

Inspiring Traveller MEN





Foreword

It gives me great pride to be part of this booklet that promotes some of the amazing things that Traveller Men are involved in across the country. Within this booklet you will be inspired by Traveller Men who day by day are contributing to their communities, challenging stereotypes, promoting diversity, challenging racism and making Irish society a better place for all of us.

It is a privilege for the Irish Traveller Movement to bring together the stories of the inspiring men within these pages and be able to create this resource to share with you all. Within these pages you will be fortunate enough to read about Traveller Men who are actors, playwrights, comedians, community volunteers, fundraisers, adult learners, journalists, sports stars, community workers, carers, herbalists, gardeners, organisers of boxing clubs, tinsmiths and wagon makers. It really does showcase some of the activities and interests that Traveller Men have in Ireland. And the truth is, this booklet is merely scratching the surface of the range of talent that exists among Traveller Men who make us all so proud.

The idea for this booklet comes from the success of last year's Inspiring Traveller Women, which we produced in conjunction with the National Traveller Women's Forum. The truth be told, we were absolutely stunned by the overwhelming positivity for this publication. Immediately after it, many

members of the Irish Traveller Movement pointed out that a similar booklet for Traveller Men was even more necessary.

As Travellers we face discrimination on a daily basis on an individual and institutional level. Our ethnicity is not recognised and our health statistics are similar to those of the settled community in the 1940s. Our educational outcomes are poor from a system where all supports that had been built up are gone and few Travellers are in well-resourced culturally appropriate accommodation. Unemployment is endemic and our mental health is suffering, with epidemic levels of suicide seven times that of the majority population.

It is fair to say that Traveller men disproportionately face racism and negative stereotypes of who they are and what they do. We hope that this booklet strongly challenges those lazy, racist stereotypes and instils pride in our community for the amazing things our men do in the face of hostility and fear. For Travellers out there we hope that reading the stories of these men will remind us of the proud, confident people we are. We hope that Traveller men reading this will be inspired to go on to great things, or that Traveller women will look to support husbands, sons, brothers, fathers, uncles, cousins or friends onto new paths based on these words.

For non-Travellers who read these stories we hope they provide a fresh insight into Traveller culture and identity in the 21st century. This is a small snapshot of things that Traveller Men do and there are many, many other amazing role models out there. We hope that what you read will challenge any myths and stereotypes that have negatively portrayed all Traveller men without looking to the positives that exist within our community. We hope that everyone who reads this will be as inspired by the words in these pages as we have.

We would like to thank the Department of Justice and Equality who made funding available as part of Traveller Pride Week 2014 to print this booklet. The funding for events like the Traveller Pride Awards and booklets like this give us an opportunity to celebrate the genuine talent, skills, energy, passion and strength that exists in our community, but that are so rarely recognised, even by ourselves as Travellers, let alone by the general public.

We would like to thank Damien Walshe for coordinating the development of this booklet and Patrick Nevin, who was on placement with ITM, for his support on developing this.

The main credit goes to all the men for agreeing to take part in this, to share their stories and put into words what they do in order that they might inspire others to go on and do more brilliant things. Often Traveller Men are not given enough credit for being open- well, I think that this booklet will shatter that and a 101 other myths and stereotypes that may exist about Traveller Men.

Brigid Quilligan,
Director,
Irish Traveller Movement
June 20th 2014

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AN ROINN DLÍ AGUS CIRT AGUS COMHIONANNAIS
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE AND EQUALITY

as part of Traveller Pride Week 2014

Johnny Mc Donnell

I was born in England in 1986 and my family moved back home to Ireland when I was two when we moved to what was known at the time and still is referred to as Dunsink in Finglas. I started in St Bridget's school in Finglas maybe my first year or two was grand because I have very little memory of it but as time went on I felt that because I was Traveller I was always labelled a messer; I am not saying I wasn't but not all the time; this was still not a good enough reason to be put at the back of a class and given papers to colour in because us Travellers did not need to learn Irish.

This was 1992 not back in the 1970's; so I decided from an early age that I was not going to be anything when I grew up only a Traveller, so I did not need an education. Thinking back this was instilled in me from my so-called "teachers" who were supposed to support and help me.

Over the years I always felt I had missed out and had a yearning to go back to education so in 2008 I started on a community employment scheme in Fingal Traveller organisation in Balbriggan and my journey began; during my time there I completed a community addiction course, ASIST suicide training, engage men's health training and bereaved by suicide training

For me my biggest accomplishment is my participation on a Community development course which I am due to complete in a few weeks and I hope to



move on further and go to Maynooth and focus my path on the area of mental health and Travellers; I currently chair the Fingal mental health action group and I am the first male Traveller Primary health care worker in Balbriggan.

One of my biggest fears as a Traveller and an activist within my community is the recent austerity measures and how they have affected Travellers. The Traveller education budget has been completely eradicated and I fear that as a direct result we will have the age-old problem of Travellers falling through the cracks in our education system.

Education is very important and as the song says as I have gotten older and wiser I have realised the importance of it and how it really does change your life. I know there may be Travellers out there who do not want to go back to education and that is fine but if the yearning is there my advice is to GO FOR IT!

Michael Power

I'm Michael Power, I am a subeditor and reporter for the Voice of the Traveller Magazine.

The biggest moment for me in my life was being able to break away from the repetitive rut that I had gotten tangled up in, getting up every morning and going to do a job that I didn't want to do but felt I needed to so as not to be idle. I left my previous job, I was working in a busy household and fancy goods store and after an argument with the owners I decided I'd had enough and packed it in. It was a decision I hadn't fully thought through, I found myself unemployed and sitting at home doing nothing. About 2 months later a voluntary position in sales had become available with Voice of the Traveller. At the time I had been on social welfare for two months, this role offered no extra payment but I thought it might have had prospects of a future paid job but more importantly to me it meant that I had something to do again.

I started with the magazine in October 2008, it was really uncharted lands for me, a job in an office selling a magazine I didn't really know or believe in, how could I expect other people to be subscribing to or advertise in it? I knew sales, I'd spent most my younger years selling on a market stall on Sundays and a number



of years in my late teens and twenties at a call centre convincing people to take out credit cards and every manner of insurance but this was different; why would people want to subscribe to read about Travellers? I knew what Travellers were like, I was one of them and at the time I felt we just weren't that interesting.

I ended up doing more writing in the magazine than sales, I always liked to write when I was younger despite my

limited time in the formal educational system. I filled in for regular features and developed my writing style and ability, gradually learning to take a step back and try look at the community from a mutual and outside prospective; this helped me focus on the issues that faced Travellers without getting involved and as a Traveller I found a way to be impartial, on paper anyway.

In late 2009 a paid full-time position as a regional reporter became available; I applied for it and officially became a reporter by December of that year. At the time I remember it being a lot of pressure, I was being paid to write so I could no longer only write what I felt like, I had to get out and meet people, write about what they wanted to read, be interesting.

I learned a lot in the first couple of years as a reporter; how to use words correctly and the importance of being impartial but what I learned most of all is that we are as interesting a community as we are diverse. As a reporter I had grown in my ability to write but as a person I realized my community had a story to tell, one from their own prospective and not of someone being paid for sensationalism in a national tabloid.

In my time so far as a reporter I've formed an understanding of my community that's not written about in mainstream media, especially of the men within the community. Where possible I try to change society's perception of Traveller men by writing what we are really like, how in the overwhelming majority of cases we are upstanding members of society working hard with the resources we have to create a life for ourselves and families. The latest project I worked on was a calendar featuring 11 such men who doesn't fit the preconceived notion of what they are supposed to be, doesn't conform to the low expectations put on them.

Jim O'Brien

My name is Jim O'Brien, and I am the manager of Bray Travellers Community Development Group. I started as a volunteer in 1991, and progressed to being a community employment participant and later became the coordinator of Bray Travellers CDP. I have always tried to be not just an advocate for Travellers but a role model as well. I have always seen the importance of building bridges between Travellers, statutory agencies and the wider settled community.

