

WWETB COMMUNITY EDUCATION NEWSLETTER

Winter 2024-2025 Learner Voice Edition

WWETB Community Education supports Waterford and Wexford community-based groups through grant funding and tutor hours. Community Education aims to promote and support community work as a means of addressing poverty, social exclusion and inequality and ultimately as a means of achieving social change that will contribute to the creation of a more just, sustainable and equal society.

Rita's Story- Sacred Heart Family Resource Centre

My name is Rita and I have lived in Waterford since 1972. I will be 70 years old on my next birthday. I worked in Waterford Regional Hospital, as it was known at the time, for 14 years, but due to ill health I had to leave. As time went by, I wanted to do something for myself, so I contacted the WWETB in Railway Square, Waterford and I started a computer course. Here I learned how to use Microsoft Office. This gave me the confidence to join the Literacy through Drama course where I took part in the plays they put on. I excelled in both these courses as I was able to take it at my own pace and was never frightened to ask questions.



Rita's Story- Sacred Heart Family Resource Centre Continued

Everything was going well for me but last year I had to stop all this and take a year out as I wasn't feeling right. Last October I had a fall at home and was very unstable on my feet, so I stayed indoors. I also suffered a mini stroke and was in and out of hospital and doctors constantly with pain. On one visit to A&E a doctor asked me if I would like to see someone to help with my mental health. This was the first time anyone had realised I wasn't okay. I have lost my get up and go and really missed the interaction I used to have with my grandkids. I agreed and it was the best thing I have ever done. Through this process I heard about Social Prescribing in the Sacred Heart Family Resource Centre in Waterford and during one of my visits there I heard about a baking course that was starting there and was funded by the WWETB Reach Programme so there were no fees. This sparked my interest, and I signed up for it and started it on the 10th of September. My first week there I realised that my love for learning was still there.



Rita's Story- Sacred Heart Family Resource Centre Continued

I am enjoying this baking course so much. The other people on it are so nice and so much fun. The tutor makes everything so enjoyable and easy to follow. The first week we made apple pies and crumble. I couldn't wait to get home and bake it again in my own kitchen. I had not baked in years. I believe that when something has been given to me, I like to give back so with this in mind the very next Friday I made an apple pie for a walking group that I joined and brought it along. Everyone loved it. I could feel my confidence coming back.

A few weeks ago, I joined a Women's Group in Waterford as I enjoyed the company so much on this baking course. I was telling the facilitator about this course and my renewed love of baking so she asked me would I like to do a demonstration for the group, and I am proud to say last Monday night I did just that. I made my now famous apple pie. I would not have done this before, but I have a new lease of life now.

My main worry is if everything went back to online learning like it did during covid. I would miss the face-to-face interaction so much and I would feel isolated as I intend to continue on with my learning journey. But I would 100% shout this from the rooftops, if anyone is thinking of joining a course just go and find yourself the nearest adult education centre, community hall, FRC, or wherever and put your name down. Because if I can do it, so can you.



Southend FRC Yarnbombing Project

I really enjoyed my time at Southend Family Resource Centre, the learners in my group, the skills I acquired, the chats the fun, the tea and cake. Also, the beautiful knitting and crochet that everyone made which we displayed in our community. What I got from the group was a home from home, a family warm welcome. The kettle was always on, we learned to knit whilst chatting away.

What I love about the group is 'it's my safe place' with a wonderful bunch of women. I feel a total sense of belonging. Yarn bomb was a fantastic project to be involved in. This project has taught me a whole new set of skills and created lifelong friendships.

Helen



Southend FRC Yarnbombing Project continued

I had missed coming to the group for a couple of months due to personal circumstances, but the coordinator kept in touch with me and said the door is always open. I finally got back to group for the last month. I never realised how much I had missed it until I went back. I was made to feel so welcome and straight away I felt everyone really cared. The whole group were so supportive towards me. I wasn't great on the knitting or crochet, but that didn't matter, and I was able to contribute when we were displaying all the pieces for show in our community.

The teamwork between both the Tuesday and Wednesday groups was great. When Tuesday's group were finished putting pieces on the wire, the Wednesday group would finish what we had started. It was such a team effort and am so proud to be part of it and seeing all the work on display in our community. To be part of this project was eye opening. It started off small and look where it finished.

Nicola



Enniscorthy Community Allotments

Learner Jean's experience of taking part in Community Education.

“Isolation, Isolation was the reason I wanted to join the Community allotment. After I retired, I began to realise I was socially very isolated. This was starting to affect me emotionally. Isolation can make you feel very vulnerable emotionally. It can have a big impact on your mental health.

During my first contact with the Allotment I was asked why I wanted to join. I replied that I could grow cabbages and potatoes in my back garden but I could not grow a community out there.

Digging my plot is keeping me physically fit, eating my organic vegetables in keeping me healthy but the biggest benefits have been emotionally. I did an introduction to horticulture ,it ran over a number of weeks. I was made to feel welcome and I met a lot of nice people. I learned a lot and was able to implement my new knowledge immediately. I did an introduction to Herbalism, it was an amazing course.

I now make my own apple cider vinegar, lots of lotions and potions, I am making things now to use as Christmas gifts. The classes were great. During the classes we had a lot of banter, and a lot of laughs, we had tea and chats and sharing of knowledge I met new people from the community and people from the wider community.



Enniscorthy Community Allotments continued

I spent a long time in the town without knowing a lot of people but now people wave to me in the street and say hello. I feel a sense of connection. The fact that the courses are free is a great benefit. I am living on a pension. If I had to pay for these courses that money would have to come from a limited budget. I am so happy that I can do these courses and not be stigmatised by my lack of funds.

I don't know who pays for these courses but I want to say a big thank you. The use of the word Life changing is bandied about a lot but for me this has been life charging. I also want to say a big thank you from the people I have met and spoke to on the allotment , non national, unemployed and pensioners who say they appreciate the opportunity to be involved in the community.

I can now say that the real benefit to me is that I now feel emotionally stronger.”



Passage East Arts & Crafts Group Tell Their Story

The Passage East Arts & Crafts group started with a few women in Passage-East, a small fishing village in Co Waterford. They first met in 2014 and officially formed a committee in December 2015. At first, they funded everything themselves before looking for other funding. Over the years they have become a key part of the community, supporting 18 women in the area.

One group member stated that joining Passage East Arts and Crafts group was the best decision she ever made. She lived with her mother and felt a sense of loneliness when she passed away. She heard about the group and started attending the Wednesday meetings. Meeting with the group every week helped her feel less lonely and gave her a sense of purpose. She enjoys the activities, the company and she feels good!

The group is a fantastic support system. Another group member said that even when she feels down, the group lifts her spirits. She enjoys the tea and company, and without the group she would not have made any friends or learned new skills. It is not just about the arts and crafts; it is about supporting each other in a rural community.



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