



### Newsletter Committee Foreword

The newsletter focuses on a variety of Ballymakenny College events. All the articles in the newsletter are written by students. This newsletter committee includes Catherine Meehan, Emily Scallan, Abi Sheerin, Ryan Sheerin, Sebastian Moldovan, Matthew Mc Fadden, Hazel Kumru and Rosanna Mc Mahon.

Thank you to those who contributed articles outside of the committee.

Editors of the newsletter are Ciara McCrohan and Shauna Matthews. We hope you enjoy reading this edition of the school newsletter.

### Uganda 2024

by Samara Black Dunne

In May 2024 a small group of staff and students from both TY and 5<sup>th</sup> year will be travelling to Uganda with Nurture Africa. Nurture Africa is an Irish organisation which works in Uganda with focus on healthcare, education, child protection, gender equality and economic empowerment through business training and micro-finance projects. While in Uganda, we will get to see the difficulties that the local people face in regard to both climate change and poverty. We will get to see the true strength and determination of the community to improve the lives of their children. We are extremely lucky to have the opportunity to get an insight into the local people's lives when visiting people living in the community, experience their food, culture and more. During our time in Uganda, we will get to visit local schools and also visit the Irish Embassy in Kampala to meet the Irish ambassador to discuss Ireland's assistance to Uganda.

Students have been working extremely hard to fundraise towards their individual goal of €2,900 to go towards this project. On October 14<sup>th</sup>, students and staff held a car wash at our school. This was a great event which brought in many kind donations. Some other fundraising events that have been planned by students include quiz nights, raffles, coffee mornings and many more! This project is an excellent opportunity for students to gain many skills while organising and running different events. The overall fundraising target is €60,900 and over €18,000 of this has already been raised! Both the students and staff have worked extremely hard and put a lot of effort into organising fundraising events.

This project was originally opened to Transition Year students, but a very limited number of places were opened up to 5<sup>th</sup> year students. I am extremely grateful to be one of the seven 5<sup>th</sup> year students who will be travelling to Uganda. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity which I knew I could not give up. I believe that we will all truly benefit from this experience as it will help us to appreciate everything that we have and to never take our education, our opportunities, our lifestyles or our healthcare for granted. It will also really open our eyes to the effects that climate change has on our planet.

For more information on the Uganda Project and Nurture Africa you can visit our school website!

### Uganda a TY Perspective

by Sophia Mc Govern

When I first became aware of this compelling adventure to Uganda, I instantly knew it was something I wanted to be a part of and an opportunity not to be missed. At the age of only 16, to do something selfless and meaningful seems like an experience so worthwhile. While learning and gaining an understanding of how different life is, in a stage two country. I hope to make some sort of a difference, big or small.



It's unlike any traditional Transition Year trip. I believe it's an ideal year to undertake such a journey as there is less stress of exams and extra time to pursue fundraising events. All travelling students must fundraise a total sum of 2900 euros, this includes a charitable donation of 700 euros which goes directly to the charity Nurture Africa.

Nurture Africa is a non-governmental organization who were established in 2003. They give aid in various ways such as providing access to healthcare, education, and sustainable livelihoods. Uganda the country we are embarking to next May, is a landlocked country located in East Africa with Kampala the Capital lying directly on the equator.

Another travelling student described her expectations as "an enormous learning curve on what life is like for people living in developing parts of the world, their conditions, earnings, healthcare, and quality of life". Personally, I cannot wait for the trip and I am so grateful and fortunate for this once in a lifetime opportunity!

## TY Customer Services

by Niall Carroll

In today's highly competitive business landscape, exceptional customer service is a marker of success. Recognising this, Ballymakenny College decided to introduce a customer service training workshop for our TY students from the 13<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> October. Each TY class took part in spending a day learning about the importance of good customer service through a variety of team-building activities, led by Melissa Moore from CSE Ireland, who has over twenty years of customer service experience.

BKC aims to equip students with the skills and knowledge necessary to exceed customer expectations, and for their work experience in November.

