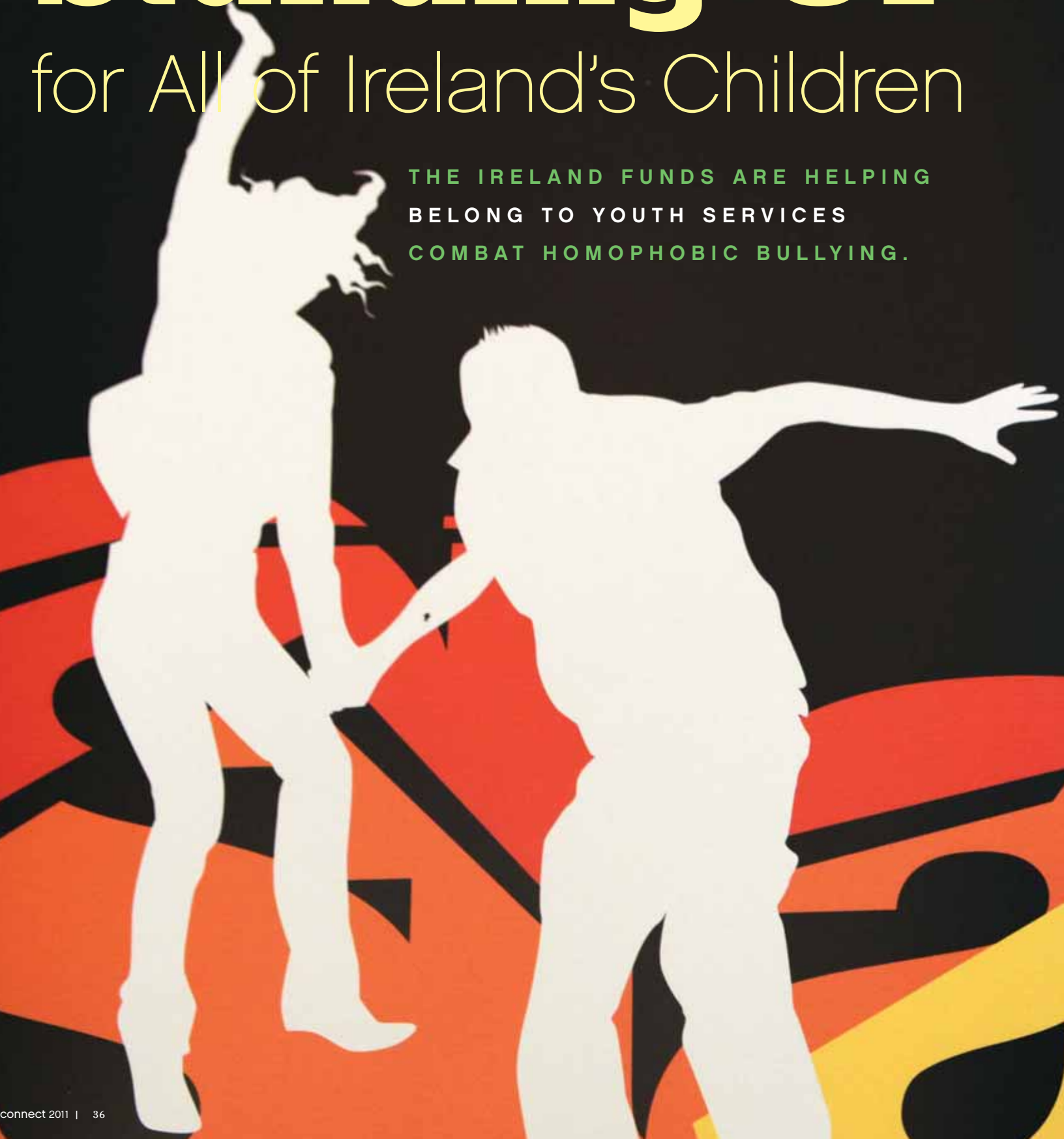


Standing UP

for All of Ireland's Children

THE IRELAND FUNDS ARE HELPING
BELONG TO YOUTH SERVICES
COMBAT HOMOPHOBIC BULLYING.



