art

Staff: Director; CE Project Supervisor and Participants; Tutors; Voluntary Literacy Tutors

Networks: HSCL (Primary and Secondary Schools); Mercy Family Centre; Francis Street Education Centre; SWICN; Connolly Centre for Unemployed

Management: Board of Management; Advisory Committee; Finance Sub-Committee

Challenges: Training for Transformation; Facilitation of social justice and social change; Labour Market; Computers; Social and economic issues; Outreach; Public relations

Outcomes: Individual participant outcomes; Family outcomes; Neighbourhood/locality outcomes

Adult Lifelong Learning