Throughout the course of the customer work experience, our TYs participated in a variety of team-building exercises. Students engaged in problem-solving within the workplace, and how to overcome certain workplace challenges. At the end, the TY students came up with their own business ideas and presented them to the class.

Customer service training workshops are essential for a variety of reasons and it is extremely important that students are prepared for the challenges and obstacles they may face when they enter the workforce.

One of the fundamental principles taught in the workshop is empathy. Students learn how to put themselves in the customer's shoes and actively listen to their needs. This not only helps resolve issues but also builds trust and rapport.

Effective communication is critical in customer service. Our TY students learnt how to improve verbal and non-verbal communication skills to convey information clearly and courteously.

Customer service representatives are often the first point of contact for resolving issues. Training equips students with techniques for identifying problems, exploring solutions, and delivering timely resolutions.

Not every customer interaction is smooth. Our TY students learnt how to handle difficult and irate customers professionally and with patience, turning negative experiences into positive ones, while learning the importance of having a PMA. "Positive Mental Attitude".

In-depth knowledge of the company's products or services is a crucial component of excellent customer service. Training ensures that students have a thorough understanding of what they're offering.

I would say this course was a success. I would say each student left feeling more prepared and confident for the work experience ahead.

Effective customer service training workshops bring about several advantages for both businesses and their employees:

With well-trained staff, businesses can consistently deliver excellent service, resulting in happier and more loyal customers.

Employees who receive training feel more confident in their roles, leading to greater job satisfaction and motivation.

## TY Customer Services Cont....

Well-trained employees are more likely to stay with a company, reducing turnover and the associated costs. A reputation for excellent customer service can be a powerful in a competitive market.

Satisfied customers are more likely to make repeat purchases and recommend a company's products or services to others.

Customer service training workshops are an investment in both employees and customers. They equip staff with the skills needed to provide exceptional service, leading to improved customer satisfaction, brand reputation, and, ultimately, business success. Each class was left with the same sentiment. "People by people, then the product". This displays the importance of knowing how to behave within the workplace.

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## U18 Basketball

by Alanna Flanagan

In Ballymakenny College, we are extremely proud to have such an enthusiastic and hardworking girls' basketball team. Both our under 16s and under 19s teams are made up of dedicated and skilled players who love the sport as much as they love the group they're playing with. I have been playing on the team for two years and I have made lots of new friends and learned many new skills.

Our coaches have always pushed us to try our best and showed us by example how to work as a team. Maider Pascualena, team player of the year and a highly valued member of our team says that when she joined us last year, she 'immediately felt included by the team and by our coaches'. Our coaches are always there to celebrate our victories, while also helping us through hard losses. Maider also said 'even though we lost our last semi-final, our coaches were able to make us feel a lot better, and the team will support you no matter what. We always play as a team, and that's the most important part'. Our coaches are very fair, every player gets a chance to play and nobody is ever left out.

Even though our training can be tough, we all look forward to seeing and having fun with our teammates for an hour after school. We have all loved playing on this team and I would strongly recommend joining to anyone, as I think it is very beneficial in many ways. You get to meet lot of new people, make new friends and learn an incredibly fun sport while being on an exceptionally passionate team.

## Higher Options

by Matthew Mc Fadden

On the 21<sup>st</sup> of September, the 6<sup>th</sup> year class of 2023/24 hopped on a bus to the RDS in Dublin, for the annual Higher Options fair. This was a rare but very insightful day out for the 6<sup>th</sup> years, and served as a chance to get more information on their potential career paths post-Leaving Cert.

Higher Options gives students from all across Ireland the opportunity to speak with representatives from colleges and universities from all over the country, and also a few from abroad. Our 6<sup>th</sup> years took full advantage of this offer, and learned lots about potential courses they are interested in, and also collected lots of freebies that participating colleges were offering, such as pens, tote bags and college prospectuses. There was also a celebrity guest at the fair, with the Studyclix robot making a surprise cameo!

