

# Newsletter

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## A Gala Performance For Ards



Saturday 9 April saw the fruits of many months of hard work on stage at **A Gala Performance for Ards** in the beautiful Ulster Hall, Belfast. It certainly delivered on its promise to be “one night to remember - for a concert you’ll never forget!” A standing ovation, following the massed finale ‘You’ll Never Walk Alone’, testified to the variety and range of talent that Ards can boast.

The Gala Performance was supported by Mayor David Smyth, as we are his chosen charity this year. It brought together over 200 performers from right across the Ards community to showcase the wealth of musical talent in the town. From polished professional soloists to the youngest school child starting out on their musical training, the **Gala Performance for Ards** celebrated the cultural diversity of the town and offered a glimpse into how well the Ards community work together regardless of age, tradition and background.

Soloists Fr. Martin O’Hagan, our director Diane Petherick and Jeff Anderson drew on musical styles from Irish traditional through musical theatre to jazz and classical. The audience also enjoyed St. Finian’s Primary School’s ‘Edelweiss’ with Father Martin and Londonderry Primary School’s colourful performance of excerpts from ‘The Jungle Book’.

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# A Gala Performance For Ards

*(Continued from page 1)*

Andrew Doherty led Regent House's wind band in an exciting and professional programme of pop and big band jazz classics and Movilla High School's traditional Ulster Scots medleys, including Jake Magill's drum solo, had the audience on the edge of their seats. Ards Choral Society demonstrated their versatility, with selections from Gershwin as well as Handel's 'Hallelujah Chorus' (accompanied by Noel Williamson on the magnificent Mulholland Organ) marking the start and end of the concert's first half.

Representatives of The Link were on hand to sell programmes and talk about the work of the charity. Audience members were also able to learn about an upcoming trip that some young people will be taking to Hungary, to participate in a football tournament and learn about other cultures. A team of willing volunteers helped backstage and in the preparation of a mountain of sandwiches and numerous cups of tea and coffee for the huge cast. Diane Holt, the Director of The Link, said of the concert: *"Our aim in having this event was to celebrate the talent and cultural diversity in Ards. But we had such a good time in doing it, and from the feedback I have had, people left the Ulster Hall feeling uplifted and encouraged! As Van Morrison says, 'Wouldn't it be great if it was like this all the time'!"*

Our heartfelt thanks go to the Mayor, Councillor David Smyth and his team at Ards Borough Council and all of the schools and choirs who did so much to make the evening such a success. We are particularly grateful to Peninsula Print and Design, Northern Bank (Ards Branch) and T.G. Eakin for their generous sponsorship of the event.



# Marc Wins Award

## Befriending Project Recognition Award

At the end of 2010 the Making a Real Change (MARC) Project won the regional section of the **Befriending Project Recognition Award**. The project helps people with addiction problems, supporting a reduction in self-harm, promoting sobriety and helping service users to maintain independence. Four recent 'graduates' of the MARC's support programme have achieved over 2 years of sobriety after an average of 20 years of chronic addiction.

The awards are a part of a national campaign, called **Supporting Life's Journeys**,

which seeks to celebrate and support the many individuals and organisations who help to address poverty and social exclusion through mentoring and befriending. Mentors and befrienders are usually volunteers who are trained and supported by a range of charities and organisations to provide one-to-one support for vulnerable or at risk people.

Mentoring and befriending have long been recognised as powerful and cost effective approaches to helping people achieve their full potential and avoid damaging or even criminal behaviour.



Anne Faloon, Tim McGarry, Robin Newton and a MARC client

Steve Matthews, Chief Executive of the MBF, which organised the awards, says: "Individuals, projects, funders and commissioners across Northern Ireland's have demonstrated how mentoring and befriending can transform people's lives. They help the most vulnerable people in our society, from the very young to the very old, cope with real difficulties and challenges."

"We had huge numbers of entries to the awards, with many people and projects being nominated by members of the public. It was really difficult for the judges to choose between so many diverse examples of excellence, so we really would like to congratulate today's winners; they are incredibly special to have got one of these awards."

# The Eng

Over the last few years THE LINK has been providing free classes for anyone who wants to learn English as a foreign language. North Down has quite a variety of folk who have come here to work. I visited them on Monday 4 April and was made very welcome. Five separate groups were all beavering away. Each group had a teacher/group leader and was working on exercises appropriate to the stage they had reached. I was impressed by the variety and usefulness of the activities.