Bray Travellers Community Development Group has grown from a small beginning in 1993 resourced by volunteers to a partnership with a host of government, statutory and voluntary agencies. I was the first Traveller Manager/Co-ordinator to be appointed to a Community Development Programme in 1996, which was a novel idea at the time (although it's more accepted practice now).

Back in 2000 I led the organisation to form a partnership with FAS (now SOLAS) and secured funding to run a Local Training Initiative (LTI) with up to 16 women participating in training each year. Some trainees from these LTI programmes have progressed to employment and work in their community as peer educators and development workers. This programme has been recognised as a model of good practice to follow.



One of the other services that Bray Travellers is actively involved in is the Traveller Specific Counselling Service Clinic that runs once a week for all Travellers, this initiative has proved to be a success considering the mental health problems that Travellers face today. On a related programme that work in tandem with Traveller Men's Health,

I started an innovative “Dads and Lads” Friday night soccer where fathers and sons play in-door football combining 40 men and their sons and has proved to be an invaluable and very successful initiative.

This programme ties in nicely with our annual integrated soccer tournament. The Bray Travellers seven a side soccer competition has been running yearly since 2000. This is the highlight of our summer programme and this years is more exciting because of the World Cup. From this year on our Summer Soccer Tournament has been dedicated in the memory of a local Traveller participant who died tragically and our tournament is now called the Thomas Murphy Memorial Cup.

I have always believed that part of Community Development was never shying away from tackling difficult issues. In Bray we weren't afraid of challenging the problems of substance misuse in Bray and secured funding for the DAISH Project. This project today remains a very successful intervention for Travellers and their families in Bray and its environs.

I have experienced tough times over the years as a manager and on a personal level but I am as passionate about Community Development now as I was when I started over 20 years ago and remain dedicated and committed to progressing the needs of Travellers in Bray.

Michael Collins

My name is Michael Collins and I am an actor, writer and performer and a human rights activist for over 20 years. I have acted on stage in the Abbey and Olympia Theatres. I probably am most famous to some people for playing Johnny Connors in RTE's *Glenroe* for over 10 years and have also acted in many films such as *Trojan Eddie*, *Man about Dog* and recently, *King of the Travellers*.



I wrote my first play 12 years ago *It's a cultural thing or is it?* which I perform as a one-man show and have performed it in venues in Ireland and in the UK and in New York this play received a five star review in the Irish Times in the 2005 Dublin Fringe festival.

I then wrote and performed a play called *Mobile* which looks at the dilemma of a Traveller man who is matched off to fight another Traveller to settle a family dispute. The fellow he is to fight is not only his cousin but they are also married to two sisters. The play explores some of the issue of internal fighting within the Traveller community through eyes of Peter, one of the combatants who is faced with the dilemma, "will I/won't I fight". The play challenges the audience's perceptions of the Traveller community and the particular issue of internal fighting while highlighting the role of the outside community in contributing to the issue.

My third play that I wrote and performed was *Worlds Apart Same Difference* which explores the different cultures of Travellers and elements of the African community. It is about a young Traveller woman who is forced to flee her home because of domestic violence she suffers at the hands of her husband. She flees to England and finds a new love in the arms of an African man. Their union exposes the similarities and the difference in their strong cultural backgrounds. This play received great feedback from its audience in Dublin in May 2010.

My most recent play is *Magpies on the Pylon* which is an award-winning play which deals with the very challenging issue of suicide in the Traveller Community. I have performed this play across the country and it has often been held with workshops afterwards to discuss the powerful emotions the play brings up.

Last year I was in a new film *Jack Taylor Shot down* which has already been shown in the UK and USA and will soon be on Irish TV.

In 2012 I was privileged to receive a life time achievement award at the Traveller Pride Awards and was delighted when it was presented to me by the president of Ireland Michael D Higgins one of my proudest moments as it was awarded to me by members of the Traveller Community.

Gerard McDonagh

My name is Gerard McDonagh and I am from Cork. I have been part of the men's group here in the Traveller Visibility Group (TVG) for over 8 years. During this time my role has changed and I have become involved with the project in a men's development capacity. I have been a participant in the groups and have led the men's groups doing different woodwork and metalwork projects.

In 2010, The TVG and other regional groups in the Cork and Kerry area formed a Traveller Men's Leadership group that meet once a month to engage in different training or pieces of work. I am also a key member and will always have an input around the different work going on. I also have been leading a teen gym programme with young Traveller men that meet on a weekly basis. I have

Traveller Wagon Wheel Theatre Company

I set up a theatre group called the Traveller Wagon Wheel Theatre Company which works with Travellers and other socially excluded and ethnic minority groups to allow them to tell their stories and issues in an artistic way. I can be contacted at travellerwagonwheel@hotmail.com and on Facebook [travellerwagonwheel](https://www.facebook.com/travellerwagonwheel)



participated in SafeTalk workshops, Traveller Ethnicity workshops and have been on a Fetac Back to Education Initiative since September 2013 ran here in our centre. In December, 2013 I was part of a drama group set up by TVG and Shine in Cork to highlight the issue of dual diagnosis with addictions. This group involved Traveller men and settled men and developed into a play which was delivered on 2 nights to a packed audience and was very well received by both communities.

Tom McDonnell

I am Tom McDonnell and I am a Traveller tinsmith from Dublin. As a young boy I learned the art of tinsmithing from my father. I am very proud of Traveller culture and am proud to be one of the last remaining small number of tinsmiths in the Traveller community and in Ireland.

I think that tinsmithing is an important part of who we are and we need younger Travellers to learn this craft to make sure they pass it on from generation to generation to keep this tradition alive.

In this day and age where everything is disposable, there is no value placed on traditional crafts and unfortunately a large part of Irish society shows little regard for Travellers and their way of life.

However, it is great that when I am showing people some of my craft at a public exhibition to see large crowds gather and watch what I am doing. It is clear that there are people who appreciate a skill and craft that has been so closely associated with Travellers and where people recount to them fond memories from their childhood when the Tinkers would call to their doors to sell or mend saucepans, buckets and cans.



In the last couple of years I have been involved in a number of big events and had my craft profiled on TV and radio. In June 2012 I was involved in the International Eucharistic Congress in Dublin and was featured on RTE's Hector show bringing a renewed interest to the craft. In 2013 myself and another tinsmith, James Collins won the 2013 Arts & Culture Award at the Traveller Pride Awards and the overall Traveller Pride Award and on the day I showed a packed house some of my work and it was a very proud moment.

John Mc Carthy

I am John Mc Carthy and I am a Traveller who lives in Dublin for the last 15 years having been born in England. I am very passionate about many things, but I have four main interests that I really enjoy. My work, gardening, cooking and music.

I am very passionate about my role working in the caring profession. I am a qualified social care worker working with adults with intellectual disabilities and mental health problems in Dublin. I identify with my clients because like Travellers, as a group, people with intellectual disabilities have similar life experiences and, such as social exclusion, marginalisation, inequalities etc. All these they face, we face as a community and I thoroughly enjoy supporting people to overcome these challenges.

As the first Traveller man with a degree in social care, this has empowered me in being able to take my stand amongst other recognised health care professionals working as part of a multi-disciplinary team ensuring that the service users I work with have the best quality of life and care as possible. I firmly believe that my work as a social care worker has its roots in human rights and this is what drives me.

As a Traveller working in this area I believe my work highlights the issue of



mental health and intellectual disability among the community and I try to make the issue of disability visible and positive.

I am a very keen gardener and I have my own garden and an allotment. I won 1st prize in the Rialto Garden Competition for the best garden container section. I love spending time out in my garden and am always thinking about how to make it better. I am very creative and will look to improve and update my garden, taking my inspiration from visits to Bloom in the Park, the Chelsea Flower show and stately gardens.

