

ATTIC Youth Café, an Unstoppable Force for Longford's Youth!

Five years on from the opening of the ATTIC Youth Café in the Temperance Hall and what an amazing five years it's been. The ATTIC Youth Café in Longford was the brain child of the Temperance Hall management committee who felt after the newly renovated Temperance Hall was opened it was important to incorporate into the community hall a dedicated youth facility for the young people of Longford Town and surrounding areas. The management committee of the Temperance Hall established a working committee of community people to spear head the project and after a year of planning the ATTIC Youth Café was born. Initially the Café was a place for young people of Longford to meet and hang out on Saturday afternoons from 4pm – 8pm. This continued for over a year until *Foróige*, the national youth organisation based in Longford came on board with the project and decided that the facility was an ideal venue to engage with much more young people. With a team of dedicated volunteers, *Foróige* worked on opening the café on a daily basis at lunch times from 12:30pm – 2pm and afternoon programmes such as Drug & Alcohol education, Leadership, Citizenship and events. Drop In sessions were also introduced on Wednesday evenings for junior cycle and Friday evenings for senior cycle young people. To date the ATTIC Youth Café engages with over 500 young people in direct programmes and over 1500 in activity based events. The *Foróige* ATTIC Youth Café is open to all young people at Post Primary level and is free membership. This year the

ATTIC Youth Café brought All Ireland glory to County Longford when they were announced the "Permanent TSB *Foróige Youth Citizenship Top Teen 2011*". The Community were united in celebrations as the young people of the *Foróige* ATTIC Youth Café were announced winners live on TV3. This was an amazing achievement not only for the ATTIC Youth Café but also for the entire county of Longford.

The Parish Review gets a sneak peek into what the *Foróige* ATTIC Youth Café has been up to and what the future holds for this progressive facility **ACTIVITIES THROUGHOUT THE YEAR:** The ATTIC's success is very much down to the dedicated base of volunteers who give of their time to give back to the community in which we live. Activities in the ATTIC Youth Café include monthly Disco's for junior cycle young people where they can meet and socialise in an Alcohol & Drug free environment under the close supervision of trained volunteers. Longford Youth Factor is still a major attraction for young people throughout the county and takes place in January over four weeks. It is an X Factor style competition which showcases young people's talents to a live audience.

Summer time can be an exciting time for young people with school holidays, however it can also be a boring time with very little to occupy their time. The ATTIC appreciates this and annually organises Summer programmes and Camps for young people which involves trips away, arts and crafts, sports events and of course activity centres.



Picture shows ATTIC members on stage at The Helix having just won the *Foróige* Top Teens of Ireland award.



Ruth McGarry with Rachel Cheevers and Fiona Leahy join Martin and Syball on TV3's Morning Show after winning the *Foróige* Top Teens of Ireland.



Jim Maher, (Regional Youth Officer) pictured with *Foróige* Leadership group graduating from NUI Galway in October, were, Hannah Farrell, Louise Sheridan, Nikitta Cassidy, Rachel Cheevers, Grace Hogan, Luke Casserly, Ciara Linanne, Marie Claire Lgoe and John Farrell.

HYPE 2012 - Youth Festival in Longford!

After a very successful 2011, the New Year will yet again bring another first for the *Foróige* ATTIC Youth Café and for Longford as the Café host the first ever Youth Festival aimed at teenagers aged 13 – 18 years. The event has been aptly called HYPE Youth Festival 2012 and will take place in the grounds of the Rugby Club. *Foróige* clubs all over Ireland have been invited to the day and the event is expecting in excess of 5000 young people from all over the country to attend. This event is being organised by the ATTIC Management committee and *Foróige* in an effort to secure money to be able to purchase a premises for a state of the art youth centre in Longford town.

Programmes for young people:

The ATTIC prides itself in delivering non formal educational programmes to young people in Longford. The ATTIC Drug and Alcohol programme was developed in 2009 and delivers education and preventative pieces based on the needs of young people to enable them to make informed choices around alcohol and drug use. This programme also develops confidence and self esteem while challenging young people attitudes towards Alcohol and drug use. These programmes are delivered in an individual and a group basis and are tailored to meet the individual age and needs of the young person involved in the programme. This programme is incorporated into graphic design, photography, soccer and beauty workshops which encourages young people to participate while developing much needed life skills.

The ATTIC is proud to be at the heart of the community and annually young members of the ATTIC get involved in a citizenship project which encourages young people to identify a need in the community and try and bring about change in the community in which they live. The ATTIC first took part in the Permanent TSB *Foróige* Youth Citizenship programme in 2009 and were awarded for their efforts in developing the Longford Youth Factor competition with winning the overall award. In 2010 the ATTIC again entered the programme and were awarded a merit for their achievement with their novel idea a booklet for new first year pupils called "Are you ready for the next step". However the ATTIC took their citizenship project to

another level in 2011 by developing a discount card for local retailers to encourage young people to shop local, a recession themed project earned the ATTIC this year's All Ireland Top Teen award which was broadcast on TV3 in November.

ATTIC ON TOUR! INTERNATIONAL TRIPS

The *Foróige* ATTIC Youth Café annual trip abroad happens in early June with past destinations being Edinburgh 2009 & 2011 and London in 2010. This annual trip is organised for young people who give of their time effortlessly to the ATTIC, supporting programmes, events, organising events for their peers and supervise events alongside leaders. The ATTIC feel it is important for young people in Longford to get opportunities like this to travel abroad to learn new cultures and experience new things for themselves.

The *Foróige* ATTIC Youth Café has become a fundamental stepping stone in the lives of young people living in the town and surrounding areas as it gives them a fun safe environment for them to socialise under the supervision of committed volunteers where parents can be assured that their young person is safe and involved in something worthwhile. The café is a unique venture for Longford as it is a voluntarily led initiative where local community people have come together to provide this service to the many young people engaging with the facility.

Successes to date for the *Foróige* ATTIC Youth Café to date include; St Patricks Day Parade 2008, 2010, 2011, AIB Better Ireland Award runners up 2008, Permanent TSB Youth Citizenship awards 2009 and 2010 winners and Permanent TSB *Foróige* Citizenship All Ireland Top Teens 2011 winners.

So what's next for the *Foróige* ATTIC Youth Café?



Fiona Leahy, Ciara Fallon and Rachel Cheevers.

Leadership for Life Programme

The Albert Schweitzer "Leadership for Life Programme" was developed in the ATTIC in 2010. This programme is aimed at senior cycle members who wish to develop their leadership skills and public speaking abilities. The programme is designed to encourage young people to explore their dreams and visions and develop concrete ways of achieving them. Young people who take part in this programme can get the opportunity to graduate for NUI Galway with a foundation certificate in youth work and community action. The ATTIC are very proud to have nine of our members graduate from NUI in Galway last October.

New York here we come!

In 2012 The *Foróige* ATTIC Youth Café will be crossing the Atlantic Ocean as ten young people will travel along with volunteers to the Big Apple on a leadership exchange with All Hallows School in New York. This is a very exciting time for the young people in the ATTIC as it will be the first time a youth group in Ireland will get this opportunity to promote Longford and Ireland in the United States.