Also, as part of the trip, the 6<sup>th</sup> year students visited the



World Skills fair, which focused heavily on apprenticeship courses, such as cooking, bricklaying, beauty therapy etc. Between the Higher Options and World Skills fair, every student had the chance to learn more about the career path they wish to take after life in Ballymakenny College.

## 6th Year Biology Trip

by Catherine Meehan

On the 25<sup>th</sup> of September the 6<sup>th</sup> year biology classes took an Ecology trip to Emerald Park.

The students were broken up into groups to complete their study of an ecosystem, and learn more about the zoo and the animals that inhabit it.

One group was taken to a classroom where they discussed food chains, different animals' structural and behavioural adaptations to their environment, and the effects of global

warming on animals in different parts of the world.

While the other two groups completed their study of an ecosystem. Undertaking qualitative and quantitative surveys of the plants and animals living in the field that was chosen for their study. Students had great fun catching everything from beetles to frogs, and finding out what percentage of the field was covered in clover compared to butter cups.

After lunch they went on a tour of the zoo. Getting to discuss the animals diets, their status in the wild, and what the staff are doing to recreate their natural habitats.

The students also got to watch the zoo keepers feed their two Amur Tigers, and were able to ask questions about their diet and training in the zoo.

Overall, it was a successful trip with studies completed and lots learned about all things Ecology!

Thank you to the teachers who made this trip happen.



## BKC 3rd Year Diary

by Sebastian Moldovan

Compared to 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year, 3<sup>rd</sup> year is much more difficult in terms of exams, tests and overall school work. Although 3<sup>rd</sup> year is much more difficult than 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year, the work that you complete is also much more rewarding because it goes a long way for helping you study for for your Junior Cycle. Since 3<sup>rd</sup> year is an exam year everyone has to put a lot more effort into studying which can put a lot of stress onto people but a good way to get rid of that stress is to study a bit everyday instead of trying to learn 2 chapters in one day. Overall 3<sup>rd</sup> year is a difficult year but most people like to think about the reward of getting through it which is going into TY the next year which is a year where school is much easier.

## Halloween Fundraiser

by Sarayu Annavarapu and Emily Scallan

On the 27<sup>th</sup> of October, many students and teachers at Ballymakenny College dressed up for the Halloween fundraiser to raise money for the Project Uganda trip. It was great to see everyone having fun and dressing up. Overall, we raised around €1,260 and everyone put an exceptional amount of effort into their costumes. Altogether, it was a very memorable and enjoyable day.

## BKC Mentors

by Hazel Kumru and Abi Sheerin

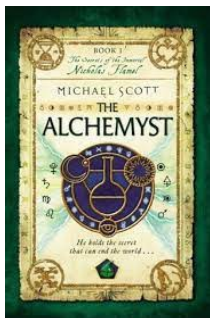
The mentor program is a program for 5<sup>th</sup> year students to gain experience and help the new first years settle into Ballymakenny College. Being a mentor means a lot of things, you need to be there for the first years, let them know that they can trust you, allow them to feel comfortable and in general, you need to be kind and caring towards them in order to build up a good relationship. Every Friday we meet the first years during Treoir to check in and see how their week has been so far, and once every three weeks, each of the mentors meet up with their first years during lunch time to do activities with them. Overall, the experience of being a mentor has been really fulfilling, it allows us to give back to the school community and help the first years feel welcome, and it is definitely something that we as mentors recommend for future fifth years to take part in.



## Book Review: The Alchemist

by Ryan Sheerin

The book I am reviewing is called The Alchemist. It's the first book of six in the Secrets of the Immortal Nicholas Flamel series. It's written by Michael Scott, an Irish author.



It has about 400 pages and features a modern fantasy theme, with the basic good vs evil idea. Nicholas Flamel being the "good" that wishes to protect earth and humanity, and Dr. John Dee, being the "bad" or "evil" who wishes to destroy humanity.

The book focuses on two protagonists. Twins by the names of Josh and Sophie, who, like in many other modern fantasy series, are introduced to a new world of magic via a mentor. In their case, it happens when the antagonist mentioned earlier, John Dee, appears on an otherwise ordinary day. The book takes different parts of a variety of mythologies, such as the different gods and ideas.