In my garden I have an aluminium milk churn that as a young boy I would use to go and get water in for the family for cooking & cleaning. It now has prize positioning in my garden and is full of lovely flowers. This brings a smile to my face when I think of the struggle and hardship years ago going to look for and fetch water for the family often at long distances with a pram that would be falling apart and running the wrath of local youths who would name call. It's very empowering as I now have reclaimed the power by getting the pleasure of seeing a beautiful work of art in my garden.

I have had an allotment for five years where I grow vegetables and have made my allotment into a small camp where I have a stove, pots and pans and often will make a meal using the produce from my garden for other gardeners in the allotment. I think that doing this keeps me in touch with my roots when we used to travel the countryside and cook by an open fire and this brings back happy memories for me. My fellow gardeners are amazed at my spirit of community and this helps to challenge stereotypes and break down barriers. My allotment gives me a true sense of identity and allows me to be a Traveller again cooking by the fire and carrying parts of my tradition.

I love cooking and I love cooking good, old fashioned wholesome meals. I love cooking roast dinners, Lancashire hotpot, dumplings, Yorkshire puddings, steak and kidney pies, mushy peas, pork pie, scotch eggs, bread and butter pudding and custard tarts. My cooking style has definitely been influenced by growing up in England. I try to use the vegetables I grow in the allotment as often as possible in my cooking.

My final passion is music and my favourite music is Tamla-Motown, Soul and reggae. Again, I think this is influenced by growing up in the North of England. I once met Diana Ross & the Supremes, Marvin Gaye and Jimmy Ruffin. I was very aware that my music taste differed from many Travellers, who often preferred traditional Irish music and country & western, which I never was a fan of.

I feel that as a Traveller man I strive to be a positive role model for other Traveller Men.. My initial education was poor when growing up, however once I was given the opportunity I achieved to a high level, so much so that I wasn't just the first member of my family to achieve a formal education but to also get a degree from a University. I believe that education is the way forward. It is a powerful tool to support people's dreams and aspirations to achieve and break down barriers.

Bernard Kenna

I am Bernard Kenna; I am a 22 year old Traveller man from Dundalk. I joined the Dundalk Order of Malta in 2011. I completed a basic first aid course and went on to complete a CFR and emergency first responder course also I am working towards my instructors badge. I try to use the skills I have learned and pass on my first aid knowledge within the Order of Malta and my community.

Part of my volunteer work means you need to be willing to help those that are in need of assistance, be it visiting the sick and elderly in the nursing home or helping out at Christmas time to give out presents to the residents. On Christmas day this year I helped a patient come home to her family so she could spend some time with her loved ones.

This year I did some fundraising to support members of our unit going to Lourdes and also other fundraising adverts within the community.

I am also an active member of Louth Traveller Movement and have been working with the Irish Traveller Movement since August 2013 as a community development worker in Co. Louth. Since my involvement with a Traveller organisation I have been inspired by many people but my biggest inspiration is a Travelling woman I know very well. The work she does on a volunteer basis and the differences she



has made from when she started working with Traveller Groups around the country has inspired me to continue my volunteer work with in my own community not only as a Traveller but in my role as an Emergency First Responder. I have been giving back to my community as I would like for the younger generation to get more involved in the future. We encourage the young men and women of the Travelling community to get more involved with their community and give the older people the care and attention that we would like to receive when we grow old.

Alan Kavanagh

My name is Alan Kavanagh and I am from Tullamore. I've always been passionate about education and I was the first person from my family to progress to third level education. I finished my Leaving Certificate in 2005 and then I completed a 1 year FETAC level 5 course in Health, Fitness and Sport Coaching in Portlaoise College.

I received distinctions in this course which allowed me to progress to Athlone Institute of Technology to complete a 2 year course which resulted in a Higher Certificate in Business, Sport and Recreation.

I then undertook a 1 year add on course where I graduated with a Bachelors Degree in Business and Sport Management. I did a FAI Coaching Course in Soccer and a level 5 course in Football, Hurling and Basketball Training and have also completed the SafeTalk and First Aid Courses.

However, over the course of my life I have faced and overcome many barriers to my education. At the age of 7, I was told I had serious hearing and speech problems which resulted in me falling behind in school work as I couldn't hear and speak. I attended speech therapy sessions and had grommets inserted to correct my hearing. When I was studying in Athlone Institute of Technology, an assessment was carried out and I was diagnosed as highly dyslexic.



I worked as a Youth Worker and Sports Development Officer in Offaly Traveller Movement and did various activities with young people such as circuit training, a soccer league and wellbeing club, which promoted the importance of sport among young people.

I was a Sports Development Officer in Scoil Eoin Pol where I worked with third class children, promoting sport and the advantages of a good education. I am also strongly involved in Offaly Traveller Movement on a voluntary basis and am a member of the Midlands Traveller Men's Health Network which meets once a month.

I have a strong interest in working in disadvantaged areas in a sports context, promoting education through sport. Throughout my time in Offaly Traveller Movement, I have tried to serve as a very positive role model for young Travellers by actively promoting the positive effect a good education has on one's life and the importance of incorporating fitness into your daily routine.

Thomas Maughan

My name is Thomas Maughan, I'm the second oldest in a family of five. I was born in Cavan town, my parents Kathleen and Tom Maughan were originally from Cavan. Many people will tell you that we have a very long history in Cavan. I went to St Felim's National Boys School where I received a very good education with children from all different backgrounds. In the early 1990s at the age of 10 years, my father Tom decided to leave Cavan for Dublin to be closer to my grandparents on his side of the family, who were living in Ballymun, which is the north side of Dublin.

At the time, most Travellers were living on the roadside without any basic facilities, as the Council wouldn't do anything. We moved to James Town road Ballymun, Co Dublin, where the Wards, McDonagh, Stokes, Maughan, McDonnell's and Joyce's were living and, there was also a high level of poverty at this time.

My mother sent me to Gardener St School and a mini bus would come around and pick us up and bring us to school and back again. My first day in the school was very much a life changing experience.

I was now in a Traveller special class in a settled school for the very first-time in my life. I can recall very strongly reading the "Anne and Barry" book, which was at the time was meant for



senior infant level. I explained that, I was on "Golden gates to my teacher which was more appropriate for my age, I didn't think reading junior infant books was appropriate for me. I didn't know what to think and was shocked by all of this, my teacher was somewhat taken back by my education and she brought me to the head principle to explain the situation and suggested that I be moved to another class.

Unfortunately this didn't happen and I was thrown back in with everyone else with no changes to the reading materials given to me. It wasn't that I was any way smarter than any of the other Travellers children, It was just I was in a settled school prior and was treated more fairly in Cavan. Unfortunately in my new school all the Travellers were just thrown together into one class and give the same treatment, it didn't matter what level we were at .

We were treated like lepers by the school; for example the other settled children would have different playtimes in the schoolyard and we weren't allowed out until the settled children had gone back to class. We were very isolated at time and weren't allowed to mix with other settled children. I really couldn't understand why as a 10year old, we weren't allowed to play with the settled children. I was coming from settled school in Cavan town and I just could understand why this was happening in Dublin, but even then I knew it wasn't right.

I lost interest in my education after this and after making my confirmation I left school at the very young age of eleven years and starting working with my grandfather Big Tom Maughan, who sold lino and carpet and was very well known to the people of Ballymun. This was another form of Education in terms of life skills and becoming a young Traveller Man and starting to learn

how to provide for me and my family for future years ahead. I also recall the verbal abuse we got from some members of the settled community, who hated Travellers; to them we were just scum on the roadside, knackers; our caravans were vandalised whenever there was an opportunity and this has stayed with me all my life and has made me a better person today and shaped my views and how I see others.

At 18yrs, I met my future wife Geraldine Maughan who was just visiting a cousin in Ballymun. We fell in love and got married in Dublin in 1996. It was another life changing event for me. Geraldine Maughan who was from Mayo had lived in a house all her life until we got married. It seemed that somehow attitudes toward Travellers were very racially motivated and it was difficult place to live.

We were very lucky at the time as St Margret's was being built and my mother Kathleen was very involved in all the meetings with other Traveller Women and we were eventually offered a bay which was a great start in life and we were expected our first child, I had running hot and cold water, electricity for the very first time in my live.

