



ST COLMCILLE'S COMMUNITY SCHOOL PARENTS' ASSOCIATION

News Update
June
2015

AGM is on Tuesday 6th October 2015

Sports Kits

In late 2013 representations were made to the Parents' Association (PA) by a number of girls in Transition Year on replacing some of the sports kits for the students in St. Colmcille's.

A full review was undertaken by Ms. Ni Mhuirí in 2014 and again by Ms. Daly in 2015, and based on need it was agreed that the PA would sponsor a full set of Jerseys for the Boys Soccer team and a set for the Athletics team in 2015, as these were considered priority items for replacing.

It is hoped that the PA will be in a position to sponsor a set of gear for one of the girls teams in 2016 with the intention to replace all team kits over the next few years on a rolling needs basis. Should any parent or company be in a position to help in sponsoring a team kit they can contact the PA, who would be delighted to assist.

**2nd Year
Soccer Squad**



**Athletics
Team
Members**



Class Stools

Last Summer before the start of the school year, the Parents Association funded the replacement of 232 stools in the school with an improved model. The previous stools had no back support.

Some student's timetables required them to sit on these stools for multiple consecutive classes. The new model has been engineered to provide back support for the occupant. The new stools with back support have been much appreciated by the students and staff alike and the feedback received has been very positive.

There was significant cost incurred by the Parents Association but we feel it has been money very well spent.

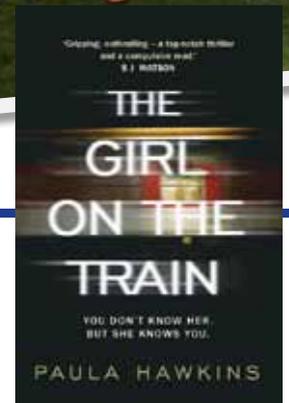


Library

Once again it has been a busy, productive year in the inner sanctum of the school library. Thanks to the ongoing and unwavering support of the Parents' Association budding new authors such as Shane Hegarty (Darkmouth) and Paula Hawkins (The Girl on the Train) now grace our shelves, while our new range of graphic novels has proven to have considerable appeal among the student body.

In consultation with the students an expansive selection of popular contemporary titles has been purchased and our First Years are only too eager to beaver their way through them! World Book Day was embraced with fervour on March 7th and it was inspiring to see so many of our students eager to immerse themselves in the wonder of the written word. In the midst of our often hectic lives books are a haven that can comfort and console us. Books ignite our imaginations and open up our minds to the realms of so many possibilities.

"Books are uniquely portable magic", Stephen King.



Lab Aid and IT Support

In recognition that Science and Technology will offer major employment opportunities in the future the Parent's Association has supported the school's students by funding a Science and ICT position. This support position has been invaluable in the continuous development of the science department and school's ICT capacities. To this end the school employs Dr. Thomas Foyle a NUI Galway graduate who has extensive experience having lectured at University level in both science and computers. Thomas is also a fully qualified Secondary School Mathematics and Biology teacher.

On a day to day level Thomas provides assistance by preparing laboratory experiments and chemicals and setting up the labs. All students in the school have benefited from this support as all students study science during the junior cycle and most study at least one Science subject for the leaving certificate. This is of particular value to the junior certificate students who as part of their third year State exam are required to design and carry out their own experiments. These experiments are worth 25% of their Science exam. Additionally with the introduction of the new junior certificate reform and the emphasis on projects and experimental work the need for Thomas's support of both students and teachers will further increase in value.

The role also includes the management of science resources including stock control, new resource acquisition and equipment maintenance and repair. This centralised management helps streamline the day to day activities of the science department by freeing up the teachers time to focus on continuous improvement in curricular delivery and innovation. Since the inception of this role there has been an associated improvement in exam results achieved by students in both junior and leaving certificate levels. This role has expanded to offer assistance and mentoring of students involved in extracurricular science activities such as the BT Young Scientist Exhibition.

This in-house ICT support has been essential in helping to keep the complex computer systems for the 700+ student and staff running optimally. Repairs and maintenance can be carried out promptly to minimise disruption to staff and students. As the need to embrace technology throughout the school has developed the school has invested in 100 Mb wireless technologies.

2014 saw the introduction of the iPad as a teaching and learning tool with all 120 1st year students arriving to school on their first day with one. Thomas gave classes in the educational use of the iPad to both teachers and students. This in-house ICT expertise has been invaluable in the successful implementation of this valuable new educational tool.

