

# St. Joseph's Secondary School, Castlebar Summer Newsletter, 2023



## Leaving Cert. Graduation Mass

Congratulations to the class of 2023 who recently celebrated their graduation from St. Joseph's with a beautiful ceremony in the parish church. This was a very special occasion for our students and we, as a school community, were delighted to share it with our student's family and friends. We wish all our 6<sup>th</sup> years every happiness and success in the future. Thank you to everyone involved in organising such a memorable and special evening for the Class of 2023.



## Achievements Day

Achievement Day ceremonies took place for each year group during the month of May. The awards acknowledge student participation in a wide range of extra and cocurricular activities. Three special awards were presented in each year group for student attendance, Student of the Year and the Cara award.

The criterion for the *Student of the Year Award* was as follows: a student who has performed well academically throughout the year; a student who has had a good attendance record throughout the year and a student who has a good rapport with both students and teachers within the school.

As a school we are all too well aware that excellent attendance and punctuality has a positive impact on student's learning & progress and is key for student's success hence the *Attendance Award*. Finally the *Cara Award* was presented to one student from each class in all year groups. This is presented to a student who has a positive influence within the class, treats the school community with dignity and respect, encompasses the school ethos and spirit and always performs to the best of their ability. All students who received this award were nominated by their peers.

Two further awards were presented to this year at the 6<sup>th</sup> Year ceremony. The CEIST award is presented to a 6<sup>th</sup> year student(s) who reflects the spirit and core values of CEIST. The student(s) is good at creating community, shows respect for everyone, strives for justice and takes responsibility and seeks a meaning and purpose to life through developing their spirituality and human relationships. This year we were delighted to present the award to two 6<sup>th</sup> year students – Sarah Aitkin & Áine Fox



The second award is a new award presented by our new principal Mr. Ó Tuathail. This year the *Principal's Award* acknowledges a student who has had to deal with bigger challenges than most and who has fought hard to overcome those challenges time and time again. This student is hardworking, determined and resilient and even when the going got tough this student kept on going. We were delighted to present Katie Walsh, 6<sup>th</sup> year, with the first ever St. Joseph's Principal's Award.



Thank you to Ms. Maughan, Ms. Crean & Mr. Durcan for organising and hosting the awards ceremonies. And finally well done to all our students who received awards and certificates. A full list of the key award recipients has been published in our app and will be available shortly on the website.

### **Lourdes Pilgrimage**

Thank you to Fr. Mike Murphy and Trish Gallagher who visited our school recently to catch up with our Lourdes group 2023. The eight 5<sup>th</sup> year students had a fabulous experience over the Easter break as they travelled with the Irish Pilgrimage Trust to work with children and young adults with special and additional needs. It was wonderful to hear all the stories of the people they met and the impact the experience had on them personally and spiritually. Thank you to Fr. Mike and Trish for giving our students an opportunity to work with the Irish Pilgrimage Trust and for helping them throughout the year in preparation for the pilgrimage





### 3<sup>rd</sup> Year Prayer Service

Our Third year students had a beautiful prayer service to mark the end of their Junior Cycle years together and to pray for their upcoming exams. Thank you to the students for their prayerful participation and colourful artwork. Thank you to our musicians who enhanced the liturgy with beautiful music and song. Each student received a pocket size exam prayer card which they may like to use over the next few weeks. The morning finished with some sweet treats and goodies which were enjoyed by all. Best of luck to everyone in the exams.



### **National Youth Choir of the Year competition**

Congratulations to our Gospel Choir under the musical direction of Ms. Aoife Durcan on placing 2nd in the National Youth Choir of the Year Competition in May. The choir was one of 12 schools competing in the Navan Choral Festival. Well done to all involved!



### **A Celebration of Music & Song**

On May 16<sup>th</sup> our school was proud to showcase our rich tradition of music and song with a concert in the Linenhall Arts Centre. The concert featured our Gospel Choir, traditional groups, soloists, harp ensemble and special guests. The night was a great success. Well done to Ms. Durcan and all our students!