I worked at the time gathering scrap metals, hawking, markets literally anything to make a living to put food on the table, I did this for years. We had one more child in Dublin and agreed

that we would move back to Cavan in 2004 for a change of environment along with the rest of my family as we are very close.

For the first time, I now found myself living in private rented accommodation in Cavan town. Our family was increasing, we had our third child in Cavan town who is doing so well in preschool, since coming back to Cavan town. Education is playing a bigger part in my life since getting involved with Cavan Traveller Movement. What inspired me to get involved was the lack of accommodation, my life experiences and the issues affecting Travellers here in Cavan and throughout the country.

I wanted to be part of this group to bring about change and liked what this group was about, as we were making decisions with the community as opposed to others making decisions for us here in Cavan, which was a big change.

Over the past 18 months, I have supported the establishing of the Cavan Traveller Movement. I am also chairperson of Cavan Traveller

Interagency group and was just recently elected by other Travellers on Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee. I was overwhelmed by the support here in Cavan town from Travellers as this was the first-time any local Traveller election was held. In 2013, I was successful in gaining a place on the Irish Traveller movement Community leadership course in Dublin and this was a big turning point for me.

I want to see better education for the next generation of young Travellers and be part of Cavan Traveller Movement in the future. For me I would like to play a bigger role and have more responsibility, I am still very new to all of this and I am just 36. It has been a great experience and would show that anyone can start at any age and change your life around. I have been so inspired by the many other people I have met on the leadership training and within the Irish Traveller Movement and also here in Cavan and hopeful someone else will be inspired by my story today.

John Mongan

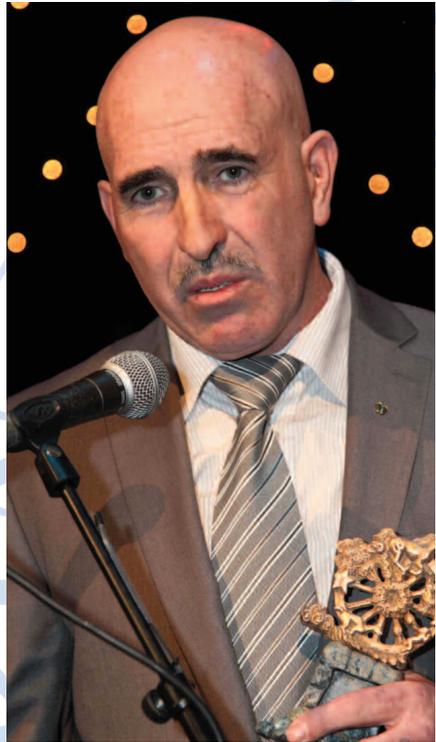
My name is John Mongan and I am from Galway. I have been a boxing coach with the Olympic Boxing Club for twenty years. During these years I have trained numerous young boxers in Galway to win County, Provincial and National titles.

I have always tried to instil in club members the values of hard work, commitment and dedication as the roots of achievement. I have worked hard with the Management Committee of the Olympic Boxing Club to secure the development of a local Sports Co-op and Social Club.

I have organised a number of events and international boxing tournaments including hosting a team from Chicago and the work of the club is much appreciated by the people of Galway as demonstrated by the high number of attendees.

I have always encouraged boxers from both Traveller and settled backgrounds to stay in school, pursue training and progress in life, both inside and outside the ring. I participated in a DVD and workpack promoting Traveller employment.

I am committed to the young people in the club, many of whom come from disadvantaged and RAPID areas, and as a volunteer I have given up countless number of evenings and weekends



training young people and bringing them to tournaments, including abroad.

When I occasionally have time off, my pastime is to represent Ireland as International referee.

Olympic Boxing Club has been in existence for 50 years, having been established in 1960 by Chick Gillen in Galway City. The club is now one of the biggest in the country, having 90 members, drawn from all over the city and beyond. Chick called the club 'Olympic' to reflect the ideals of the Olympics that the sport should be open to everyone regardless of race, creed or colour. The Club has always

stayed true to its ideals, and even had the honour of one of its members, Francis Barrett competing for his country in the 1996 Olympics. Many of the young members of the club come from disadvantaged backgrounds, and the Club has in many ways become a second home for those members in the evenings and at weekends.

In the present year, the club has won 5 All Ireland Champions at various

grades, 20 Connaught Champions and countless county titles. The club is the most successful underage boxing club in the country. In 2010, the club successfully hosted a team from the USA and also travelled to the UK to compete in international tournaments.

It is fair to say that over the last 15 years that my life has revolved around boxing and the Olympic Boxing Club.

John O'Brien

My name is John O'Brien and I am a Traveller Man from West Cork.

In 2012 I completed Module 1 in the Foroige Leadership Programme (Albert Schweitzer's Leadership for life). I finished my leaving certificate in 2013 and am currently studying Business Studies at The Cork Institute of Technology (CIT) .

I've applied to join An Garda Síochána and have passed the first and second stages. I'm waiting to hear if I have got through the third round to see if I will be offered an interview.

I've also applied to join the Garda reserves. Ever since I was a young lad at National school I wanted to go to college and to join the Guards and I am determined to achieve this aim and if I am not successful this time, I'll keep trying.



I've had huge support from my mother Elizabeth who has supported and encouraged me and my siblings to stay at school and to go to college. My mother never got the opportunity to go to college and she has always wanted us as her children to finish school, get into third level education and follow their dreams. It has been great to have a mother like that support me through my education.

John Paul Maughan

My name is John Paul (JP) and I live in West Cork. Sport is a huge passion for me. I grew up in Northern Ireland and started playing Gaelic Football at age 10 when the principle of my school asked me to play for my local club, Irvinestown GAA, County Fermanagh. I played for the club for a year and won a medal for under twelve sporting achievements.

I didn't play for a tam for several years as my family were on the road, however as soon as we settled in West Cork I started playing again for my school, Scoil na mBuachailli in Clonakilty, and it was there that I was spotted by James O Donovan (Youth Development Officer for Clonakilty GAA) who encouraged me to join the local club.

Since then I've come on in leaps and bounds: I was team captain for the under 16's Clonakilty football team and lead them to a county title and I've won two Munster medals playing for Cork under 15's and 16s. I've played with the Cork Minors for three months, and have played with the Cork under 17's.

In 2012 I was manager of the girls' soccer and football teams at my local community college but had to give it up because of my studies and personal sporting commitments. I also play hurling, soccer and rugby and have



won medals for my sporting achievements in these areas. I love sport so much that I cycle an 8km round trip 5 days a week to attend training and matches. My dream is to play for Cork Seniors and to play at Croke Park and I hope to make my family proud of my sporting accomplishments and achievements.

I am working towards my leaving Cert and would love to go to college to study Sports or Youth and Community Work.

Oein DeBhairduin

My name is Oein DeBhairduin and I am from Galway, although I have been living in Dublin for three years now. Currently I am employed as a community employment supervisor with the Clondalkin Travellers Training in which I am blessed to work with 19 young Travellers on their journey towards a higher level of education, training and personal empowerment.

My own personal educational background is in developmental psychology and I am also a trained herbalist. I currently run a small online herbal store called "The Irish Apothecary" in which I sell urban harvested resins, oils and blends. Alongside this I also run an online blog called "Barefoot Pavee" (which was shortlisted in last year's Irish Blog Awards) in which I actively promote traditional skills, craftsmanship, recipes, lore and many of the interesting and beautiful aspects of our language and community.

Currently I am also a columnist for two national magazines and a regional newspaper, run a bi-weekly urban herbalist alliance group and a harpist group with Scéalaithe na hÉireann and am a core member of the LGBT Pavee Support Group, a peer alliance of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Travellers and Romas that seeks to cultivate safe places in which LGBT individuals can chat openly, seek and give peer based advice, influence policy development through identification of needs and provide a platform in which



this aspect of our community can express their views publicly.