In addition the parents association have funded the purchase of four iMacs and multimedia equipment which is extensively used throughout the year by the transition year students as a valuable learning tool for the production of both video and image materials. These materials are used to enhance the school website, school assemblies and the school yearbook.

The parents association have committed to support the next phase of iPad integration in the classroom. The intention is to integrate the iPad with the current classroom ICT so that the contents of the iPad can be projected wirelessly on the board. This is currently at the testing phase, with three options under investigation to find the optimal model.

Feedback from pilot classrooms has been exceptionally positive, with reports of dramatic enhancement in teaching and learning. It is hoped that after this testing phase to install the optimised solution in all classrooms over the summer months.

The Parents Association hope to continue to support this important role into the future.

Defibrillator

During the year, the Parents Association in conjunction with the school, purchased two defibrillators for use by the school. A defibrillator is a device used to restore a normal heart rhythm if a person's heart stops beating. The defibrillators have been installed in appropriate locations on the school premises for emergency use if required. In addition, a number of staff have been trained in the use of the devices.



National Parents' Council Post Primary

The council represents the views of parents nationwide through the five Constituent Bodies at National level, PACCS is one of these constituent bodies. NPCpp supports Parents/Guardians in their role through the following:

- Ongoing Helpline throughout the year.
- Leaving Cert Helpline in August of each year.
- Annual Spring Seminar for parents/guardians.
- Annual Educational Conference in November
- Providing Training for Parents Associations nationwide
- Providing Anti bullying Training for Parents nationwide
- Promote parents as being Equal Partners in Education
- Promote the views of parents at National Level

NPCpp has been working for the involvement of parents in the education of their children and to give parents a partnership in the broader education system. There were many years of struggling before the implementation of the Education Act 1998 which has given parents the statutory right to participation in the Education System. Parents are the primary educators of their children as outlined by our Constitution. They are now united in NPCpp and seek to move forward and participate in all levels of the education system. They require active participation and are ready to accept their responsibility in an enlightened and meaningful way.

For further information please visit www.npcpp.ie



Lab Technician: Thomas Foyle.



Dr. Des Murphy, Food Project Group students and Dr. Thomas Foyle at BT Young Scientists Exhibition

Speaker Programme



While school is a place where students study and prepare for exams, we recognise that our students are not just intellectual beings to whom we impart knowledge. They are physical, emotional and spiritual beings as well. It is important that as a school community we develop all aspects of each person's life.

If our young people are affected by bereavement, separation, anxiety, stress or depression, this impacts on their ability to learn and to fully become the person they are meant to be. We are so fortunate in St Colmcille's Community School to have a Parents' Association committed to the development of the whole child.

This year, through the generosity of the Parents Association, we had Internet safety workshops for our 1st years. Our 2nd years through to 6th years had a mental health presentation from Jigsaw Tallaght, an outreach of Headstrong.

We've had speakers talk about drug and alcohol addiction. Our students have heard personal stories from people involved in AA and Al Anon.

Some speakers have shared their personal stories of their struggles with self-esteem and bullying issues and how they coped. We had Breda Phelan, a consultant with Headstrong, address our 4th Year parents last year and this year she addressed our 2nd year parents. The Parents Association gave their full support to our series of parent evenings which took place in the 1st term. Our third years, 5th and 6th years had some speakers deliver a workshop on Relationships and Sexuality.

Adi Roche spoke at our Christmas Carol Service and this contact was made through the Parents Association. This gives you a taste of the very worthwhile series of speakers we've have had come to the school and all made possible by the vision and support of the association who work so diligently on behalf of the whole school community.

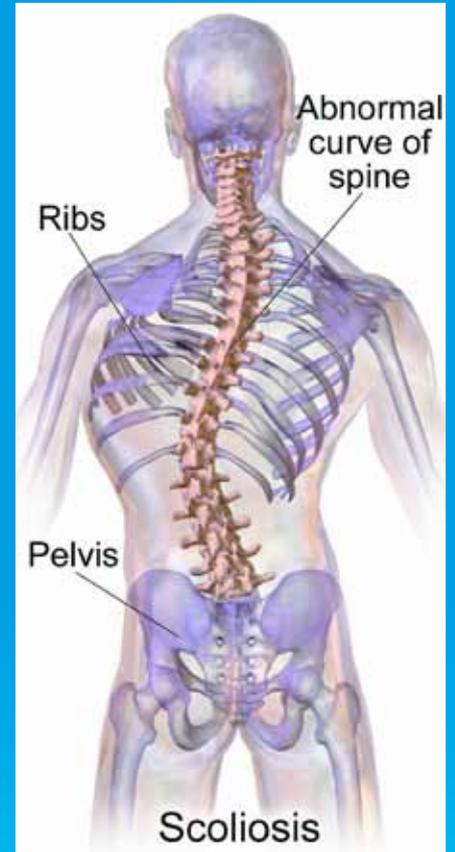
Head Girl Danielle White and Head Boy Ciarán O'Sullivan presenting Adi Roche with a cheque for €2,100.



