

INNOVATIVE,  
ARTISTIC,  
IMAGINATIVE  
LEARNING

# THE GALWAY





Walk into most community centers and you'll likely find interesting activities going on. But walk into the St Joseph's Community Centre in Shantalla, Galway and you'll see activities that may cause a double take. Children walking tightropes, teenagers suspended from silk ropes doing aerial

space as the Galway Community Circus puts on over 60 shows a year ranging from street performances to full-on big top circus tent performances featuring 70+ performers.

Teamwork is also key and in the circus that team has a place for everyone. "In circus there's

connects them. We have members from a teen parent support group, people from the Traveler community, and a refugee support group. Our aim is to build a 'Circus for All' and, with this aim in mind, we run programs in partnership with organizations such as Down Syndrome Ireland, Galway Autism

# COMMUNITY CIRCUS

acrobatics, adults juggling rings and plates. In this Galway community, the circus is always in town. The Galway Community Circus offers classes in over a dozen skills from acrobatics and aerial skills to tightwire and clowning. Taught in a safe and non-competitive environment with professional instructors, the Circus has been bringing the community together since they were established in 2002.

Hundreds of people from toddlers to adults come to take classes anywhere from one to four times a week and find that the skills imparted instill confidence, a sense of imagination and increased concentration and patience. The skills that are learned rarely stay within the walls of the practice

no right or wrong way of doing things," says Ulla Hokkanen, Circus Director. "If you build a pyramid you need the bases and you need the flyers and you need everything in between. Sometimes our thinking can be narrow, we think to play a game at a certain level our body needs to be a certain shape. But in circus it's very symbolic and obvious that everybody has a place."

The classes are also taught to people of all abilities and from diverse groups within the Galway community. "A key objective has been to promote social inclusion through the activities," explains Ulla. "We try to create a space that brings all kinds of people together and find something that

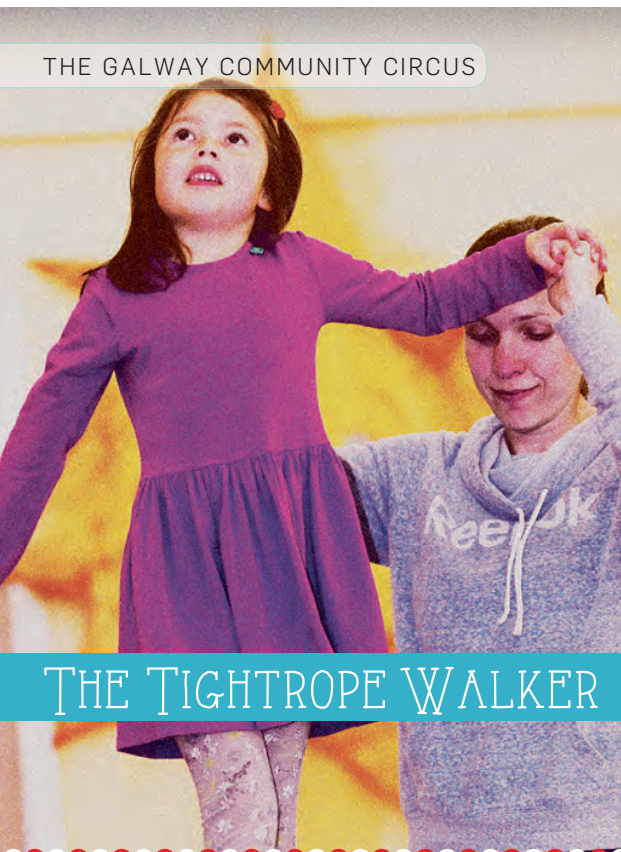
Partnership and the Irish Wheelchair Association." Support from The Ireland Funds has supported this emphasis on social inclusion. "We initially applied to The Ireland Funds to support bringing integrated, inclusive activity for young people in Galway and that has seen great success," says Ulla. "More recently, additional support from The Ireland Funds, will enable us to undertake a four-year program called 'Wires Crossed' that will promote the importance of physical and mental well-being, safe risk-taking, confidence and social inclusion through tight-wire walking."



THE JUGGLER



## THE TIGHTROPE WALKER



"SOME OF THE 70+ PERFORMERS AT THE 2017 CIRQUE DU GAILLIMH PERFORMANCE-A SELL-OUT SUCCESS AND THE BIGGEST PRODUCTION EVER UNDERTAKEN BY GALWAY COMMUNITY CIRCUS.





"The funding climate in Ireland has been fairly tough the last few years. Last year was the toughest we've had so far and so **THE IRELAND FUNDS' SUPPORT WAS HUGE TO KEEP US GOING.** That funding is now helping us reach over 300 young people over a 30-week period. That's a huge level of participation."

—Ulla Hokkanen, Circus Director

## THE BALANCING ACT

THANKS TO THE GALWAY COMMUNITY CIRCUS AND THE IRELAND FUNDS, THE MAGIC AND JOY WILL CONTINUE TO FLOURISH IN THE COMMUNITY.