### **Gospel Choir Masterclass**

In March, the Gospel Choir enjoyed a trip to the Irish Institute of Music & Song in Balbriggan. The choir participated in a vocal masterclass under Dr. Michael



Dawson. Dr. Dawson is an award winning conductor, educator and he became the first Irish conductor to win the Pavarotti Trophy at the Choir of the Year International Competition. The choir gained so much from this workshop that they will bring to future performances.



### **Promoting the Arts during Seachtain na Gaeilge**

Our school community came together in March to celebrate our wonderful traditions of music, dance, song and poetry in advance of St. Patrick's Day. Many thanks to our very talented participants and to Mrs. Berkeley for organising the event



### **Traditional Workshop**

We had the pleasure of welcoming top musician Stephen Donnelly over a four week period to our school. Stephen carried out several workshops with our traditional musicians, sharing his expert knowledge on traditional tunes, variations and styles. Our students really enjoyed working with Stephen and we look forward to working with him again in the future.



### **ATHLETICS Cross Country**

We had some fantastic achievements with our athletes this year participating in Cross Country, Track and Field and the Indoor Connacht Games.

In January, we headed to Ballymote in Co. Sligo for the North Connacht Cross Country. Eimear Hughes and Gracie O'Brien placed 1st and 2nd respectively in the Senior Girls. Our Minor girls team which consisted of Reina Heaney, Lillian O'Brien, Éadaoin Egan, Beth Scully and Pearl Sands came second in their race along with Katie Moran placing top 30 in the intermediate girls category and going ahead to the Connacht finals.

At the Connacht Finals, Gracie O'Brien came 1st in the Senior Girls event while our Minor team placed 3rd overall.

Pictured below are: Gracie O'Brien, Reina Heaney, Eimear Hughes, Pearl Sands, Beth Scully, Lillian O'Brien, Iqra Munir, Petra Popovic and Hollyanne Cameron.

Missing from photo are Éadaoin Egan, Katie Moran and Aoife Canny.





### **Connacht Indoor Games**

This year we were fortunate enough to bring 1st and 2nd year students to the Connacht Indoor games in Athlone which gave our girls an opportunity to participate in an event they may not have had the chance to participate in before. While we may not have had huge success, we had a great day out! The students involved were Leeza Sweeney, Hollyanne Cameron, Abbie Hurst, Rubyanna Barrett, Petra Popovic, Kate McHale, Lorraine O’Gara, Máiread O’Malley, Elly Bourke, Peterina Grealis, Anees Salim, Regan Foley, Ciara Barry, Sarah Neary, Grace Bailey, Kayla Fadden, Aisling O’Suillivan and Pearl Sands.



### **Track and Field**

Just a few weeks ago, our athletes headed to ATU Sligo to compete in the North Connacht Track and Field. We also had some great success at these events with Reina Heaney coming first in the 200m minor girls event, Lillian O’Brien and Reina Heaney placing 3rd and 4th respectively in the 800m minor girls event. Éadaoin Egan placed 5th in the Minor girls Long Jump. Some of the events were not run during the Connachts and our students moved straight on to the Connacht Finals where our athletes again performed very well. Casie Corrigan placed 1st in the Hammer and 2nd in the Discus, both at intermediate level and Reina Heaney placed 3rd in the 200m Minor girls race. Well done to all our students who got involved in Athletics this year, we cannot wait to see what you can achieve next year. Pictured below are: Casie Corrigan, Pearl Sands, Saoirse Donohue, Alexi McDonnell, Lillian O’Brien and Éadaoin Egan.





### **Connacht Senior Schools Swimming Competition**

Four of our students entered the Connacht Senior Schools Swimming Competition on Sunday the 5<sup>th</sup> of February. Lucia Cloherty (3<sup>rd</sup> Year), Abbie Hurst, Anna Deely and Emily Carney Major (all 1<sup>st</sup> year students) travelled to Longford to participate in various events. Each student recorded a personal best in their chosen event which was fantastic! Well done girls.



