

## ***History of St. Joseph's Education Centre***

### **Introduction**

This section will briefly look at the history of the centre, its inception and the major events which have influenced its growth and development.

### **1973**

- T.R.I.A.L.<sup>1</sup> Maurer's Lane (Travellers Rehabilitation Industrial Aid Limited)



- The centre had its origins as a drop in centre and in 1973 a limited company (T.R.I.A.L.) was formed and its purpose was to deliver a training programme for unemployed teenage Travellers.
- The founders were four members of the Traveller Settlement Committee and four professional people: a lawyer, an accountant, an engineer and a banker. Combat Poverty Agency was one of the board members, as were the Catholic Church, Clare Social Services and some local employers.
- By 1978, it was jointly managed by AnCO (FÁS) and the VEC. Paddy Houlihan was the first manager.

### **1982**

- The Training Centre moved to a pre-fabricated building of approximately 3,000 sq.ft. in the Gort Road with 24 students and three staff. The industrial model was used.

### **1983**

- The Report on the Travelling People Review Body (1983) noted that the great majority of teenage and adult Travellers were illiterate and did not have the skills to enable them to avail of employment or existing training facilities. The network of Senior Traveller Training Centres (STTC's) was formed as a result of this report.

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<sup>1</sup> "The proposed Training Centre is visualised as a link in the chain of services provided for the training and rehabilitation of the Travelling People. The Centre could not be a place where the Travellers would be merely pleasantly occupied and out of harm's way, but a place where work is carried on:....Michael J Keane Secretary TRIAL 8<sup>th</sup> July 1978

The Report, (1983) stated that the overarching goal of the Network was preparing Travellers to take up gainful employment or avail of further, more advanced training at the end of the course. The age range increased to twenty five.

### **1985**

- Antoinette Coffey was appointed Director.
- “*Many Voices, One Word*” produced by Rose McNamara was a joint project between Travellers in the centre and students from Coláiste Muire in Ennis, and was performed in the Coláiste.

### **1987- 88**

- FÁS rebuilt the centre under the Community Youth Training Programme (CYTP).

### **1989**

- Gerry Griffin was appointed Director.

### **1992**

- An all Ireland Soccer Blitz was organised by the Centre; Tuam beat Ennis in the final.
- FÁS built on another room at the back of the building.

### **1993**

- A countywide Traveller Art Festival in Ennis was organised by Sr. Alice and the Community Employment Scheme.
- Trainees went on a student exchange.
- The Enterprise Unit was developed, and over the next decade Traveller women worked on contract sewing and leather work.

### **1994**

- A radio programme was presented from the Centre on Clare FM.
- A Community Employment Scheme was established, its main focus of work was maintenance and administrative support.
- A new qualifications framework was introduced by FÁS, the Integrated Assessment System (IAS).
- The first two computers were introduced to the programme.
- Personal development programme begins in the Centre.

### **1995**

- The Report on the Task Force on the Travelling Community (1995) signalled a shift in state policy towards Travellers: for this report Travellers themselves were actively involved and had a say. The Task Force Report (1995) was the blueprint for Traveller education for the next ten years. The Report recommended that full responsibility for the Training Centre should rest with the Department of Education and Science and a national co-ordinator be appointed.

## **1996**

- Helen O'Sullivan was appointed Director and Gerry Griffin was appointed as National Coordinator for STTCs to oversee the development of the Network on behalf of the Department of Education and Science.
- RTE recorded the first annual presentation of awards, which were presented by Bishop Willie Walsh.
- A Holistic Therapy Course, which is funded by the Mid Western Health Board, begins.

## **1997**

- Ennis West Partners start a Literacy/Music Programme for Traveller Men, with the support of the Centre. Clare Reading and Writing Scheme jointly sponsor the programme;
- The National Traveller Pilgrimage was held in Clare. Ennis became Ireland's Information Age Town;
- A part-time secretarial post was given to the centre.