Despite the author being Irish, it's got an international appeal, being set in the United States. I originally read it in first year, and still regard it as an amazing book, and would definitely recommend it. It's got a different idea to a large amount of other fantasy books, which would mostly try to recapture the feeling of Harry Potter, while The Alchemist attempts to stand out as its own entity with its own feeling.

## TY Musical

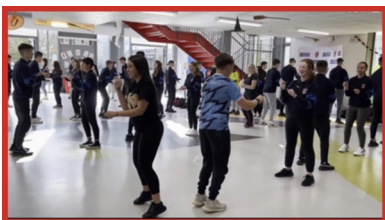
by Maider Pascualena

This year, our Transition Year students are rehearsing and making an amazing musical. The musical will take place in March, the date is not confirmed yet. TY students already started rehearsals and dancing classes during and after school. The school provided a professional dancer which will come to the school once in 2 weeks to support and teach the students. Students who take part as a main character they had an opportunity to have a 2h class with a professional actor that also worked for Broadway.

Thomas and Sheree, 2 school teachers worked on the musical reveal and TYs had fun finding out which musical they will be making this year. This year, the musical "Grease" is going to be performed by students. Students also found out who were the 16 main characters after auditioning.

Teachers confirm that this is the first year they had to do callbacks for audition saying that there were a lot of talented students.

This year, Maisie Kelly and Amit Jackson will be performing as "Danny Zuko" and "Sandy" in Grease. Also some pink ladies will be: Fodhla, Ciara, Maider and Milleanne. The four of them say that rehearsal are really fun and easy to learn, they confirm that teachers are putting a lot of work into the musical. Ross, Markuss, Harry, Jay, Aaron, James, Aaron, Luke, Jill and Roisin are also the main characters of this musical 2024.



## TY Bonding Trip

by Aaron Quinn

On the 13<sup>th</sup> of September 2023 the 4 TY tutor groups Bly, Heath, Shackleton and Crean headed off to YMCA Newcastle on their TY bonding trip for two nights. The trip started off on a high as all TY left Ballymakenny College and began their journey to Newcastle, when we arrived at YMCA we were greeted by some of the workers and were told some of the activities that we would be doing for the day. We were split into different groups and were assigned different activities.

The first activity for my group was a very challenging 2 hour hike. The hike began at a very steep incline of stone steps that was about a kilometre or two long but felt a lot longer. At the top of the steps, we had to wait for the rest of the groups to join back together. We then carried on to the top of the mountain where we came to a small mini waterfall and took a few photos before we headed back down the mountain.

When we arrived back and met up with the rest of the group we went and got ready for dinner and planned to walk down into the town for a bit but it started to rain so we played a game of bingo while we waited for the rain to pass.

On day 2 we got up in the morning and went for our breakfast and got a bit of free time before we got given our activities for the day. The activities my group were bouldering, archery, zip lining, wall climbing and a group obstacle course. We first started off with archery where we got taught how to shoot arrows and hit the target accurately, this was so much fun as we got to play mini games called Pizza and who could get closest to the target. The second activity we had to do was the group obstacle course, this was where we had to work as a group to get around the course without touching the ground. This was one of the funniest activities and was a great way to bond with your group and to help each other out.

Another highlight from that day was the bouldering. Before we even set off to the bouldering we had to get fitted for wetsuits and life jackets because we would be getting wet. Once we all had our wetsuits and life jackets on, we had to hop on a bus to get to the river with the big boulders. This had to have been the best activity during the whole trip, we all had the best time on this activity as we were able to climb through a big river with rocks, boulders, and areas we could jump off into the river.

The bonding will go down as a core memory of TY. It is a great way to start off the year and one of the best opportunities to get to meet new people make loads of new friends and most importantly getting out of your comfort zone. I really enjoyed the bonding trip and would definitely encourage the next group of TYs to go as it's the best couple of days.