### **1<sup>st</sup> Year Tag Rugby Blitz**

1<sup>st</sup> Year students had a great day out at the Connacht Tag Rugby Blitz in Westport Rugby Club on the 1<sup>st</sup> of March. We entered two teams and both teams got the chance to play against other competing schools. Students were coached through the rules by experienced Connacht Rugby coaches. The girls had a brilliant day out and developed a new love for tag rugby. Thanks to their TY coaches Jane McHale, Aimee Dillon and Leah Rochford and to Ms. McHale and Eileen Dillon for accompanying them on the day.





## TY PE Activities

Transition Year students had the opportunity to participate in various activities outside the PE hall this term. In January, all students engaged in a four week block of tennis. Local coaches visited the school and coached the girls on how to improve their skills in tennis. The girls really enjoyed it and got very competitive in the game setting!

Students also got the opportunity to visit Inside, the local escape rooms where they learned how to work cooperatively in a team as well as using problem solving skills. Pascale came in to do Zumba which brought great energy to the class. They visited the bowling alley for a game of laser tag and bowling. Some students got to experience golf for the first time when we visited Aidan Moran's Driving Range. Lastly, students got some downtime when we visited Lough Lannagh Leisure Centre for a yoga session with Colm Hynes. Students enjoyed working on their flexibility and breathing. We are so lucky to have wonderful facilities to avail of here in Castlebar. Thanks to their PE teachers, Ms. Gibbons and Ms. McHale for organising the activities.



## Badminton

On the 19<sup>th</sup> of April some students travelled to Ballina to compete against various schools in the Mayo Secondary Schools Division 3 Badminton tournament. Our girls put in a lot of work training this year and it all paid off when they came away as Mayo Champions and Runners Up. This was a great achievement for all involved, especially for those who were new to the sport. Well done to all who trained this year. We look forward to competing in Division 2 next year. Thank you to Ms. O'Donohue and Ms. McHale for all their guidance and coaching.



### **1<sup>st</sup> Year Aquatics**

After the Christmas break, 1st Year students participated in a five week aquatics module as part of their PE module. Students learned the basic strokes and their abilities and confidence improved as the weeks progressed. Thank you to their wonderful swim coaches.



### **Basketball**

Pictured below are both the 1st and 2nd year basketball teams enjoying a bowling outing to celebrate their great achievements this year in the Basketball Ireland Schools 'B' league. Both teams progressed to the All-Ireland quarter final stage. We are hoping to go one or two steps further next year! Well done girls and thanks to their coach Ms. Kilkenny.





### **U-14 Gaelic Football**

The new year brought about the start of the U-14 Gaelic School's competition and this year we had a very large turnout for training with over sixty students across First and Second Year. We entered two teams into the competition: Team Navy and Team Blue. Team Navy had a very successful campaign beating Ballina, Headford and Kiltimagh whilst a cracking game against Claremorris ended up in a draw. The girls placed in the top two of their group and progressed to semi-final stages. We were all very excited to play in the University of Galway Connacht Air Dome on a very wet and windy March day for the semi-final. The girls played a very fast paced game of football against a strong side Ballyhaunis, which became a point for point game in the second half. After a great display of football from our girls we lost out on a place in the final by a point. Team Blue played four hard fought games against St. Joseph's Charlestown, St. Joseph's Foxford, Davitt College and Scoil Muire agus Pádraig Swinford. Unfortunately, we didn't progress into the semi-final stages but excellent football was played throughout the campaign. With a panel of 39 players on the blue team, each player got plenty of game time.

All involved with the team and indeed the staff and parents of the girls are very proud of the fantastic season of football played and we are looking forward to a bright future with the upcoming teams.