I am passionately proud of my own cultural background, a factor that has had a profound effect on all areas of my life and I feel that pride should never be just a word or a statement but an act of will and manifestation that produces a positive and discernible presence within our lives.

Alongside the embracing beautiful strength of my family I am inspired by the bravery in our everyday people, on how our small voices when insistent on change can grow to be powerful in the wake of it utterances. I believe that our community is one not of struggle and challenge, but one of beauty and potential. One that is filled with strong men and fierce women, wise elders and courageous youth and I hope that as we move forward that we not only continue to treasure our past and shared heritage, but continue to push beyond old barriers and hollow expectations and become the community that we have always desired."

John O'Sullivan

My name is John O'Sullivan I am a Traveller man and Community development worker from Cork. I started working in the Traveller Visibility Group (TVG) in Cork City in 2005 on a voluntary basis. During this time I was working closely with the development worker working with men's groups and organising health activities. Through this work and with the help, and support of TVG I decided to take on a two year Youth and Community Development course in University College Cork. I really enjoyed the course and completed it in 2007.

I then started working in TVG on a part-time basis working with Traveller men's groups. While working with these groups we decided to develop the structure of our group work and base it on health activities, creating a Traveller men's health and fitness programme. The programme had emphasis on losing weight, getting fit and improving overall health and well-being. I really enjoyed the job and took every opportunity to develop my personal skills training.

I completed training such as Group Facilitation, Community Leadership, Computers, Family Support, Supervision and Suicide Intervention training. With this training and the experience I gained working with Traveller men I felt better equipped to work in this area of community development in a more intense role.



In January 2009, funding was made available by the Traveller Health Unit/HSE for a full-time Traveller Men's Health Development Worker in Cork City and I was lucky enough to get the post. I started work in early January and it has been very encouraging process of work over the past number of years. The work has changed a lot during this time when need to respond to the needs of the community which is very important when working in Traveller Community Development.

I currently facilitate men's groups, doing different projects and programmes such as woodwork, metal work, football, Cork City Marathon, gym and swim classes with men's groups and teens. I also deliver training and workshops in

different areas such as Sexual Health and family Support. I also co-ordinate Back to Education Programmes for Traveller men. In March 2014, I started In-reach work with Traveller men's groups in Cork Prison which is very interesting and challenging I am also a council member of Minceirs Whiden and also sit on different Traveller Accommodation sub committee's that are involved in the rolling out of Traveller Accommodation Programmes every 4 years.

Since March 2013 I have been involved in a working group set up to implement recommendations from a report my organisation compiled on Traveller Horse ownership with one recommendation looking at the setting up of a Traveller Horse Project in Cork. We along with the Dept. Of Agriculture, Cork City Council, the ISPCA and Cork City Partnership compiled and sent a proposal for such a project off to the Dept. of Agriculture seeking funding early this year so here's hoping their might just be (fingers crossed) a Traveller Horse Project in Cork in the near future.

The Traveller men's groups I work with have proven themselves an important outlet for the men to get involved, to come together and access both health and social facilities without fear of discrimination or refusal of services.

During the time I have been a development worker here in Cork I have noticed a lot of changes within the community I live and work in. My own organisation was viewed by men here as a women's project, as it was women who set it up and went to the meetings down the years. However, this trend has now started to change with more men using our building and taking up services we offer such as support around drug and alcohol or gambling addiction, employment skills training, LGBT training, accommodation or health support. Traveller men are more active in Cork, getting involved in issues affecting the community such as accommodation, education, discrimination, suicide awareness or Traveller identity and pride.

Men are now getting involved in formal FETAC accredited Education Programmes. We have men who were never part of a group before, leading groups now. I am very happy with the progress we have made in Cork with Traveller men's involvement but it is a long road which will no doubt have its ups and downs into the near future. I hope to see more Traveller men getting involved to affect positive change and becoming paid workers so they can be role models for younger Traveller men and women coming up thank you.

Keith Maughan

I was born in Ireland in 1983, born in to a family of 13; being 2nd youngest I was always encouraged from an early age to follow my dreams and ambitions in life and to be who I wanted to be; that being a member of the Traveller community.

Growing up wasn't always easy especially during my school years; being excluded by the teacher's at school, being left at the back of the classroom with colours and paper while the others were being taught to spell. After 6th class I decided to drop out of school as I couldn't see the point anymore. Two years after leaving school I decided to go back to get my education as my parents were persistent that this was the way forward and I went on to take my exams.

What encouraged me to go forward was being a Traveller myself and knowing how I was treated; this wasn't what I wanted for the younger Travellers growing up. I knew what it felt like to be turned away from the door of a night club because you were a member of the Traveller community and I didn't want the younger Traveller's to have to face the shame you feel when you are turned away from place's because of who you are, so this is what got me thinking that it was time to learn more about the Law's that were brought in by the Irish Government in 2000, the Equal Status Act. Knowing this information meant that I could pass it on to younger Travellers so that they would know that if they were discriminated against in any



way there was something that they could do about it.

I started as a volunteer with Mayo Travellers Support Group (MTSG) in 2010 and with Involve Youth Services in 2011. I have also volunteered with the Order of Malta since 2008. I was interested in volunteering with MTSG because I wanted to learn about the organisation, the work they do for Traveller's and how they help them. In December 2012 I was employed by MTSG as a part time men's Community Development Worker (CDW) and have continued my training in ASSIST mental health, men's health, FAI Kick start, and accommodation and the ITM/CAN Leadership & community development course. My role as a CDW is to engage with Traveller men and raise awareness of the health issues that they face and support the men to get more involved in the community. I also link with other service providers to share information on the best way forward for Traveller men's health.

I really think that education is the way forward for Traveller's as information is power, the more power you have the more control you have over your life.

David Mc Carthy

My name is David Mc Carthy and I work with Ennis Community Development Project as a Peer Education support worker for young Travellers at second level. It is a project that has a focus on education but in an holistic way which promotes the development of young Travellers to their own strengths.

Our aim is to support these young people to build self-esteem through engaging with sports, cookery, the arts and health and fitness awareness. We are guided by their interests and we link closely with the schools in Ennis. From being involved in this I have gone onto college to study Youth and Community work in University College Cork.

I am also passionate about sport in all forms, but am probably known best in Clare for playing soccer. I started playing soccer at the age of 7, inspired by watching my late Uncle Eddie McCarthy (RIP) play for Avenue Utd and Co. Clare. My Uncle Eddie was a great player and scored over 500 goals for clubs and county. He encouraged me and many other young people from all communities to play soccer.

I played for Cloughleigh Celtic as a schoolboy up to the age of 16 winning 4 leagues and 5 cups and when I was 16 I signed for Lifford FC, and played in the league of Ireland under 21s. I had 2 good years at Lifford and then he was called by Avenue United, the most successful club in the Clare league



Avenue Utd. In my 1st year with Avenue I won player of the year and was top scorer in the Clare leagues premier division. I also won the Clare league, Clare cup, FAI area cup and Munster junior Area cup.

I got called up to the Clare Oscar Traynor senior team and reached the All Ireland final but we were beaten by Wexford in Ennis and this was a real low-point in my sporting life. In my next 2 years with Avenue Utd. I was top scorer in the league once and Avenue Utd and we won the Clare cup twice in a row, and I got man of the match in the final where I scored both goals in a 2 nil win.

This year has been the most successful to date. In September 2013 I was asked to be the captain of the Clare senior soccer team at age of 24 (youngest captain ever for Clare). It is a real honor to take this role for my county and I was also picked for trials for the Irish Junior International team which is the highest you can reach at amateur level. This was the best achievement I have had in sports as there was only 80 trialists picked out of nearly 45 thousand players. It was also a clear indication to me that my mother and father gave me the right advice to go back and play the sport they knew I loved so much. I'll be forever grateful to them that they always encouraged me and supported me when times were difficult for me in my earlier years and also the fact they always bought me all the gear I needed when money was tight.

