

2000

Millenium Madness

For about twelve months before January 1, 2000, the entire world's population was alerted to the fact that it could suffer from a major illness- The Black-out Syndrome. We were warned by those "in the know" that:

- The world would end by 2000. Even if we managed to overcome that Minor obstacle, we weren't home free.
 - PCs and computers would be defunct if we were not Y2K compliant.
 - Videos would only record - they would not play.
 - Microwaves would not function.
 - Automated Bank machines would not give out money.
 - Air travel was not recommended if you hoped to live into the next millennium.
- In fact, nothing computerised was guaranteed to work.

We were all on the verge of short-circuiting. Hysterics had taken over from calm. There was only one certainty ... everyone was planning a party. (Mary-Ann McGillicuddy)

But what were we planning in the Centre?

A Millenium Garden - for we believe "a garden is a place where you work on the soul as well as the soil. A garden is a cultivated patch of earth designed for many different needs of the body, the soul and the spirit."



The gardening course is a popular choice at Warrenmount Centre. Although the Centre is located in the heart of the city, there is a little haven of trees and

flowers that often surprises visitors, and here you will find the group planting, weeding or discussing how to get the best out of the small plot. Despite the fact that the participants have their eyes set on FETAC Certification, there is lots of fun and enjoyment. "This course is a must for any gardening enthusiast", says Noel Barrett, as he digs and plants.

The Centre offers courses for body and soul. And so we proceed from the Millenium Garden to the garage, where classes on Car



Maintenance, or **Automobile Mechanics** take place. Apart from the **skills** and **theory** modules, issues such as **pollution, reduction of public transport, exploitation of the oil producing countries, social exclusion** are raised around the open bonnet of the car. Indeed, what better place to discuss forthcoming elections and referenda, particularly when there is follow-up in the **Citizen Workshop**, when questions about the rights and responsibilities of citizens, the importance of casting one's vote, the role of Government are raised.

Participants: 180 (including 15 men)

Programmes: Millenium Garden; Creative Writing; Read to Succeed; Training for Transformation; Junior Certificate Maths; Car Maintenance; Literacy; Home Furnishing/Crafts; Yoga; Counselling/Therapy; Second-Chance Education; FETAC - Foundation Level Levels 1 and 2; Junior Certificate English and Maths

Networks: NALA DALC AONTAS FAS VISTA CDVEC SWICN Dept of Social, Community and Family Affairs Dublin Corporation Mercy Family Centre Francis Street Community Education Centre Liberties College

Staff: Director; Jobs Initiative Scheme; Secretary; Outreach Worker; TEFL Tutor; CE Project Supervisor and Participants

Management: Board of Management, Advisory Committee

2001

Living in a Diverse Society



The problems encountered by those who come to our country under difficult political and economic circumstances, are aggravated by the inability to communicate. But language is not the only barrier. Lack of understanding, tolerance and respect for difference are serious concerns.

Participants in the Centre now come from Pakistan, Russia, the Ukraine, Latvia, Algeria, Afghanistan, Bulgaria, Argentina, and Spain. How do you make them feel welcome? Through consultation and dialogue with participants at the Centre, the following needs emerged:

To understand how other cultures live their everyday lives; To improve my English and make friends from other countries; I can inform other people about traditions and folklore in my own country.

In response the **Living in a Diverse Society** Module was launched. This year Warrenmount Centre celebrated International Women's Day by highlighting the wide range of cultures and countries represented among participants. The occasion was marked with music and dance, followed by lunch with an international flavour.



Lilia Goleac, who came to Ireland from Moldova just over three years ago, is enthusiastic about the programme. She is very grateful to Ireland for giving her an

opportunity to make her dreams come true. She has attended classes in ESOL (English for speakers of other Languages), Living in a Diverse Society, Computers for Beginners, Introduction to Internet, Interior Design and Aromatherapy. Lilia says: When I first came to Warrenmount, I was amazed at such a pleasant service...Pauline helped me so much to engage in the Irish community.

Lilia's son Alan is looked after in the Child-Care facility here in Warrenmount every afternoon, while both Lilia and her husband, Alex, attend classes. Right from the early days of the Centre, the provision of child-care facilities was seen as essential to the overall mission of an integrated education centre. The Collier Report 2001 verbalised the dream thus:

Premises: Extension to Computer Room

Participants: 181 (160 received awards)

Programmes: ECDL; Tai Chi; General Studies; Literacy through Computers; Parenting Home Décor; Child-Care (in Liaison with 4 Centres); FETAC (replacing NCVA); Junior Certificate English and Maths; Counselling/Therapy

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

Networks: DALC; Fountain Resource Centre; Whitefriar Street Community Centre; Dublin City Council

Management: Board of Management Advisory Group

Funding: Congregation; Dept for Education & Science; Dept for Social, Community & Family Affairs; Dept for Justice & Law Reform; FAS; CDVEC; Rent (Nagle Hall)



The lack of adequate, accessible, affordable pre-school care creates a major barrier to participation in ongoing education and training. The existing crèche facilities in the locality were full and had long waiting lists. Lack of space was not the only concern. The provision of quality care, together with a secure and quality base for training in childminding became the goal.