### **Soccer at St. Joseph's**

Soccer progressed really well in St Joseph's this year. Our U-15 team made it to the quarter final of the Connaught School Girls Plate and were narrowly defeated by Oranmore away. Our First Years progressed to the semi-final of the above competition losing 2-1 to Headford. We are very proud of both our teams. The girls have shown to be dedicated team players at training and throughout the competition. Well done girls on all your great efforts and thanks must be extended to our wonderful coaches Mr Durkan, Lauren and Sarah Courell, Kate Healy and Molly Fox. Wishing everyone a lovely summer break and looking forward to seeing you all back in September.

### **Transition Year First Aid**

On the 20th and 21st of March, we welcomed Pulse 8 Cardiac Responders Tom and Gary to our school to carry out First Aid training with our TY students. Students got a full day experience of how to respond to different life saving scenarios and learned basic lifesaving skills. Our students really enjoyed the workshop and will now know how to react in certain situations should first aid be required. Thanks to Ms. McHale and Ms. Lally for organising the training.





## **JP11 Awards**

Congratulations to our 5<sup>th</sup> year students who received their JP11 awards at a presentation evening in Breaffy Church, organised by Castlebar parish. The awards were presented by Archbishop Francis Duffy. The Pope John Paul II Award is a faith achievement award for young people. The award is committed to helping young people enhance their spiritual, physical, emotional and social development through participation in school, parish and community activities. Well done to all involved and we thank you for the time you give to school and parish on a voluntary basis. It is very much appreciated. Thank you to Ms. McHugh (Award Leader) and Ms. Mc Alpine (Deputy Principal) who attended with our students.



## **TY Foroige Leadership for Life**

The TY Foroige Leadership for Life group were busy this term organising a bake sale and raffle in aid of Daisy Lodge. Daisy Lodge is a therapeutic short break centre for children with cancer and their families that is going to be built in Cong, Co. Mayo. Thank you to our sponsors Supervalu & EBS Castlebar, Swirl@Gavins, BSZ Limited, Mulroy's Beauty Salon & Caoimhe's Beauty Room. A total of €652 was raised. Thanks to everyone who supported this fundraiser and well done to all the students who organised this event.



### Peer4Peer

Congratulations to our Transition Year students who received their Peer 4 Peer awards at a presentation evening in Breaffy Church, organised by Castlebar parish. The awards were presented by Archbishop Francis Duffy. Peer4Peer is a mentoring programme that involves Transition Year students from our school and the confirmation class from local primary schools. After two full days of training the TY students delivered the programme over four sessions. Topics covered include assertive communication, being able to say no to peer pressure and making good decisions as a teenager. Thank you to Mary Connell (Parish Pastoral Coordinator) and Yvonne Horkan for facilitating the training and to the local primary schools for their help in the delivery of the programme. Thank you to Ms. McHugh and Ms. Mc Alpine who attended with the students.





### **First Year History/Geography Trip**

Our first year students enjoyed a wonderful day out on Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> May on a combined History & Geography trip to King's House in Boyle and the Arigna Mines in Co. Roscommon. The trip to the mine was made all the more meaningful as our guides were ex-miners who gave our students first-hand accounts of the experience of working in the mine. In King's House, a number of our students enjoyed the experience of playing on a Steinway piano in the upstairs drawing room. A great day was had by all! Thanks to Mrs. Berkeley, Ms. Harrington, Ms. Crean & Mrs. McGrath who accompanied the students.



### **5<sup>th</sup> Year Geography Trip**

It's one thing to study Physical Geography features from a text book but quite another when you get to see the actual formations on the landscape! And so it was for our 5th year Geography students who travelled to counties Fermanagh & Leitrim in early May to visit the Marble Arch Caves, do a walking tour of the limestone pavement and view the beautiful Glencar Waterfall and Glencar glaciated valley. We had a great day!