“Homophobic bullying continues to be a society-wide issue...and the link between it and suicide sends a clear message that this trend must be reversed. By working together... we can overcome the bias and hostility experienced by many young gay people throughout the country.

No one should have to suffer on account of their sexual orientation.”

— President of Ireland Mary McAleese, 2008



It is estimated that there are over 60,000 Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) young people living in Ireland today. While attitudes are changing through education, it can still be a terribly isolating and vulnerable time in an Irish teenager's life. BeLonG To Youth Services is an organisation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered (LGBT) young people, aged between 14 and 23. It provides direct youth work services to these LGBT young people in Dublin and supports LGBT youth groups all around the country.

The Ireland Funds have provided a grant to assist BeLonG To with their work to combat LGBT bullying, in the hopes that Ireland continues to become a safer and more welcoming place for all young people.

Michael Nanci Barron, CEO of BeLonG To said, “We were delighted to receive support from The Ireland Funds. The grant means that we can bring our *Stand Up! Don't Stand for Homophobic Bullying* campaign into every school in Ireland for another year. The campaign has been a huge success so far and has been commended by Ireland's Minister for Education Ruairi Quinn. It is so important to us that this grant comes now, because the demand for our services has more than doubled in 2010, while at the same time our government funding was cut back by 20%. We simply cannot meet the urgent needs of young people, parents and schools without these significant new investments. It makes all the difference.”

By working with other youth services, creating awareness campaigns and advocating with government departments in Ireland, BeLonG To has been a catalyst there in changing attitudes and creating awareness around the long term effects that bullying can have on LGBT youth. In addition, they offer a place where teens can have the benefit of peer-to-peer counseling and professional services in a safe environment.

Most recently, the organization produced the “Stand Up!” Campaign that urged not only people in Ireland, but around the world, to stand up and speak out against acts of homophobic bullying. Their Stand Up! video—a short piece about a young gay Irish couple and the school friends who ultimately advocate for them—received over 226,000 views on YouTube in the first four days it was posted.

The Ireland Funds salute the work of BeLonG To and support them in their mission to help LGBT youth realize their full potential as they live in Ireland and make their way in the world.

Research in Ireland has shown that among LGBT youth:

- 50% have experienced homophobic bullying
- 25% were physically threatened by their peers
- 34% have heard homophobic comments from their teachers
- 50% have seriously considered ending their lives
- 20% under the age of 25 have attempted suicide
- The period in an Irish LGBT person's life when they are most vulnerable to suicide is between the ages of 12 and 19