I am also a keen golfer. I took up the game in 2010 and in the 1st 2 years I got my handicap down to 13 and by last year I won a major tournament and finished 4th in the golfer of the year and represented Pierce Pucell team in the Munster Championship.

In 2014 I was honoured to receive the sports award as part of The Traveller Pride Awards recognising my achievements in soccer. It was a huge honour for me to have my achievements recognised at a national level.

Brian Mc Donagh

My name is Brian McDonough. I was born in Sligo and reared up here in Cavan town, all my life. I'm one of 14 children and 2 passed away, we've always lived in Cavan and have a long history here in Cavan town, as far, as I can recall the McDonaghs were one of the first Traveller Families to stay in Cavan town along with the Maughans and Mongans.

Like most Travellers years ago at school, I was given a colouring book and colours and put at back of the class. There was no expectation that we would be able to learn to read or write. We didn't get the same opportunity as other settled children at the time and at 12 years I was told by the principle not come back to school after a run in, and that was end of my education.

My continued Traveller education was with my father Martin McDonagh. We went off hawking in Cavan and we did this for years. I eventually come across my future wife Theresa Ward in Sligo on my travels and asked Theresa to marry me and two year later we got married in Northern Ireland at very young age and we now have five beautiful children today, three girls and two boys.

We lived on the halting site in Cavan with over 30 other families and eventually our group housing was built in 2006 under the Traveller



Accommodation programme. We were delighted to be offered one of those houses.

I eventually met the trainer of Smythborough boxing Club, Monaghan and I volunteered to come onto the committee and help out with the training the lads and supporting the club from 2007-2010. I volunteered for those years and over time, I learned a lot. As my family increased, I could no longer give time to the Boxing club and step down from Committee.

The last year in Cavan seems like a very long-time, but over this time, I have gained so much valuable experiences working with the Cavan Traveller Movement and am working on the Cavan Traveller Movement Men's Shed programme. I also started the Community Development Leadership Training with the Irish Traveller Movement FETAC Level 5. This has changed my life around over the past year and giving me so much insight into what is happening around the country. I couldn't do this without the great support of my family.

I am the first Traveller to be employment in Cavan Traveller Movement and am also one of the founding members of the group. My role is to support and start up the Cavan

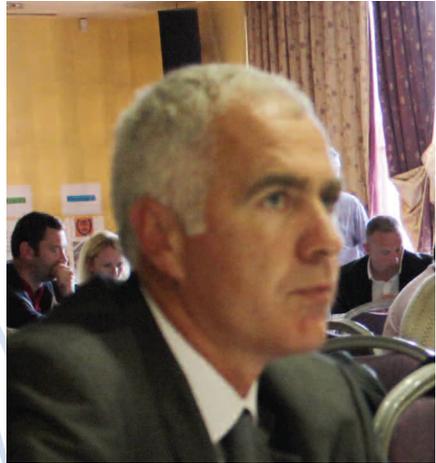
Traveller Men Shed programme here in Cavan. I'm linking in with other groups in September 2014 and will be looking at other Traveller projects around the County. I'm very interested in seeing Traveller men getting more involved in the work and also just recently completed suicide awareness training in Longford. I know, I still have a long road ahead of me and am still learning, I've started my journey and know that the road ahead is long but I'm committed. If we don't do this, no one else will, for too long in Cavan there was nothing for Travellers.

Cavan Traveller Movement is the first Traveller-led local organisation in the county, I'm very proud to be part of this movement.

Martin Reilly

I'm Martin Reilly and I am from Carrick-on-Shannon County Leitrim. I'm married to Tina and we have six children and two beautiful granddaughters. I lived in England for 10 years before returning to live in Carrick over 12 years ago. I'm the Chairperson of the Aughameeny Residents Association on a local authority housing estate. I'm the only Traveller on the Committee and I've been working with the Traveller and Settled residents to improve the quality of life and the environment for the estate.

I am also Chairperson of the Leitrim Travellers Development Group (LTDG) which I helped establish in 2013 with the help of funding from the EU, through the Leitrim Peace III programme. It started with myself together with Eddie Stokes, John Mongan, Robert Stokes, and Tom Stokes and we worked together with different facilitators to develop the LTDG constitution and launch the Leitrim Travellers Development Group last December. We also completed training in board functioning and are now members of the LTDG Board which also includes settled people. While it is early days yet, I believe the Leitrim Traveller Development Group will in time make a big difference to the lives of Travellers in Leitrim as more people support and get involved in the activities and work of the Group.



I feel privileged to be working with the Leitrim Travellers Development Group and that it is a great opportunity to do something that will benefit my children and grandchildren as well as the Traveller community in Leitrim. My involvement in The Leitrim Travellers Development Group has given me the chance to meet Travellers from different parts of the country through the ITM and Minceirs Whiden and learn from the work they are doing for Travellers. I have helped set up health and fitness and training opportunities for Traveller men and women in Carrick and I have the chance to interact with local agencies and community groups and to speak about the views and interests of Travellers in County Leitrim.

Leitrim Traveller Development Group can be contacted on leitrimtravellers@gmail.com

Martin Warde

My name is Martin Warde, and I am 29 years old. I come from a small town called Tuam in County Galway. It is one of those towns hidden amongst the hustle of Traffic going to either Sligo or Galway City. Tuam, with its massive personalities and incredible characters is responsible for the person writing this piece today. It is fair to say that while I grew up in Tuam - Listening to the Saw doctors and playing soccer in the Christian Brothers school car park- I was also very much aware of my other history, my Traveller history.

While I was young I often faced situations that were negative, purely based on my background. While in secondary school during my junior cert year, my Art teacher decided that it would be somewhat appropriate to sit the 5 Traveller children together at the front of the class. My teacher was obviously thinking that the Boys would prefer sitting "amongst their own". My lovely teacher was wrong in so many beautiful ways, because I was never one to overshadow one culture with another. For me, Being Irish and being a Traveller were not mutually exclusive. I relished the idea of knowing more about the Cork or Killybegs traditions, I loved to hear the boarders tell tales of their hometown. I was a curious and somewhat odd student, mainly because I didn't buy into the clannish mentality that school usually produced. I was, in



essence, a free soul searching out the opportunity to engage with others. It was that mentality that shaped the adult I became. I owe a lot to my parents, because they forced me to be a good person, with social analysis and care that is oft times lost with the poisons a disadvantaged life can sometimes create. My life took a grand turn, when I turned 20. I was finished school, and seeking out something out of the ordinary. That is when I was presented with the opportunity to be part of a TV show for RTE, Titled "Des Bishop, Joy in da hood". It was at this point I really became known by the moniker of Martin BEANZ Warde. I have performed in Vicar

street, The Cork Opera house, nationwide and in the UK. However, even comedy has its pitfalls, and sometimes not being in with the “in” crowd can make obtaining Gigs difficult. So, like my Travelling Brethren before me, I moved on- to acting. However, while I await my big break and a called to Hollywood, I will complete my Bachelor of Arts degree and seek out societies answers

within between the pages of a sociology book. If I had one bit of advice I would give to anyone today, it would be this: never live a life that requires you to denounce who you are. Never fill your space with objects immovable by reason, love or understanding, for those objects are merely there to block your path on an otherwise beautiful journey.

Martin McDonagh

My name is Martin McDonagh and I am from Cork. I have been part of the men’s groups here in the Traveller Visibility Group Cork for the past 5 years. I have been part of the groups and have led the men’s groups doing different woodwork and metalwork projects.

In 2010 the TVG and other regional groups in the Cork and Kerry area formed a Traveller Men’s Leadership group that meet once a month to engage in different training or pieces of work I am delighted to be part of this and always try to have an input around the different work going on.

I have been leading a teen gym programme with young Traveller men that meet on a weekly basis. I have participated in SafeTalk workshops,



Traveller Ethnicity workshops and has been on a FETAC accredited Back to Education Initiative since September 2013 that TVG run in their offices.