Keeping up to date

The Parents' Association notice board is located in the General Purpose Hall. On it you will find details and photos of some of the activities the Parents' Association has been involved in, alongside details of upcoming events.

You can also find out more on the Parents' Association part of the website. Please check these out and feel free to contact us with any comments, suggestions or queries via email or our post box in the school office. Email: parents@stcolmcilles.ie



Scoliosis

Scoliosis, also known as curvature of the spine can be a serious deforming condition. On Friday October 3rd 2014, the parents association arranged for and funded an Orthopaedic scoliosis nurse specialist to come to our school. With parental consent she screened first, second and third year girls and boys.

With an incidence of 1/50 girls and 1/1000 boys, we felt this was a worthwhile event. She also re-screened students needing further assessment from previous years. Appointments for follow up with consultants in Our Lady's Hospital, Crumlin, were made for those required. Others will be reviewed again in a year.

We also purchased a DVD launched in consultation with Mr. Pat Kiely, Orthopaedic Consultant in Crumlin Hospital for the school. This is a beneficial source of knowledge on this condition for the subject of S.P.H.E.

Voluntary Subscriptions

As the 2014/15 school year draws to a close, the Parents' Association would like to thank all the families who paid some, or all, of the suggested €250 voluntary subscription.

We're aware that all families face lots of financial demands and we very much appreciate any contribution that is made, however small. St Colmcille's Community School Parents' Association relies on voluntary subscriptions from its parents to fund its activities.

Your contribution is used to finance the many activities detailed throughout this newsletter, all of which are for the benefit of the students. In September 2015 our new Easy Pay option will be available on the school website.

We hope many families will use this facility to pay when they are completing their back to school payments to the school. Just click on the Parents' Association link to pay!

The other ways to pay are by standing order (see www.stcolmcilles.ie to download a form) or cheque (drop envelope in to the office for the attention of the PA). Whichever method you use, if you could include your family name and address, it will enable us to send our receipts.

Tax back - the Parents' Association can claim thousands of euro every year thanks to tax refunds given by the Revenue to approved bodies. This is a straightforward and simple process, which allows your subscription to go even further.

From Jan 2013 both PAYE and SELF EMPLOYED are treated equally and instead of filling in an annual CHY2 Cert you now simply fill out a CHY3 Enduring Cert which lasts for 5 years. The rebate is calculated at 31% across the board regardless of whether you're paying standard or higher rate tax.

This means that for every €250 the PA receive per family the Revenue will refund the school €112.31 making your voluntary subscription worth €362.31.

All rebates received go directly to paying for more facilities and services for the school from which all students benefit.

European Youth Parliament

The Parents Association was delighted to make a contribution towards expenses incurred by both Conor Dunne and John Kerr when they represented the school at the European Youth Parliament. Below are their accounts of their experiences.



I would wholeheartedly recommend that next year's T.Y.'s and 5th Years get involved in E.Y.P because it is an unforgettable experience, whether on a Regional, National, or International basis. Congratulations to the students who participated in this year's Dublin Regionals, with a special word of congratulations to Orla Kelly-Murtagh, Hugh Jordan, and Patrick O'Connor, all of whom represented the school at this year's National Conference.

John Kerr

Over the past year, Conor Dunne and I have been on what can only be described as the journey of a lifetime. In April of 2014, we were ecstatic to learn that we had been selected as International Alumni of the European Youth Parliament, to represent Ireland at international sessions of this prestigious organization,

I was fortunate to participate in the Thessaloniki International Forum from the 10th-18th of August. Over 200 delegates and 50 officials took part in a session that involved 32 European delegations.

Upon arriving in Greece, the eight Irish delegates were split up into committees including 12 delegates from different countries across the continent.

Each committee was assigned a current European issue to tackle. These included such topics as: the conflict in Ukraine, the EU's Common and Foreign Security Policy, and the use of military drones in Europe.

I was a member on the Committee on Employment who had been asked to address the massive issue of youth unemployment in Europe.