**Stefan** and **Martin** come to the class from Killinchy, but their native country is **Bulgaria**. They were working with volunteer teacher Elizabeth Black on a news magazine from a web site called Newsademic.com. It contains articles from all over the world and is written in reasonably simple English. Elizabeth was using it to help them work verbs that were in the past tense.

**Asim**, **Laima** and **Susan** were studying with volunteer teacher Josh Kwant, who himself came to Northern Ireland from South African when he was six years old. Asim is from **Pakistan**, Laima is from **Lithuania** and Susan is from **Hong Kong**. Their task was to write a letter of complaint to an appropriate person. They had been looking at the structure of government, starting with the Queen and ending with a local politician. They had each chosen a matter that was disturbing them and were learning how to compose a letter.



Laima had written an excellent account about the way her garden is littered with trash left behind by late-night revellers from a nearby pleasure spot. Susan has lived here for a long time, having arrived unable to speak any English. She is now integrated into our culture but wants to improve her grasp of the language. Asim and Josh were working on a letter, but the discussion I heard was mostly about the recent cricket world cup matches where Pakistan had been beaten in the semi-finals!

# English Class



The group with volunteer teacher Alison Beggs was working through a set of exercises designed for adult learners of English. **Rima** and **Egidiyus** are both from **Lithuania**. They like our country - the people smile and make them welcome. Egidiyus is soon to be married to Laima.

**Zsofia** from **Hungary** was working with volunteer teacher Elizabeth Murdie. They were reading (aloud) from a detective story called **A Death in Oxford**. They were enjoying the story but were also discovering and solving pronunciation problems like 'they're' and 'knife' and numbers written as words.



In the last group volunteer teachers Alice and Robert Magee were doing a Cloze Procedure exercise which required **Dangeras** from **Lithuania** to read a passage from which words were missing. In order to replace the words the reader must understand the passage. Other class members were unable to come that night as the longer daylight hours meant they were required to work later.

If you know anyone who would benefit from these classes, please encourage them to come along on Wednesday evenings. The team will be delighted to welcome them. Further details may be obtained from THE LINK office ([thelinkcentre.org](http://thelinkcentre.org)) or from Elizabeth Black (07746 052464).

**Ruth Hutchinson**

# We're going

On 30<sup>th</sup> June, 23 members of the Link Family and Community Centre (16 from Project 23 and 8 from MARC) along with 8 members of 1<sup>st</sup> Bangor Presbyterian Church will be travelling to Hungary for 11 days. The three groups will spend 3 days in Budapest and then travel to Telkibanya for the remainder of their stay. The idea is to build understanding between all the different groups.

A lot of work has gone into the project and into the fundraising. We still have a bit of fundraising to do but we are confident we will reach our target. Look out in the next newsletter for how we get on.

The young people will take part in a programme called **Football as a Foreign Language**. The aim is to build common ground between Northern Irish young people from some of the estates and young people from the village using football. They will be training together and playing some matches against local teams. Most of them have not been outside the British Isles before.

Please pray for our final preparations, that passports arrive when we need them to and that we are able to pull all the different groups together. Pray for safety for travel, safety for the various groups and also that our young people eat something, as the food can be "different"!

We asked some of the teens who are travelling to Hungary to tell us what they are expecting from the project.

## Why do you want to go to Hungary?

*Never been out of NI ... Want to see a new place ... experience a new culture*

*Get to play football against new people*

**Want to experience new things**

# to Hungary!

**What do you know about Hungary?**

Nothing!  
It's a poor country, but very  
warm!

**Is football popular in Hungary?**

Don't know! Don't think so! Very, very popular!

**What are you looking forward to most?**

Eating new food  
Making new friends  
Seeing a new country

**What are you dreading?**

The heat!  
Coming home!  
Nothing. I can't wait!

# PICTURE GALLERY

## Tots Christmas



Tots  
Meet Santa



## Thursday Drop-In



The Folk and Down Museums  
in January and February



## Staff and Volunteers Residential



Karin (volunteer) and Gareth (staff)



Naomi, Adrian, Anne, Mags, Alison  
and Joan