



Picture shows some of the Transition Year Students from Mean Scoil Mhuire performing in the St. Joseph's Halloween Party.

Scoil Mhuire reviews the year

SCOIL MHUIRE TY MEETS ST. JOSEPH'S SENIOR CITIZENS:
This year marks the 10th Anniversary of visitations from Transition Year Students of Mean Scoil Mhuire to the residents in St. Joseph's Centre, Longford.

The programme has gone from strength to strength and each year special bonds are built between the two generations. So far this year as well as chatting the residents each Wednesday the students have taken part in quizzes and a Halloween party. Plans are underway to hold a joint carol service and nativity play for Christmas and other exciting activities for St. Brigid's Day, Valentine's Day and Easter. We all hope that the programme continues to develop for the next 10 years and beyond.

SISTERS OF MERCY, LONGFORD

The Sisters of Mercy, Longford celebrated 150 years of continuous and dedicated service to the people of Longford this year. The seed of education was planted then also as Mean Scoil Mhuire had its beginnings in the same year. A school mass was held on the day to celebrate this special occasion. The Sisters of Mercy were welcomed back to share in these celebrations and afterwards commemorative medals were given to all board and staff members.

CHRISTMAS SHOEBOX APPEAL

Each year our Transition Year students work tirelessly to give back to those who are less fortunate. The Christmas shoebox appeal supports Team Hope and has been helping needy children in schools, communities, orphanages and hospitals all over Eastern Europe for over twelve years. We are proud to support this great cause and are currently getting shoeboxes full of gifts from our students as it may be the only gift they get this Christmas.

POETRY ALOUD

The National Library of Ireland has a long tradition of supporting post primary students. One of the ways it does this is by holding the Poetry Aloud competition each year. This gives students an opportunity to research and recite their chosen poems. This year ten girls went forward to the regional finals and we are delighted that three were chosen to progress to the semi-finals later in the year. Congratulations to Muireann Murtagh (6th year) Elina Mats (5th year) and Alannah Dolan (2nd year).

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Students of Mean Scoil Mhuire have been busy casting their votes in our own presidential election this year. To encourage students to participate seven enthusiastic presidential hopefuls took to the podium in the gym and persuaded us to vote for them.

EQUESTRIAN TEAM

Mean Scoil Mhuire's Open team of Joanne Whyte, Aisling McGrail, Rebecca Casey and Rebecca Yorke have won two first places and two second places in recent Equestrian events. Our novice team have won two second places in their respective events also. The equestrian panel includes Brionny Sainsbury, Evie Moloney, Maria Kenny Shauna Farrell, Jade Hoare and Alice Whyte. This is a great result for all involved.

ACCORD – at the Heart of Marriage and the Family

ACCORD is the Agency of the Catholic Church concerned with promoting the sacrament of marriage and preparing couples for a life-long relationship with God and each other. The organization empowers people to care for their relationships and face the challenges of Christian marriage in today's world and affirms its value in an ever-changing world. ACCORD empowers couples through their pre-marriage course to explore and reflect on the essential elements of their marriage and the purpose and value of their choices in a committed relationship.

Relationship counselling is also provided for couples as well as individuals in a couple relationship, in a caring and confidential manner. The economic recession has exercised enormous pressure on marriages and families. Tragically too many people had put all their trust and energy in the job, the house and money as they took their relationships for granted.

Societal trends have changed dramatically over the past 10 years. In February, the Department of



Pictured are members of Longford ACCORD group.

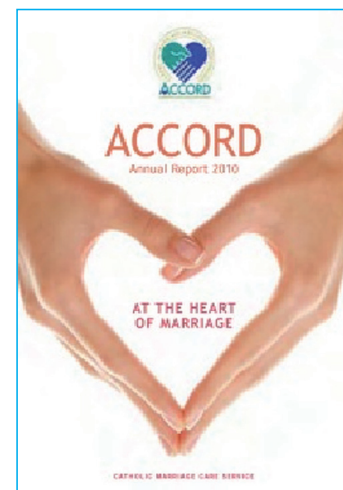
Social Welfare and Family Affairs launched the report "Family Figures" (a joint publication of the Family Support Agency and the ESRI) which was an in-depth analysis of family life in Ireland based on the 2006 census. The report showed: a fourfold

increase in Cohabitation 1996-2006; a sharp increase in numbers living with partner after age 25; a dramatic rise in lone parenthood for those with low educational attainment; and an increased rate of marital breakdown in late 30s age group. The report showed a downward trend in rates of catholic marriages, civil marriages and divorce. These facts present a challenging time ahead for the organization which nationally will celebrate its Golden Jubilee in 2012.