Our main task was to discuss and solve this issue, to write a resolution and to pass it at a general assembly. After much discussion and debate, our resolutions were voted upon. Fortunately, our resolution passed in Parliament – we were over the moon!

The session also offered a variety of events throughout the week, allowing us the opportunity to know other people at the session. This gave us the chance to witness the many talents of the participants, and to immerse ourselves in the many diverse cultures present. Among my favourite memories of Thessaloniki are participating on a concert with a UK delegate and "Eurovillage", a cultural evening that showcased national heritage. It was the experience of a lifetime, and without a doubt one of the best weeks of my life.

On April 17th, I was one of the lucky few given the opportunity to represent Ireland at the 78th International Session of the European Youth Parliament in Izmir, Turkey. There we met with groups of enthusiastic and motivated young adults from all member states across the EU.

I was on the committee on Agriculture and our goal was to debate current agriculture affairs whilst forming a resolution booklet to debate in a General Assembly with 14 other committees.

The whole journey lasted 10 days, 10 incredible days with over 250 delegates from 31 different countries, 31 different cultures and hundreds of endless different ideas all working together with one aim, to simply make the EU a much safer, sustainable and better place live. The experience was unforgettable, extraordinary and simply remarkable.

Conor Dunne

School Counsellor

A number of years ago we availed of a small grant from Family Affairs to access the services of a counsellor to come into our school every Monday. Needless to say the grant did not fully cover the costs of the counsellor.

Once again we were blessed to have a Parents Association who committed to meet this shortfall and support this very valuable service. The work of the counsellor is invaluable in supporting students through difficult times in their lives.

As with all grants we have seen the amount given to us decrease over the years. This valuable service could not continue without the commitment of our Parents Association.

Year book

2015

A picture can tell a thousand words and so can the 2015 St. Colmille's Yearbook. Both students and staff came together to produce a snapshot of practically every aspect of student life.

The variety of school activities is astounding, and it is all captured thanks to a hard-working editorial staff – talk about a real page-turner! The Yearbook gives us so much insight into the day to day running of the school. As we look through the pages the word that springs to mind is fun - from academic achievements to transition year activities, from sporting success stories to fundraising drives; it is incredible how much can fit into just one school year.

The closing pages of the Yearbook showcase the faces of the graduating sixth years. You can't help but wonder what path these young people will take and where life will lead them. One thing we're all sure of: this volume will be a treasured possession now and in the years to come and the Parents Association are very happy to sponsor the Yearbook for these graduating pupils.



MOCK INTERVIEWS...

The parents association is a great support to students preparing for future job and college interviews. Last December all sixth year and LCA students were invited to attend mock interviews organised by parents. Students prepared and submitted CVs and cover letters which outlined their career interest areas.

They were interviewed by parents with expertise in these areas and received constructive feedback on their CVs and interview techniques while also receiving tips for future interviews. The student evaluation forms were very positive with 100% reporting their interview experience as helpful or very helpful. Student comments included that they learned; “to be more confident”, “how to present yourself at interview”, “how to sell yourself” and “to be prepared for predictable questions”.

The evening was a great success. In addition, Majella Henchion from the parents association organised an engineering workshop for TY students in ESB Head Office, as part of Careers week. She also addressed both TY and sixth year students about engineering as a possible career area. Both events were very informative and well received by students. We would like to thank the parents association for their ongoing support.

The Guidance Department



Adi Roche - Chernobyl's Children Trust

“A lot done and more to do” a phrase we are very much familiar with. However, “a lot done” in this case is an understatement. Last October, we listened to Adi Roche describe with oratory expertise the commitment of the Chernobyl's Children Trust. The Parents attending the Association AGM were given the opportunity to reflect on their wonderful healthy children and privileged lives, in comparison to the pain and suffering of the children who continue to suffer the after effects of nuclear contamination following the World's worst nuclear plant disaster in 1986.

Extensive research has identified that over 985,000 have died following this disaster, predominantly of cancer. The Nuclear pollution spread continues to have a significant impact on the lives of the people of Belarus and will do so over seven generations.

The commitment of the volunteers for nearly 30 years to fundraise in order to provide essential oncology service, surgery, Nursing care, development and construction of homes for impoverished children is truly phenomenal.

Adi Roche's ongoing compassion, understanding, tenacity and sheer determination to fulfil a vision to deliver the best possible living conditions and humanitarian care in collaboration with the Belarusian communities is truly admirable.

The parents were humbled by her speech and in awe of her enduring commitment- Thank you Adi.