Christy Moorehouse

I am Christy Moorehouse and I work with Bray Travellers Development Group here in Bray Co Wicklow. I was the first Traveller to be qualified as a Community Reinforcement Approach (CRA) therapist with Dr Robert Myers PhD University of New Mexico, Centre on Alcoholism, Substance Abuse and Addictions, USA.

Over the last 9 years I've been working with the DAISH Project, a Traveller Specific Drugs initiative established in response to the growing issue of substance abuse within the Traveller community. I have trained in the Training for Transformation Programme, ASIST suicide awareness training, Sexual Health and Drugs Training with Dublin Aids Alliance, Leadership in the Community with the University of Limerick, Harm Reduction Training with Merchants Quay Ireland and Addiction Studies with NUI Maynooth. I also have completed a number of programmes with Merchants Quay Ireland (MQI) MQI Cocaine and crack-cocaine Programme, MQI Safer Injecting Techniques, Therapeutic Crisis intervention Training, M.I.T-Motivational Interviewing Techniques, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Dual Diagnosis Training, Strengthening Families Programme, Copping programme. Harm Reduction Practitioner Training -Health Service Executive addiction services



I've been involved in this work for over nine years: I started as a volunteer with Bray Travellers Community Development Group running summer activities and from this I was drawn into working in the field of addiction/substance misuse. In 2005, I accepted the offer to work again with Bray Travellers CDG as an Addiction Outreach Worker, which is what I do today.

I completed all my training and Education whilst working with DAISH Project and Bray Travellers CDG. Bray Local Drugs Task Force have been exceptional in their support and continued funding. I must say that without the support of all three organizations I

don't know where I would be today in terms of my career as I left school at 14 with little or no Education. Jim O' Brien and Michael Mason of Bray Travellers CDG has been the back bone of my support throughout those years.

I continue to broaden my Education and training for the benefit of myself and my clients from the Traveller community. I have a strong interest in working for my own community and I'm very proactive in the human rights of Travellers. I have travelled extensively over the years and I have a keen interest in different cultures and minority groups globally.

Hughie Maughan

My name is Hughie Maughan and I am from Ballymun, Dublin. I have always tried to be involved himself in the community and have been active in residents' groups, men's group activities and attempting to divert young people from anti-social behaviour through activities such as boxing. I have been involved in the work of St Margaret's Community Association (SMTCA) as a volunteer for well over 10 years. My latest project is working alongside the SMTCA development worker to deliver a course entitled Drug and Alcohol Awareness.

I have always been interested in sports and in keeping fit. In recent years, running has become my passion and I have used this as a way of helping others. In 2007 I completed the Dublin City Marathon and raised €11,000 for Temple Street Children's Hospital. Since then I have gone on to run nine marathons in total, six of which were for fundraising



purposes (including New York, London and Berlin) and I have also completed numerous half marathons and shorter road races for charity.

In total I have raised more than 50,000 euro for charity, mostly for Temple Street.

In September 2014 I will attempt to raise more money for Temple Street hospital by taking part in the Berlin Marathon.

Christopher Hand

My name is Christopher Hand and I am 22 and live in Navan. I am a CE Participant in the Meath Traveller's Workshop and work with Involve Youth Project Meath. In my work I try to support and encourage young Travellers to get more involved in local activities and try to lead by example.

Last September I volunteered to be the Involve & Meath Travellers' Workshop representative at the Tara High Kings Festival and to compete in the tasks originally designed for Na Fianna. Although I didn't win on the day I did come in a healthy 5th position out of 14 contestants. I am always willing to put myself forward for any task whether it is to carry a large 8ft Puppet on my back for the Saint Patrick's Day Parade or cooking with the group. I think it is important never to be afraid to challenge stereotypes. I recently was part of the Involve calendar which featured 11 Traveller men and is being sold to raise money for charity.

I was recently crowned King of the Navan Shamrock Festival by being voted in by the people of Navan for recognition for my work with young people. It is the first time a member of the Travelling community has won this competition. I have worked hard to get where I am coming up through the Youthreach education system, where staff and I still have strong relationships years later.



This year I was honoured to win the 2014 Traveller Pride Award for youth and was delighted to be part of the awards ceremony recognising my achievement. I have just become a new father and want to be an inspiration to my new son Kayden and my fiancé Sarah.

Through my work I always try to be a good role model for other young Traveller boys and men, by breaking down the stereotypes people may have about being a Traveller and it what it means to be a Traveller Man.

Often people have their mind made up about Travellers by the negative stuff they see on the TV and read in the newspapers, I would he would like to see a positive story being told about Travellers and Traveller Culture.

Hugh Friel

My name is Hugh Friel and I am from Donegal. I joined Donegal Travellers project as a young man and since that time I have taken on leadership roles and worked at both the local and national levels. I have worked at Donegal Travellers Project (DTP) for 15 years and have campaigned tirelessly against institutional and individual racism. As a leader within the local Traveller community, I try to promote Traveller participation at all levels of the work of DTP and I deliver capacity building programmes to Traveller men.

In 2013 there were some extremely negative anti-Traveller comments made by a locally elected representative and a house allocated to a Traveller family was subsequently burned out. This led to a media storm and as a Traveller leader in Donegal I led the DTP campaign to challenge this negativity and tried to get Traveller voices heard, especially the needs of the family who had just lost their home, on local and national radio, newspapers and national TV.

I am a representative for the organisation on a range of local committees such as the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee, the Social Inclusions Measures group of the Council, the Traveller Interagency Committee, the Community Health forum and many other local committees. I also represent the Irish Traveller Movement on the National Traveller Health Advisory



forum and am an active member of Minceirs Whiden and the National Traveller Health Network.

Recently I started the ITM training on Leadership and am supporting two members of the community from Donegal on the course as they look to develop their leadership skills. In my role as a development worker and as an activist, I have campaigned for the recognition of Travellers as an ethnic group and advocate for the rights of the community in a human rights framework and continue to call for the redistribution of resources to the community to address the multiple levels of disadvantage the community experiences as a result racism and marginalisation in Ireland.

I also work in solidarity with other ethnic minorities in county Donegal to build relationships and promote a collective approach to inter-culturalism in the county. I'm also active in sporting activities which are focused on Sport Against Racism.

Martin Mahon

My name is Martin Mahon and I live in Tralee. I am 20 years old and I am an actor and playwright. I got into acting from watching T.V. and found I had a passion for it from a very young age. At 16 I joined the "The Free Radicals Youth Theatre" in Siamsa Tire, in Tralee where my talents were given the chance to grow.

My first play was called "My Big Greek Play" where I played a guard trying to stop a rebellion. I then left for two years to do my Leaving Certificate in Mercy Mounthawk, which I sat June 2012 and passed everything. I rejoined the theatre in September 2012 and have been there ever since. I acted in a play in December, 2012 called "Short-cuts" where I played an upper class business man. In March, 2013 I played three different roles in a play called "X". One part was a lonely guy and the second part I played was a husband. The third part was the most difficult to date, as I had to play the part of a lady! The director trusted me and said I was the only one capable of playing the part.

In the next play which was about 21st century teenagers I played four different parts. The first part was a silent part as a bank robber. The second part as a person with difficulties who escaped from a nursing home. The third part was



where I played a debt collector. In September 2013 I took part in a play called "Stangers" where I played three roles.

I joined the Kerry School of Music while I was still involved with Siamsa Tire where we are going to act in the musical called "The Producers". I also write my own plays for Siamsa Tire. I have written seven different pieces and have entered script writing competitions. I also sing and play the guitar. This year I was nominated and won the 2014 Traveller Pride Award for Arts & Culture. It was a great honour for me to be part of the ceremony and I met the actor and musician David Essex, who presented me with my award. I am very proud of my culture and plan to be a successful actor and playwright in the future.

Anthony Nevin

My name is Anthony Nevin and I was born in 1973 in Mullingar. I spent the first half of my life growing up in County Longford. I attended Melview primary school. As a member of the Travelling community going to mainstream primary school I knew from the very beginning we were different to the settled community. I was always led to believe that Travellers were never going to get anywhere within Irish society so therefore this resulted in me leaving school with very basic literacy.