## **1998**

- Centre policy and practice change as a result of the takeover of the network by the Department of Education;
- FÁS withdraw from the management of the centre and Co. Clare VEC has sole responsibility for its management;
- Permanency is offered to some staff, shorter working days for students are introduced and longer holidays;
- An Art Exhibition is hosted in the DeValera Library, Ennis.
- Adult men start a part-time programme in the centre;
- Ennis West Partners with the help and support of staff, commence an evening programme for Traveller women;
- A Christmas Craft Fair is hosted.

## **1999** A number of changes take place this year:

- There is Traveller Representation on the Board of Management for the first time.
- The murals are painted outside.
- Much publicity is received from participation in Aer Rianta "Sharing our Future" competition.
- New programmes are offered; Faith Development , Music and Wood Carving.
- First pilgrimage to Medjugorge.
- *Travellers Unplugged* is recorded here. It is a great success and much publicity was received from it.
- The secretarial post becomes full time.

## **2000** Several new developments take place:

- Two new men's groups started, supported by FÁS.
- NATC develop the post of Youth Worker and it is hosted by the centre.
- A shop opened, selling produce made by trainees.
- Several teachers and one trainee completed the ECDL course.
- Launch of Training Centre website: [www.stjotc.ie](http://www.stjotc.ie)
- St. Joseph's Training Centre was short listed in the Community Category of the Information Age Town Best Practice Awards (see photo).



- MWHB funded health related projects.
- Winnie Mongans and Winnie McDonagh received their Diplomas in Community Development Practice from NUI Galway, supported by staff;
- Second Pilgrimage to Medjugorje.
- The Prayer Book is launched.
- Deirdre Moynihan puts forward a proposal for IT development under the Community Application of Information Technology (CAIT) initiative.
- Visiting teacher for Travellers post started.

## **2001**

- The Department of Education agrees to increase numbers to forty places and the additional places go to the men's programme.
- CAIT funding is successful. The Centres profile is greatly increased and other schools begin to use our IT facilities.
- Clare County Council gives Co. Clare VEC a site in the Industrial Estate for a purpose built Centre. There is a three-year call-back on the site if it is not developed.
- "Traveller Cures Book" is launched by Clare FM presenter Cormac McConnell. This is a joint publication between Ennis West Partners, Clare Reading and Writing Scheme and St. Joseph's Training Centre.
- A video on handball is also launched.
- Helen O'Sullivan takes one-year leave of absence. Paul O'Shea takes over as Director.
- A one year post of Community Healthcare Worker in the centre is sponsored by the MWHB.

## 2002

- Centre increases its numbers to 52 places.
- The building next door is leased for two years.
- Hairdressing, Metalwork, and Gym are offered as part of the syllabus.
- There is much community involvement as a result of the CAIT project, Destinations - schools use our facilities and we get new computers.
- Helen O'Sullivan returns as Director.
- The Heritage Council gives a grant for Copper Craft and the centre begins the process of reviving the ancient skill of tin-smithing.



Thomas Keenan constructing a copper bucket

- Jim Lyons retires as CEO of County Clare VEC and Pádraigin Ui Riordáin takes over the helm.
- Student Garda Placements: The centre begins a programme of outreach work with An Garda Síochána and the first Trainee Garda was placed on a 2-week work experience programme within the centre. This will be an ongoing process between the centre and the Garda Síochána.

## 2003

- Community Employment Scheme finishes;
- CSPE on the syllabus for first time;
- The post of Education Support Worker is created;
- Two new part-time posts, cleaner and chef created;
- Much renovation work to building next door;
- PR training for centres is organised at national level;
- A Copper craft exhibition takes place in DeValera Library Ennis;
- Twelve of the women start FETAC Childcare Level 5 in conjunction with County Childcare Committee;
- Child Protection Awareness Raising Workshop: All members of staff took part in the Children First Training Programme;

- The National Framework of Qualifications was launched.

