

# LEARNING HUB LIMERICK



A Space for Limerick to Stretch & Grow



**WHEN** THE SCHOOL DAY ENDS IN COUNTY LIMERICK, THE ACTIVITIES AT THE LIMERICK LEARNING HUB MOVE INTO HIGH GEAR. THIS EXTRAORDINARY EDUCATIONAL SPACE OFFERS CHILDREN AND FAMILIES A PLACE TO LEARN NEW SKILLS, EXPLORE MUSIC, SCIENCE, EXERCISE, ART AND OTHER PURSUITS. MOST IMPORTANTLY, IT NURTURES A DESIRE TO LEARN WHILE LISTENING TO THE COMMUNITY AND ITS NEEDS.



“I SUPPOSE WHEN I WAS IN PRIMARY SCHOOL WE FIT INTO THE CURRICULUM, RATHER AT THE HUB THE PROGRAMS FIT AROUND THE CHILDREN. YOU KNOW IT’S JUST DIFFERENT. IT’S SO INNOVATIVE. IT’S THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX. IT’S WHAT EDUCATION SHOULD BE ALL ABOUT.”

— TIERNAN O’NEILL, PRINCIPAL OF CORPUS CHRISTIE PRIMARY SCHOOL



**HERE, JAMES BLAKE, CEO OF LEARNING HUB LIMERICK, EXPLAINS WHAT MAKES THE HUB SO SPECIAL.**

**LEARNING HUB LIMERICK: BREAKING THE CYCLE**

The Learning Hub is in one of the most disadvantaged districts in Ireland. Socio-economic disadvantage has a negative impact on health, access to opportunity, social mobility and even life-expectancy. The Learning Hub focuses on education to break the cycle of intergenerational unemployment and underachievement. In partnership with local schools, community groups and third-level institutions we provide in-school and after-school educational programs to help raise aspirations and offer further opportunities to young people and their families. We have created a child-centered, safe, dynamic, happy and informal learning environment in which children are encouraged to be inquisitive and to explore education. We adapted the services we provided as the needs of the community evolved.

To deal with demand for diverse classes, we collaborated with third-level partners, teaming undergraduates from local universities with primary and secondary children in projects directly related to third level courses. This model grew and the Hub now takes between 15 and 20 third-level students a year on six month placement (internships) to work directly with children in the community enabling us to deal with increasing demand for our services. The third-level students share their learning, are positive role-models and sign-post routes to further education for our young people.

**SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE AT THE HUB**

Children from as young as four years of age to late teens engage weekly with after-school and in-school programs in Science, Health and Fitness, Art and Music. Seasonal and annual events such as Easter, Summer and Halloween Camps incorporate digital engagement as well as drama, film-making and song-writing. Underlying every activity is a focus on building confidence, numeracy and

literacy. Parents and adults from the community engage in our kickboxing and boxing clubs which boast a 50/50 male female participation. The Learning Hub Kickboxing Club has even produced several regional, national and European Champions.

Children are invited to try as many activities as possible. Many of the children attend more than one of the activities offered. The integrated nature of our programs connects the work we do with young people to real life. The Art Hub students designed the community garden which is used by the Science Hub for plant biology classes. The fruit and vegetables in the garden form the basic ingredients for our healthy eating programs as an essential part of the Health Hub.

Depending on the time of year, children at the Hub may be picking apples in the orchard, training for a kickboxing tournament, recording a song they have written, spinning honey from our beehive, harvesting vegetables or studying the creation of carbon. In between activities, our campus is used by young people as a safe place to play and just 'hang out'.

**SUPPORT FROM THE IRELAND FUNDS**

The Ireland Funds has been a tremendous supporter of the Learning Hub. Since 2018, a series of grants have boosted all of our activities. This support has helped the Learning Hub to meet the increasing demand for the services we provide.

Support from The Ireland Funds gives us the freedom to channel energy and funding to where it is most needed which includes new initiatives. It empowers the Hub to innovate to meet the needs of the community. This support can be leveraged with existing and potential funders and underscores the value of these initiatives and innovations.

It is impossible to stress enough the value of The Ireland Funds' support in a time of crisis. During the COVID-19 pandemic, support from The Ireland Funds helped us to deliver digital learning content and to make deliveries of learning packs to the community under lockdown. This extraordinary funding afforded us the freedom to direct funds where they were most needed as these needs arose, however unforeseen those needs were.

**MUSIC  
SCIENCE  
ENVIRONMENT  
CHALLENGES  
ART  
HEALTH  
COMMUNITY  
NURTURE**



LIMITS ON THE SPACE WE CAN USE DUE TO COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS PRESENTS A CHALLENGE, EVEN AS DEMAND FOR OUR SERVICES CONTINUES TO INCREASE. THE LEARNING HUB MUST NOW INCREASE THE CAPACITY OF EXISTING FACILITIES, REFURBISH AND EXTEND OUR CAMPUS TO MAKE THE PREMISES MORE ACCESSIBLE TO ALL IN THE COMMUNITY.

10,357 PEOPLE

ENGAGED WITH HUB ACTIVITIES IN 2013

29,625 PEOPLE

ENGAGED WITH HUB ACTIVITIES IN 2019.



“I LOVE THE ART HUB BECAUSE IT’S SO MUCH FUN. I GET TO MEET NEW FRIENDS AND LEARN NEW ART TECHNIQUES. THERE IS ALSO SOMETHING DIFFERENT EVERY WEEK.” — STUDENT, AGE 9

“I HOPE THE LEARNING HUB WILL ALWAYS BE THERE TO INSPIRE CHILDREN TO FOLLOW THEIR DREAMS WITH AN ABUNDANCE OF BUDDING KICKBOXERS, SCIENTISTS, ARTISTS AND MUSICIANS.”

— KAREN, A PARENT