In 1989 I moved to Dublin and started attending a training centre run by the Christian brothers for Traveller boys, it was in this that I took up the skills of woodwork and realised that this was the road I wanted to continue. My father and grandfather before me were very much into horses and barrel top wagons. From this I also got interested in them. In 2010 I started to build miniature wagons and found that I really enjoyed making them and seeing the finished product. In 2013 I started to make what we call a full size wagon and have since completed it. Also in 2013 I started working with a group of young Traveller men from the Coolock area who were also interested in making wagons this was a very enjoyable event and through this each of them made a wagon that they now have to keep at home.



The importance of wagons to Traveller culture cannot be underestimated. The wagon was not just shelter, but also a symbol of identity. The colours on the wagon are of 3 primary colours, Red, Yellow and Green. Red being the colour of blood this was also the protector of bad luck. Yellow was the colour of the sun and Green the Earth.

While wagons may not be used for living in the modern world today, what they represent to our past and our future is what we decide them to represent. We moved to encourage the revival of this art forum. This is not about regression but about promoting our very existence and our right to be seen as a viable culture and people with a distinct and unique way of life.

In doing this I hope I will be an inspiration to the younger Traveller generation and to inspire them to be proud of their culture.

John Quilligan

My name is John Quilligan and I am a 64 year old Traveller man. I come from New Castle West, Co Limerick but have lived in Killarney for almost 39 years. I have been married to Margaret for 41 years and we have 11 children, 17 grandchildren and 1 great grandchild. My family are the light of my life. I am so proud of each and every one of my children and grandchildren. My own mother, was a very loving woman and reared all her sons to treat their wives and their children with love, kindness and respect. She taught us that it doesn't make you any less of a man to be good to your wife and children, in fact, she used to say that it makes you a better man.

My wife and I told all our children to reach for the stars and we ensured they all had a good standard of education. They all had to work in the family business which is market trading. I wanted them to be prepared for life and to be self-sufficient and able to make a living. We had to adapt from time to time – I have sold blankets, furniture, brass, radios, seat covers, gates, clothes and safety wear over the years. We moved into a house in 1981 but remained nomadic for the summer months in order to do the big fairs in the South of Ireland. Now I am retired due to ill health, but I hope to return to the markets soon when my health improves.

I met many of my closest friends in the markets. My friends come from all walks of life. In the late 70's and early 80's



families from Pakistan and India started to do the markets. My children grew up with their children and it was hard to see the racism they suffered. Irish people have travelled the world to make better lives for their families for centuries – but sadly we are not too accepting of others who want to do the same. We are all human beings, all trying to make the world a better place to live in for our children. It saddens me when I see our fine young people unable to make a living in this country. Travellers are discriminated against and even though only a small minority commit crimes the whole community has to pay for it. If you take away a person's ability to earn a living honestly, you take away their pride. You take away their future. Our traditional ways of earning a living are becoming impossible. My three sons have all had to emigrate at times and you fear that they will settle wherever they are and never return home. Apart from missing them and worrying about them, it's not easy being left with my eight daughters and my wife! They are all independent women and very opinionated. Thank God for it but it makes for a lively house! We always operate an open house for our children –

no matter what their age they are welcome back home. All we want is for our children to be happy within themselves and to be who they are.

I have two main interests – Music and Horses. All my family are musical. I play the guitar and sing. Our family get together all involve music. My other big interest is in horses. My family joke with me that I spend more time with the horses than I do with them. My grandchildren love coming up to the land with me to look after the horses and each one of them have a pet horse. I take very good care of my horses and it disturbs me when I hear negative media reports

about Travellers and horses. The majority of the horse owners I know would feed their horses before they would feed themselves. Having horses is a great past time and way of dealing with stress. My people have had horses for generations. I couldn't think of a life without having horses in it. I am very proud to be a Traveller, we come from great people and we should all walk tall. Sometimes I think that Travellers will never have equal rights or a fair chance in Ireland but then when I see Travellers on the news, on the radio or in the Dail and I have hope that life will be better for my grandchildren.

Patrick O'Donoghue

My name is Patrick O'Donoghue and I'm from Cork. I've been part of the men's groups here in the Traveller Visibility Group Cork the last 8 years. During this time I've become more involved in the issues affecting my community and I've begun working closely with the TVG men's development worker taking on the running of the men's group.

Our group meets on a weekly basis doing different projects such as woodwork, a full Cart Restoration project metalwork and health based activities such as gym and swim classes. In 2010, The TVG and other regional groups in the Cork and Kerry area formed a Traveller Men's Leadership group that meets once a month to engage in different training or



pieces of work. I am a part of this leadership programme and always try to get involved in the discussions that are taking place. I've participated in SafeTalk workshops, Traveller Ethnicity workshops and in January of this year I started back to education on a FETAC Back to Education Initiative ran here in our centre.

Michael Mongan

My name is Michael Mongan and I am from Galway. I have been a volunteer with the Olympic Boxing Club, Galway and have managed to get the membership to grow and grow. The boxing club has established itself as a hub for youth work activities. I work strongly with Foróige and the Garda Diversion Youth Project to arrange transport and additional supports for young people.

Through our links the Galway Sports Partnership and local Community Resource Centre link in with us to organise Healthy Promotion projects with the club. I have coached numerous National Champions and International Champions including two European Silver Medallists. In January, 2013, I was the main organiser in bringing team of 12 lads from his local club, Olympic B.C. to Aalborg Denmark to compete in their first International Tournament "The Viking Boxing Cup" which they won, bringing home 7 gold, 4 silver and a bronze.

Later that year we also travelled to Poland for an International Club Show. Details of all these events are available on the Olympic B C Facebook page, which I maintain, which means that club tournaments and fund raisers are very well publicised and local business and local organisations have easy access to information on the club, opening times and special events.



I was honoured this March to be selected as a coach for Team Ireland in an Irish International v England in Basingstoke where Olympic Boxing club member James Cleary boxed on the night. Team Ireland won the match 4-3. All boxing clubs in Galway City are very proud that the city has produced that I am a coach with the Irish Team.

I am very proud of my identity as a Traveller man and my culture. I volunteer with the Olympic Boxing club 5 nights per week and I organise tournaments and transport most weekends. Last year, the club brought a team to 44 tournaments in Ireland. The international trips to England, Denmark and Poland are of great value and excitement for the young boxers involved. (Teams from Sweden and England have recently been hosted here by Olympic B.C. also).

This season Olympic Boxing has nine national titles and three of those boxers will represent Ireland later this year at the European championships. We also claimed our first female national champion in the club's history this year and we also had our first senior champion for our club since 1996 when Francis Barrett won the welterweight

title. I have also just completed my AIBA 1 star European coaching exam earlier in the month I am now recognised as a European coach. In our club we have a European one star coach and also a European one star referee/judge as my dad, John Mongan (who is also in this booklet) passed that exam a few years back.

Martin Mongan

I am Martin Mongan and I'm from Donegal. I'm twenty four and I am married to Marie. We live in Letterkenny with their daughter, Lena. I have been involved in Donegal Travellers Project for a number of years. I first became involved in the project as a young person through the youth project and then I went on to become involved as a voluntary youth leader.

During this time I had many achievements and completed the President's Award and trained in Sports Leadership with the FAL. I was involved in an acclaimed arts project and with another young Traveller. We completed a stone sculpture of a boat which was exhibited as part of the Errigal Arts Festival. It is now a permanent feature in Letterkenny town park.

Now as an adult, I have remained involved in Traveller work, often volunteering on the men's health and fitness programme and also in the summer youth programmes. I was also



employed on a short term project as a youth leader where I shared my skills and experiences with young men from the community.

I am currently studying for a FETAC Level 5 Major Award in Community Development through the Irish Travellers Movement. This course has inspired me and built up my confidence. I have met with other members of the community who are taking on leadership roles right across the country and I am confident that going back to education as an adult can make a real difference to people's lives.