### **TY German Film Award**

Huge congratulations to the TY German Class who won 1st place in the ATU Languages Competition with their film about 'German and Sport'. Many thanks to their teacher Ms. Loftus, the first year soccer team and Celtic Park for their facilities. Following a successful win in the competition our TY German group was invited back to the ATU Galway kitchens for a German culinary workshop. Over the course of the morning we learned to cook and bake traditional German and Austrian specialities in the expert company of German speaking chefs and lecturers. It was like a Masterchef experience when we dressed up in full whites. A thoroughly enjoyable day was had by all and we got to enjoy the fruits of our labour with a delicious three course meal before our journey back to Mayo. Many thanks to Diarmuid, Natalie, Ulrich and all the staff at ATU Galway for two wonderful days out.





### **Drumming Workshop**

Our 1st, 2nd and 3rd year Music students enjoyed a brilliant and fun filled workshop with Terry Cooke from Drumadore. All students really got involved in the drumming, body percussion and singing aspects of the workshop. We look forward to more fun with Drumadore next year!



### **Mayo Fire Safety Talk & Demonstration for TYs**

Transition Year students were delighted to welcome Martin, Aileen, Dermot, Sean & Declan from Mayo Fire Service to the school to give a talk and demonstration on fire safety. The talks provided valuable learning and the impressive demonstrations reinforced the risks and dangers associated with fires.



### **TY Emerald Park Trip**

TYS visited Emerald Park (formerly Tayto Park) & even had time for a stop at The Liffey Valley Shopping Centre on May 10<sup>th</sup>. It was a fantastic day out!



### **TY Barcelona Tour**

What a way to wrap up Transition Year! Students and teachers had a wonderful time visiting attractions in Barcelona at the end of May. Activities included a visit to Montserrat, Ancient City of Tarragona, Nou Camp football stadium, Las Ramblas, PortAventura theme park and Park Guell. A great bunch of students and lots of special memories!





### **Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement Certs.**

In May, our Transition Year students and some 5<sup>th</sup> years were presented with their Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement. The certs. were presented by Mr. Alan Dillon TD. Congrats to all our students on their achievements and to our teachers who supported our students on their learning journey.



### **STEAM PROJECT**

Under the guidance of Ms. Tierney, 1A took part in a STEAM In Action project in Tullamore on April 20th. Students had a great day out and really enjoyed seeing

all the projects from other schools. Our project was based on fast fashion and sustainability. Students ran a second hand clothes sale in school and made €211 which was donated to St. Vincent de Paul Castlebar. In the project students looked at the impact that fast fashion has on the environment and learned which brands are the least and which are the most sustainable.



### **5<sup>th</sup> Year Guidance – Campus visits**

Our 5th year students enjoyed a visit to the University of Galway and the Atlantic Technological University, Galway in April. They received a private tour of both campuses, getting to see lecture halls, labs etc and got to speak with representatives of specific departments. Thanks to Ms. Kilkenny for organising this opportunity for our students.





### **Annual Pi Maths Quiz**

On 14<sup>th</sup> March, (3.14), our school hosted the regional annual Pi Quiz. The Pi Quiz is a national quiz run by the Irish Maths Teachers Association for Junior Cycle students. Rice College emerged victorious. Well done to all our students who took part.



### **French Exchange Students**

In March, a group of 12 French exchange students visited our school. They engaged in various cultural and educational activities. Many thanks to the local families who hosted the students.





### **Italian Students**

In February, we had the pleasure of welcoming 15 students from Italy to our school. The students attended class for a number of days. Thanks to our TY students who guided the students while here in St. Joes!



### **Junior Cycle Gaelge Awards**

Congrats to the following Junior Cycle students who were among 3.6% of students in Ireland who achieved a Distinction in higher level Irish in the Junior Cycle 2022 examination. The students were presented with their award at the University of Galway. They are Lauren Moran, Kayla Redmond, Emily Walsh, Ishran Manan. Absent from the photo is Gráinne Cogan who is studying in Inis Oirr for the year. We are very proud of our students' achievements and well done also to their teachers.





### **Visit to the Central Bank**

On February 2<sup>nd</sup>, all 5<sup>th</sup> year Business Studies students paid a visit to the Central Bank in Dublin. Students were given a guided tour of the facility by John McGrath and a talk on the internal workings of the bank and how to pursue a career in finance. Our students had a beneficial day out!