In education there is no such thing as "one size fits all"

On-going review and evaluation have been life-giving features of the Warrenmount Centre since its inception. Asking the critical questions, listening, hearing, seeing, not just with eyes and ears, but with hearts and minds, meaningfully engaging with the learning processes as they unfold, engaging with the total community, students, tutors, management and other agencies, all of this has helped to put in place a system in which there is profound respect for the mystery and giftedness of the individual. Indeed, valuable lessons were learnt from the Gardening Project. Digging, fertilising, planting, pruning, are all tasks that defy immediate gratification. Growth and development occur in secret and mysterious ways. Nature takes her own time and it does not do to rush her. But it is important to know when to cut, when to water, when to support. The **Strategic Plan 2002 - 2005** was one such process.

The Warrenmount Centre became a **Company Limited by Guarantee**. The Board of Management was replaced by a **Board of Directors**.

The **Mission Statement** was revised in consultation with a wide cross-section of participants, staff, management and trustees.

In-service for all involved in the running of the Centre, Management, advisory Group, staff and tutors was planned. In order to ensure that the principles of liberation, empowerment, respectful person-centredness, and participation would continue to inform all activities, some of the in-service programmes would focus on **Training for Transformation**.

Mentoring structures and opportunities, enabling the development of a reflective, self-assessment approach to learning, were enhanced. When a person steps through the door of a community education centre, they have taken a big step forward, but it is also a step into the unknown. They are about to embark on a journey and they do not know where it will take them. In order to acknowledge the bravery of this act the staff of the centre, whether they be volunteers or employees, must be there to support them through encouragement, guidance and genuine solidarity. The availability of this support may be a key factor for the learner.

One of the specific and formal approaches to support and mentoring is a flexible one, to answer the needs of participants when and how they arise. (Hederman Report.) This means having someone available outside class time.

Participants: Irish; Pakistani; Russian Ukrainian; Latvian; Algerian; Afghanistan; Bulgarian; Argentinian; Spanish

Programmes: European Multiple Intelligences (Grundtvig) Project; Young Mothers Group (Link with DSCFA); Mentoring Link Pilot Project; After School Club (Chamber Street); Workshop - Steps on the Road to Learning; International Food Fair (linked with Secondary School; Cultural Awareness Week); Social Outings; Summer School - Pilot new activities and Attract new participants; CE Project Accredited Courses - Childcare; Floristry; ECDL; Computer Applications; Communications; Preparation for Work; Office Procedures; First Aid Non-Accredited - Home Décor; Personal Development; Gardening; Aromatherapy

Networks: Chamber/Weaver Court Youth Development Group; Foundations Project CDVEC; Donore Education Network; Donore Avenue Youth Service; SW Health Board

Management: Co. Ltd by Guarantee; Board of Management replaced by Board of Directors

Research: English as a Second Language

Funding: For ESOL Research (under the Back to Education Initiative)

Challenge: Under-representation of Marginalised Groups; Outreach Strategies

A **pilot project** has been embarked on to assess how a **learning plan** might be part of the process of working out with an individual where they are now in their lives and take into account the whole person, not just the courses they are attending.

2003

Who am I?

Personal Development and Spirituality

Have you ever noticed that when we are angry with someone or feeling aggressive, one of the first comments to burst from our lips is: "Who do you think you are?" Whether we throw this question at another in frustration, or whether we ask it of ourselves in moments of quiet, it reminds us that life is all about relationships.

When people come to second-chance education, they are usually coming to grips with such soul-searching questions: Who am I? How can I be happy? How can I improve? Does it have to be this way? Is there something I can do to make a difference? Helping participants to develop a sense of themselves, to take control of their lives, has always been a priority in the Centre in planning its approach to learning.

As early as December 1996 twenty-seven clients were availing of counselling services. Fifteen women were attending Personal Development Courses. Soon they moved on to acquiring listening skills and the basis of Group Facilitation skills. Graduates from the Personal Development Courses trained in Grief and Bereavement work, so that they could help bereaved children and children of separated parents. Supervision on a weekly basis was provided for these facilitators.

Learning "from the inside", listening to ourselves and others, listening to the silence, observing, communing, this is spirituality. As the participants in the Centre became more attuned to their inner selves, the need for quiet time became more urgent. **Time for Me** courses were organised together with Days of Retreat and programmes on spirituality.



The Irish Government White Paper on Adult Education, 2000, **Learning for Life**, stressed a key characteristic of community education as: providing the supports necessary for successful access and learning - particularly guidance, mentoring, continuous feedback and dialogue, childcare, etc. Here in the Warrenmount Centre concern would always have been to spend time talking with people who are new to adult learning, making them feel welcome and offsetting any worries they may have. Procedures have been developed and sensitivity to the learner is considered a priority. The increased number of foreign nationals presenting for classes has called for someone to deal specifically with their needs. These kinds of supports have tended to be informal, and while it is hoped to systematise the process of initial interview and admission to courses, it is hoped to do so without losing the informal welcome that is offered.