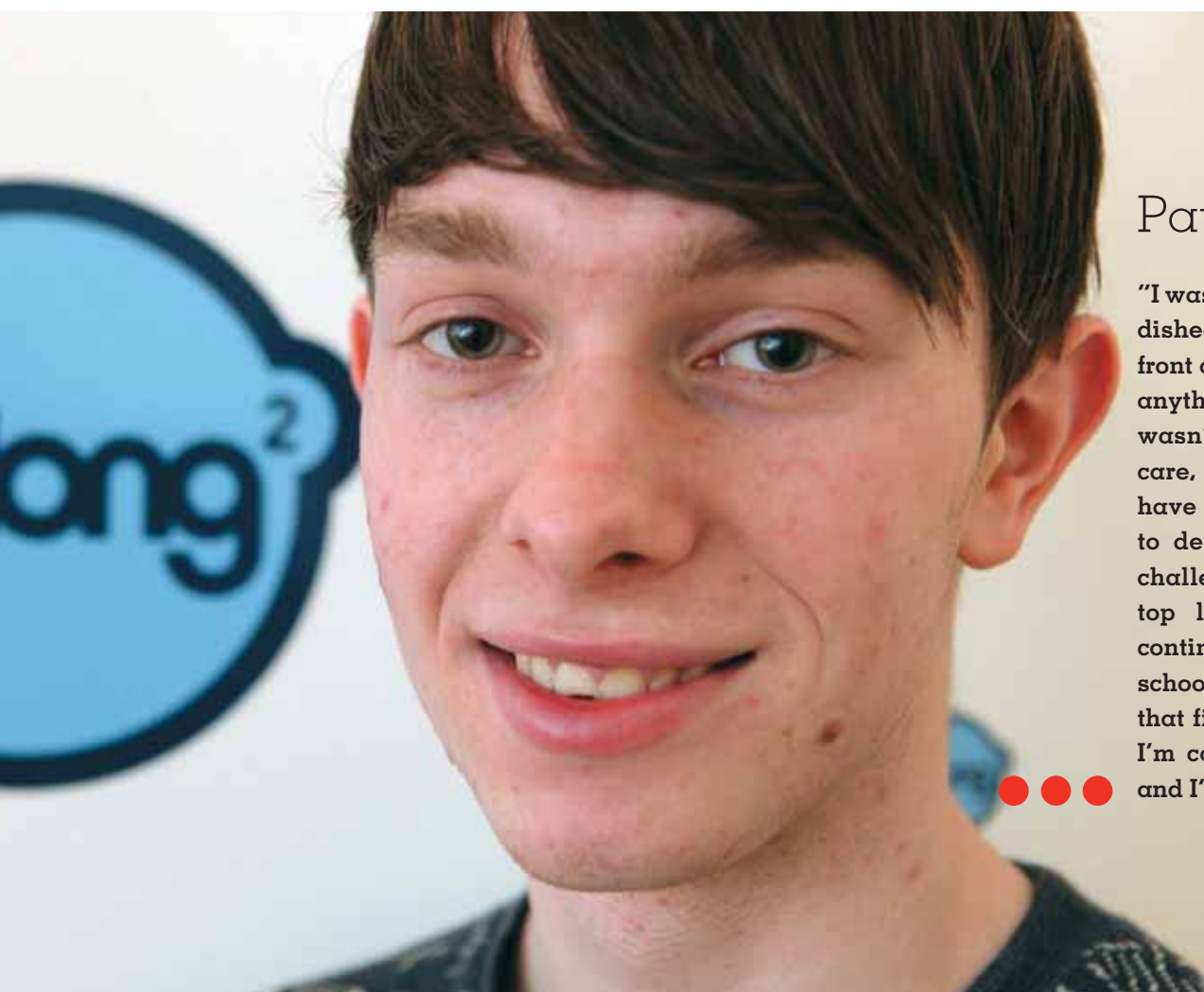
Aodhán – age 20

“When I first came to BeLonG To I wasn’t ‘out.’ I was really frightened. But I met people who sat down and told me their stories. It was just amazing and it made things a lot easier. My best friend held my hand through the whole journey and said, ‘I love you for who you are, not what you are.’”

Sean – age 20

“I was terrified when I first came in. But the youth workers here at BeLonG To let me open up when I was ready. The friends that I’ve made and the way I have grown as a person have given me confidence.”





Patrick – age 18

“I was bullied in school. It was disheartening to be bullied in front of teachers who didn’t do anything about it. I realize it wasn’t because they didn’t care, but because they didn’t have any training on how to deal with the situation. I challenged my school at the top level but the bullying continued and I eventually left school early. It was BeLonG To that finally helped me. Today, I’m continuing my education and I’m in college.”



Ruth – age 19

“I had a really tough time in school. I was on the verge of being expelled because I had come out to my friends but was so down I didn’t want to go to school. I finally told my mom I had something to tell her. She said, ‘you’re gay?’ She had already known, but was just waiting for me to say it. It was hard for her at first but she has come to terms with it. Today, both she and my dad just want me to be happy.”