### **Leaving Cert. Study Skills Seminar**

In March our 6<sup>th</sup> year students took part in a study skills seminar presented by Inspire Education. Many topics such as exam techniques, planning & time management, the impact of social media and technology on revision and much more was covered. Our students found the seminar very informative.



### **Soroptimist Conference**

Our soroptimist committee organised a very successful conference in March in Atlantic Technological University called 'A Million Dreams – Girls Conference 2023'. The day was made very special with a variety of speakers, musicians and activities. Thanks to all the participants who kindly gave of their time on the day and well done to the committee on such a successful day.



### **Debate Club**

St. Joseph's has an active debating club which is hosted weekly by Ms. Crean. In



April, our students competed in a debating competition against St. Gerald's. Well done to Zoe Flannery & Hazel Harcourt who won junior and senior prizes along with their partners from St. Gerald's.



### **CEIST Leadership Day**

Six of our Transition Year students attended a CEIST Leadership day in DCU, Dublin this year. It was an opportunity to meet with students from CEIST schools around the country and to explore many different initiatives encouraging student leadership in our schools. Thank you to the following students for attending: Hannah Maloney, Lila Grace Roache, Lauren Moran, Ciara Moran, Grace Beirne and Anna Kate Cunniffe. Thanks to Ms. Crean & Ms. Basquelle who accompanied the students on the day.



## Green Schools

This year, we had ten Transition Year students on our Green Schools committee. We are currently working on the first year of a two year programme on Food and Biodiversity in our school. The girls worked hard throughout the year and attended a full week's workshop with other schools in countries across the world such as Kenya, Africa and Dubai. They worked on the importance of biodiversity in the world today. The girls also entered a battery competition to collect the most batteries in the country. This result will be given to our school in September 2023.

Green Schools committee members for this year were: Hannah Maloney, Lila Grace Roache, Lauren Moran, Ciara Moran, Grace Beirne and Anna Kate Cunniffe, Suzanne Touhy, Keeva O'Donoghue, Hannah Coffey and Ciara Kennedy. Thanks to Ms. Crean for all her work with the committee.



## Grow It Yourself Module

Thank you to all our GIY students for their input in the development of our GIY module. Your completed surveys and evaluations will mean that your voice has been heard and this in turn will help to progress the module for your peers next year.

This fledgling module started September 2022 with Ms Allen - the early classes saw students harvesting our apples and blackberries for homemade jam. Students also enjoyed a trip to The Ploughing Championships in Co. Laois.

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals together with Catherine McAuley's vision of an alternative society provided the framework for this GIY module. In this regard promoting biodiversity by providing pollinators with food, shelter and safety along with sowing, growing and harvesting our own food were the focus of this year's class. A thank you to Ms McDonnell who took the class foraging and made wild garlic pesto and hawthorn tincture with students.

A big thank you to all staff who fundraised and donated plants from their own gardens, allowed students to give a hand/work in the garden or even just the kind word of encouragement - it means a lot.



Thank you to our community groups and parents who built bee hotels, who gave of their time and advice enabling us to make new connections in our community. GIY presented students with cross curricular opportunities in terms of Graphics, Art, Business, Home-Economics - and we are only starting out! Finally, thank you to Emily for her boundless energy on this project!



### **School Fleece**

A school fleece was introduced in January. This was an initiative suggested by our own 2D CSPE class. The girls felt that a fleece would be a welcome addition to our current school uniform. The fleece is an optional extra and can be purchased from our local uniform suppliers. Our thanks to the girls from 2D and their teacher Mrs. Berkeley for their hard work and enthusiastic support of this project.

### **Science labs refurbishment**

Over the summer holidays our three Science labs will be completely refurbished. The refurbishment of the labs should be completed by early September.

### **Book lists 2023/24**

Book lists for the new academic year are available to view on our website: <https://www.stjosephscbar.ie>

### **Return to school dates**

Return to school dates will be published shortly on the app and on our website.