In 2012 it will be 50 years since our first Diocesan Centre opened in Belfast in the Diocese of Down and Connor. Since then the volunteerism, generosity of heart, vocational calling and professionalism of ACCORD people has grown and developed, so that in 2011 there are 60 Diocesan ACCORD Centres in 26 Dioceses. The 50th anniversary of ACCORD will be celebrated at a conference in Belfast on 11 and 12 March 2012. Locally the ACCORD Centre was set up in 1970 in Longford and has grown from strength to strength since.

Throughout 2011, the Longford Centre has continued to provide pre-marriage courses and relationship counselling via a strong network of committed and highly trained volunteers.

As usual, there were some comings and goings throughout 2011. Marita MacNerney, retired as administrator of the organization af-



ter 6 dedicated years and has been replaced with Mary Walsh. Fr Pat Murphy, continues as Priest Director of Longford ACCORD despite his move to Mohill as Parish Priest. All the volunteer counsellors and facilitators continue to respond to the needs of the organization in a professional and caring manner.

Throughout 2011, 188 people carried out the ACCORD Pre-Marriage Course "Marriage, A Journey not a Destination". ACCORD continues to provide the only church recognized pre marriage course. Our local Centre decided to reduce the cost of the Pre-Marriage Courses for 2012 from €170 to €140 per course in the current economic climate.

The pre-marriage preparation course calendar for 2012 is as follows:

Dates	Time	Venue
February 10 and 11	Friday 7-10pm Saturday 9.30am-4.30pm	Venue: Family Centre, Longford
Evening Course 5/8 March	Monday & Thursday Evenings: 6pm-10:30pm	Venue: Family Centre, Longford
April 20 and 21	Friday 7-10pm Saturday 9.30am-4.30pm	Venue: Family Centre, Longford
Evening Course 14/17 May	Monday & Thursday Evenings: 6pm-10:30pm	Venue: Family Centre, Longford
June 15 and 16	Friday 7-10pm Saturday 9.30am-4.30pm	Venue: Family Centre, Longford
September 14 and 15	Friday 7-10pm Saturday 9.30am-4.30pm	Venue: Family Centre, Longford
November 16 and 17	Friday 7-10pm Saturday 9.30am-4.30pm	Venue: Family Centre, Longford

The above courses can be booked on line at www.accord.ie or by contacting the centre directly on 043 3347222. Office hours are Monday to Friday from 11.30am-1.30pm.

New Diocesan Youth Director

All at the Parish Review say welcome to Anita Allen who has recently been appointed as the new Diocesan Youth director. Anita who is from Mount Temple is a graduate of St. Patrick's College, Maynooth from where she has a Masters in Pastoral Ministry. She has a number of interesting initiatives which she hopes to spearhead in the future. Among these are the hopes to initiate John Paul 11 Awards through which young people are invited to become active in their parishes and communities. Through these awards it is hoped that young people will become active members of their Catholic faith community and experience spiritual and personal growth.

Anita recently led a group of young people from our Diocese to Madrid for World Youth Day which she describes as 'an amazing experience which I will never forget. The kindness of others is something I shall remember fondly from the experience. The goodness people hold in their hearts overwhelmed me on

more than one occasion. Spending time talking with young people from all over the world about their lives and where Jesus fits into it on a daily basis filled me with such hope, a hope for the future of our Church'.

She continues 'We are our Church and if we want it to flourish then as members we must give support and guidance to our younger members. We must invite them into communication with Him; invite them to open their hearts and lives to the message of Jesus'. We wish Anita well in her exciting and challenging new role.

Further information on the Ardagh and Clonmacnois Youth Ministry is available at www.aym.ie.

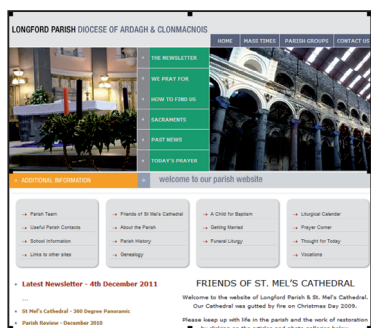


Chorister

*The boy soprano in the choral loft,
Awaits the organ call.
In muted tones, pure and soft,
His cadence, rise and fall.*

*And soaring above the hallowed space,
Suspended momentarily in time;
The timbre of an angelic voice
Exalting the heav'ns; divine;*

This poem was written by Ernest McCarthy originally from Longford as a tribute to the memory of Fr. Tommy Devine, former Choirmaster at St. Mel's Cathedral.



For further information on the Cathedral restoration and updates on progress go to www.longfordparish.com