The Evolving Quality Framework for Adult Basic Education developed by NALA has been taken on by the Warrenmount Centre as one way in which to value the input of learners, tutors and staff and hear their concerns. A look at the guiding principles of this framework shows clearly its relevance to the Centre.

Irish ABE has a proud tradition of putting the learner at the centre of its work. This is why the NALA Evolving Quality Framework has the following values or guiding principles as its core:

- The learner's right to attend on a voluntary basis and to set his/her own goals will be supported by the organisation.
- An ethical code of confidentiality, respect and trust will inform all aspects of the organisation.
- Cultural differences will be respected at all levels of the organisation.
- Learners will be enabled to participate in all aspects of the organisation, including evaluation of the organisation.
- Particular attention will be paid to creating and maintaining an atmosphere of social interaction, informality, and enjoyment within the organisation.

Premises: Additional Office Space

Participants: 243 (224 women and 19 men). 150 participated on accredited courses and 93 on non-accredited. 128 received certificates.

Programmes: Creative Developmental; Second-chance Education; FETAC Foundation Level; Level 1 and Level 2

Networking: NALA, DALC, AONTAS, FAS, RAPID, CDVEC; Dept of Social Community & Family Affairs; Dept of Community Rural & the Gaeltacht; Mercy Family Centre, Francis Street Community Education Centre; Vista Community Development Project, Liberties College.

Events: Teddy Bears Picnic (linked with Early Start in the Primary School); Bring a Friend Week

Staff: Development Worker for Mentoring Project

Challenges: On-going funding; Training Room & Coffee Shop; English classes for foreign-nationals; Supporting the Work and Findings of the Evolving Quality Framework (NALA); Creche as a model of Good Practice; Outreach ; Health & Safety Issues (NALA); Relevant meaningful courses; In-service for tutors; Application for improved childcare facilities.

2004

Statements of Quality

Within each of the **5 Quality Areas** are a number of **Statements of Quality**. Statements of Quality are the standards a scheme/centre wants to achieve. Standards are very important. When you go to a restaurant you want and expect a high standard of service. Equally when someone comes to a scheme/centre they expect to receive a high standard of service.

There are eighteen standards or **Statements of Quality** in the **NALA Quality Framework**. For example, there is a **Statement of Quality** on **Premises**. It reads: A quality scheme will provide tuition in safe, comfortable, accessible premises, where there is adequate and appropriate space for a range of educational and social activities.

When all **Statements of Quality** (18) are taken together, this gives the overall picture of a high quality scheme/centre. The names of the **Statements of Quality** are written below under their **Quality Areas**.

1. Resources

- Additional Learner Support • Resources for teaching and learning • Premises • Tutor Support • Scheme Funding

2. Management

- Management and Planning • Welcome/Initial Contact • Internal Communication • Programme Evaluation • Staff Training and Development

3. Teaching & Learning

- Learner-Tutor Relationship • Learning and Development • Range of Tuition Options • Assessment

4. Progression

- Guidance and Progression • Learner Accreditation

5. Outreach & Promotion

- Links with other Groups • Sensitive and Creative Promotional Strategies

The 9-Step Evaluation Process

Before looking at the **9-Step Evaluation Process**, it is a very good idea for all team members to know some basic facts about their scheme/centre (e.g. number of tutors, learners, programmes, funding etc.). The team then picks one of the **Statements of Quality** to work on and then evaluates it using the 9 steps to quality.

Step 1: If 100% right

Step 2: Present Situation

Step 3: Choosing & writing your signs of a quality scheme

Step 4: Looking for proof

Step 5: Gathering proof

Step 6: Making sense of proof

Step 7: Action planning

Step 8: Communicating findings and plans

Step 9: On-going monitoring

Premises: Up-grading of Computer Room; 12 new computers linked to Broadband

Participants: 260

Programmes: Creative Developmental; Second-Chance Education: FETAC - Foundation Level Level 1 Level 2; Living in a Diverse Society; Junior Certificate; Computers; ECDL; Literacy/Mentoring; ESOL; Counselling/Therapy; Bring a Friend Week; The Evolving Quality Framework

Networks: NALA DALC AONTAS FAS CDVEC RAPID Dept of Social, Community & Family Affairs Dept of Community Rural & the Gaeltacht Mercy Family Centre Francis Street Community Education Centre Liberties College

Management: Board of Directors

Funding: CDVEC; Dept of Education & Science; Dept of Social, Community & Family Affairs; Dept of Community Rural & the Gaeltacht; Hall Rental



As a direct result of the work of the EQF Team a newsletter was developed and this has proved an invaluable promotion source for the Centre. A thousand copies of the Newsletter were delivered around the area through a leaflet-drop facilitated by the FAS Community Employment personnel.