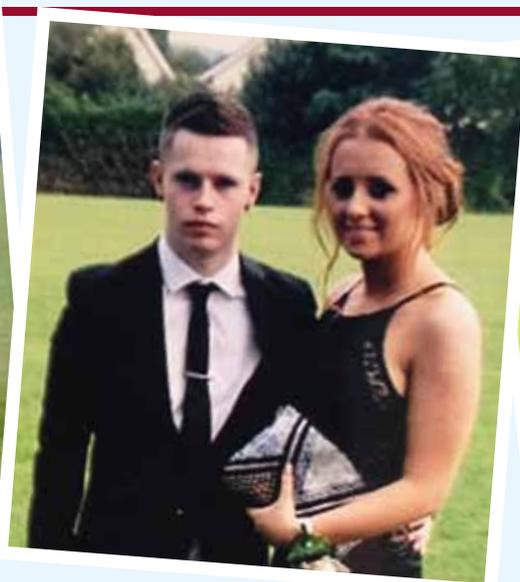
Parents' Association for Community & Comprehensive Schools (PACCS)

PACCS represents parents/guardians of students in 95 Community and Comprehensive Schools throughout the country. The Association at local level is made up of representatives from areas feeding into the local school. There is a regional structure comprising of seven regions.

Each school nominates two parents to attend the Regional Meetings. PACCS National Executive comprises of delegates from each of the seven regions including six from the Dublin Region. There are four members on the board of the National Parents Council Post Primary representing PACCS who work to deliver the best education system for all students in second level education.

PACCS hold their AGM on the first Saturday in March each year and is open to all parents/guardians free of charge.

For further information please go to www.paccs.ie



Debs Ball 2014

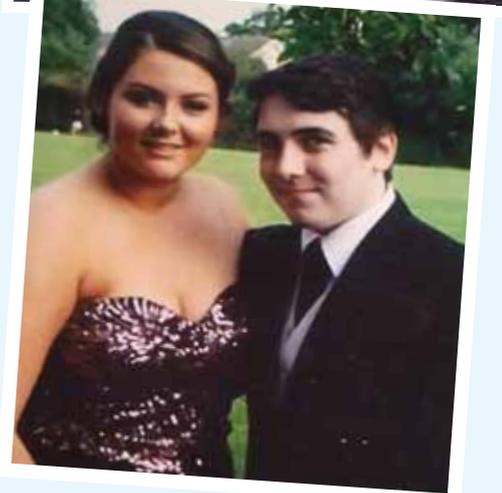
The Parents' Association, as in previous years, hosted a reception in the early evening for parents and students. Both the reception and Debs Ball proved to be another great success. A very large crowd was catered for which provided a great start to the excitement of the evening to come for the students, who all looked so amazing.

The students themselves were a credit to the school and a huge thanks to the students committee and especially Darragh McCarney who organised the entire event requiring very little input from the Parents' Association. Ms. Coulihan, as usual, was on hand in the music room to take the 'official debs photos' for the students as they arrived. A huge thanks also to the group of students from several year groups who assisted in various ways i.e. assisting Ms. Coulihan with queuing to have their photos taken, manning the desk in handing out Debs Ball tickets to waiting students and assisting in the clean-up.

Many thanks also to Ms. Loughman for her beautiful candelabra and to all the staff of the Community school for their assistance to us and allowing us to take over the school for their graduating students of 2014.

The graduates walked on a red carpet from the carpark to the reception which made the occasion very special for them. Thank you to Mr. Boyle, (St Colmcille's Jnr. Nat. school) who lent the carpet for the night. The Parents' Association have agreed to have a red carpet for all future Debs receptions.

Last, but not least, a huge thank you to every member of the Parents' Association who all assisted in various ways as this is an 'all hands on deck event'! This is definitely an event not to be missed for those lucky enough to qualify for the next Debs Ball in 2015. These are just a sample of the photos taken at the reception. We regret we could not include more. All photos are displayed on the Parents Association noticeboard, in the Main Hall, for anyone who wishes to view them and copies can be obtained.



...about the Texting Reminder Service?

Have you received a text from the school to remind you of notes in school bags, important dates, exam payments, parent teacher meetings etc?

If not, it is likely that your most up-to-date mobile number is not in the system! Important messages will be sent by text, usually before it can be posted on the website, so it is important to check that we have your most up-to-date number. This is a service provided by the Parents' Association for you and continues to get very positive feedback from parents.

To ensure we have your correct number, drop your details into our post box in the school office or contact us via either the mobile or email below.

txt Liz on 087 220 9861

or send an email to
parents@stcolmcilles.ie