## 2004

- Major internal renovation work in centre;
- The centre works with other service providers in the locality to ensure a quality of service and to ensure no duplication of services;
- A Primary Health Care Programme started in September 2004, hosted by Clarecare and funded by the MWHB.
- Trasna/Equal Van Conversion Project is hosted in centre.
- Homework club is also hosted here.
- Leaving Certificate Applied commenced in September 2004 with 17 learners.
- The process of the development of a strategic plan for the network of Senior Traveller Training Centres begins. A number of staff from St. Joseph's Training Centre are actively involved in this process.
- Centre Development Planning- The centre participated in the pilot initiative of the Quality Framework Initiative Planning Process. This was the first time taking a whole team approach to developing a 3-year programme, planning the future.

## 2005

- 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the centre was celebrated in style as nostalgic links with founders, first trainees and staff were remembered. In attendance was the centre's first director, Paddy Houlihan.



- Senan O'Loughlin retired in 2005 (see photo). Senan was a long serving member of staff who was a friend and advisor to staff and learners alike.
- A Parents' Support Programme commenced in the centre supporting parents in the education of their children. Participants received a Certificate in an After School Support programme from Mary Immaculate College, Limerick. This programme was delivered in conjunction with Ennis West Partners and Ennis Community Development Project.
- There is a change of CEO with Pádraigin Ui Riordan leaving in 2004. Eamon Fitzgerald took over in the interim. George O'Callaghan was appointed to the post in 2005.
- Centre staff participated in the implementation groups of the VEC Education Plan Cross Service Implementation Groups (CSIGS).
- Centre staff, management and learners are an integral part of the development of a Strategic Plan for the Co-ordination of Public Services to the Traveller Community (2005-2008) in Co. Clare.

## 2006

- 2006 saw the start of a new two-year part-time integration programme in the Adult Education Centre in Clonroad. The PLC course is run four days a week from 10am – 2pm for thirty weeks under the Back to Education Initiative and St. Joseph's Training Centre.
- Congratulations to the first group of 14 learners from St. Joseph's Training Centre in Ennis who passed their Leaving Certificate Applied. The class group comprised of adult men and women and some teenage boys and girls.
- LCA has been offered for the second time with an enrolment of seventeen students, seven men and ten women.
- Joe Saunders completed an independent review of the LCA;
- St. Joseph's Training Centre donated seven pieces of copper craft to the Cork City Museum. It is the first permanent display of Traveller culture in a national museum.
- Digital equipment received from the Ennis Information Age Town was used by a group of teenage learners to develop a project on Traveller Heritage and Culture both past and present (see photo).



- The Director of the centre brought together local agencies and out of this a community mediation pilot programme for conflict resolution was initiated.
- The A Group received a Certificate of Merit in the National Traveller Art Competition. Their work was displayed in the Civic Offices and Bank Place in Dublin.
- Louiseanne McDonagh received an award for a photograph submitted to a photography competition. Twenty photographs were chosen out of hundreds nationwide to be framed and displayed in Dublin's Temple Bar.
- RTE's Nationwide filmed a documentary on St. Joseph's Training Centre. It was broadcast in April 2006 and the centre received very good publicity as a result of this programme.
- Brigid McDonagh presented a feature on the centre on RTE's Pobl.
- The post of Traveller Enterprise Officer was created as a joint initiative by FÁS, Clare County Council, County Clare VEC and others. .
- "Report and Recommendations for the Traveller Education Strategy" was published by the Department of Education and Science. It aims to identify clear

goals for Traveller Education and recommend the reallocation of existing resources to ensure a holistic approach to Traveller Education from pre-school to adults. Staff and learners from St. Joseph's were involved in the consultative process.

## **2007**

- Peer Support Worker positions were developed in Coláiste Muire and Ennis Community College.
- A number of former students secured employment: in Clare County Council, Ennis CDP and in our own centre.
- Congratulations to former students, John Sweeney Jr. and Bernie McDonagh who graduated from UCC with a Diploma in Youth and Community Studies, in conjunction with NATC.
- Department of Education & Science initiated a Value For Money (VFM) report on Training Centres and Youthreach. Among the recommendations made were that the STTCs should cater for the over 18s only. In the long term STTCs will merge with mainstream further education.
- Our centre received the FETAC Registration of Quality Assurance in February 2007. Mary Fitzgerald coordinated the compilation of the Registration.
- For the second time, St. Joseph's Training Centre provided a Parents' Support Programme. Participants received a Certificate in After School Programmes from Mary Immaculate College, Limerick.
- The Coppercraft group completed work on a copper vessel used to hold the Easter Vigil fire in Ennis Cathedral. This was a collaborative effort between men working at the centre and the Ennis Parish.
- Sean Conlan was appointed to the post of Education Officer with Clare VEC.
- Aobhán Haverty was appointed Adult Education Officer;
- Politicians campaigning for the General Election were invited to participate in a questions and answers debate facilitated by Rachel English.
- The Strategic Plan for the Network of Centres for Education and Training launched by Minister Seán Haughey.

## **2008**

- St. Joseph's Training Centre was the first centre to participate in the FETAC/QFI ICE (Internal Centre Evaluation) Pilot Phase.
- FETAC External Evaluation for FETAC Quality Assurance Agreement was held in the centre and coordinated by Anne Marie Beattie.
- Two of our learners successfully completed FETAC Level 5 Hairdressing Theory and Practice, Mary Molloy and Margaret Molloy.
- The publication of the first Newsletter of St. Joseph's Training Centre occurred in May. Claire Davoren and Deirdre Denning edited the publication.
- Traveller Focus Week was celebrated with a function held in the Ennis Civic Offices, Drumbiggle. Craft items from the centre were displayed.
- Five Leaving Certificate Applied students went to the Adult Education Centre in Clonroad to do a FETAC Level 5 Business Course. This was run by BTEI.

- The Marie Keating Foundation came to the centre to deliver awareness on cancer prevention for men and women's groups.
- Five men from the centre went to Barefield National School and gave a demonstration on Copper craft to all students and staff in the assembly hall. This was done as part of a "Culture Morning Programme" in the school.
- John Simmons "Red Ribbon Project" delivered sexual health courses to men and women's group. This was part of the HSE funded programme;
- Kathleen Keenan successfully completed a Level 5 Beautician course in the Institute of Beauty and Body Therapy, Ennis.
- Strategic Plan Implementation Group was set up and members include Mary Fitzgerald and Brian Crossan, Helen O' Sullivan chairs it.

## **2009**

- Traveller Education Centres had a name change as a result of the consultation process and became Centres for Education under the Strategic Plan for the network of centres.
- St. Joseph's Education Centre reviewed their Mission Statement and commenced work on QFI Centre Development Planning.
- An Anger Management Programme for men was delivered over a number of weeks by Michael O'Toole and Triona Lynch.
- Clare Haven delivered a programme to the women raising awareness on domestic violence.
- The centre participated in Aontas, Adult Learner's Festival and many activities were organised for the week. The star performance was Jon Kenny's visit to the centre and he entertained us royally, and everyone thoroughly enjoyed themselves.
- After eleven years the Jobs Initiative Scheme has ceased in the centre. Winnie Mongans made a great contribution to centre life and we wish her well in her retirement.
- We had student placements from St. Angela's, LIT and UCC.
- We had men cooking doing the HSE "Cook It" programme.
- Learners completed an "Active Citizenship Programme" which was delivered by Clarecare and "Looking at the Economy through the Eyes of a Woman" in partnership with Clare Women's Network.
- NATC and the Director's Association commission national research.
- The McCarthy Report recommends the integration of all Senior Traveller Education (Training) Centres and this will save €25m. However, there is no definition of what they mean by integration and if they wish to save €25m this means closure of the centres.