



100
smallsteps

ONE SMALL
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Foreword



Northern Ireland is an inspirational example of transformation to peace and stability after over 30 years of violence and political instability.

The major developments surrounding political negotiations and the ending of paramilitary violence have deservedly received publicity on a global scale. But it is also clear that the commitment and courage of many individuals and groups working within and between communities played a significant part in creating the conditions for peace and political accommodation.

Northern Ireland is enjoying an amazing transformation at all levels but we all know that peace and political development cannot be taken for granted. It will require the sustained efforts of every part of society to promote a shared and better future for everyone.

This remarkable publication should give us all confidence that peace will last because it illustrates how at every level of society peace building work continues. Individual small steps they may be but taken together they represent a groundswell of community commitment for a new and shared future for all the people of Northern Ireland. This work deserves praise, recognition and every encouragement to continue.

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Preface



I am delighted as chair of the Community Relations Council to welcome this book of 100 Small Steps. In a post conflict society it is critical to recognise and acknowledge what individuals and groups are doing to create a shared future, as well as being realistic about the need to address continuing division and sectarianism.

This book provides a wealth of information about the different ways that society here is trying to leave conflict behind and also how communities are trying to prevent racism taking hold in this society.

It will be critical for the Community Relations Council to build on the work of the One Small Step campaign to promote a shared and better future and we shall continue to support the type of work outlined here. We will also work closely with the Community Foundation in supporting small initiatives which meet the principles of the One Small Step Campaign.

The Council is deeply appreciative of the work carried out by the One Small Step group led by Trevor Ringland and Roisin McDonough. The initiative caught the imagination of many and we will continue to place the principles of the campaign at the core of all our work.

Introduction



The One Small Step campaign was launched in 2003 and captured a mood in this community. It emerged at a time when people were tempted to despair that this society was incapable of change; that division and sectarianism were so ingrained a normal society was beyond reach.

But what One Small Step revealed was a wealth of actions by individuals and organisations trying to build a shared future in their communities through taking small steps; and it is they who have established the foundations for politicians to make their historic agreement to share political space in Northern Ireland. The campaign illustrated that people wanted change so that their children could have better times than those endured by people over the past 40 years and before.



The campaign had to evolve to recognise that the climate is so much different from that which existed 5 years ago. We now have real political progress which will develop, provided we all give it our support and challenge ourselves to take further small steps to change the still basically sectarian nature of our society.

I am confident that under the Community Relations Council the One Small Step initiative will continue to flourish and promote a shared and better future for everyone. I am also confident that with the One Small Step Endowment Fund managed by the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland we shall continue to promote many more initiatives similar to those illustrated in these pages.

My thanks go to those who served on the One Small Step group and in particular my vice chair, Roisin McDonough. I am also deeply grateful to Caterina Goodman for all her work in the production of this book and to Robin Morton who gave so generously of his time to make this idea a reality.

However, primarily this book is a recognition of the ceaseless efforts by so many people in all parts of Northern Ireland to break down division, confront sectarianism, challenge stereotypes and build relationships. Taken together, these local initiatives represent a groundswell of opinion which says that the future must be better than the past. That is the enduring message of One Small Step and it is one that all of us should take on board.

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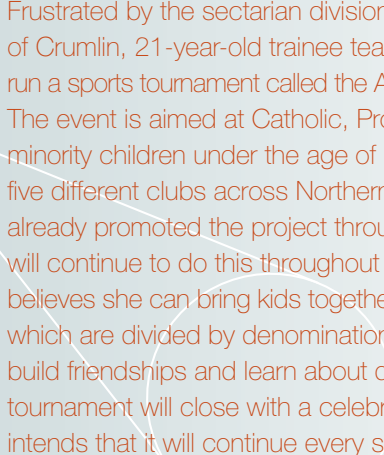
001

A Day of Reflection

The idea of an annual Day of Reflection was first proposed in a report in 2002 from the Healing Through Remembering organisation. The idea of the event is that it would act as a universal gesture of reconciliation, reflection, acknowledgement and recognition of the suffering of so many arising from the Northern Ireland conflict. The first such day took place on 21 June 2007, and people in Northern Ireland, Britain and the Republic were invited to participate, either in private acts of reflection, with friends or by taking part in organised gatherings. The emphasis was on remembering the events of the past in a non-confrontational, dignified and respectful manner. The group says its aim is to encourage people to make a commitment to a peaceful future, while acknowledging the deep hurt and loss caused by the conflict.

002

Aine McLernon



Frustrated by the sectarian divisions in her home town of Crumlin, 21-year-old trainee teacher Aine decided to run a sports tournament called the Aldergrove Go Games. The event is aimed at Catholic, Protestant and ethnic minority children under the age of 10, and will involve five different clubs across Northern Ireland. She has already promoted the project throughout schools and will continue to do this throughout youth centres. Aine believes she can bring kids together from different towns which are divided by denomination so that they can build friendships and learn about different cultures. The tournament will close with a celebration event but Aine intends that it will continue every summer.

003

All Aboard

The Chinese Welfare Association in south Belfast brought together young people from the Chinese, Indian and indigenous communities to participate in an interactive board game. The initiative, which was facilitated by Wheelworks, involved a game which can be used as an effective tool for challenging racism and sectarianism. The hope now is that it can be rolled out across Northern Ireland.



All Children Together was formed by a group of parents who were convinced that integrated education was the way forward for Northern Ireland. Thelma Shiel, one of those involved since the start, said they fervently believed that enabling children to go to school together would help produce a more stable society. An early triumph by the organisation was the sponsoring of a bill in Parliament which allowed schools to become integrated. But although the legislation was in place, the churches failed to initiate the necessary procedures. So it was that in 1981 All Children Together promoted the establishment of Lagan College, Northern Ireland's first integrated, co-ed, all-ability school, which opened with 28 pupils. The rest, as they say, is history and now there are over 60 integrated schools in operation across the province.

The Portadown Local Action for Community Engagement (PLACE) initiative brings together community groups and residents associations from some of the most strongly loyalist communities in the Portadown area, several of which share a physical interface with Catholic communities. All of the communities have experienced violence of some sort over the last number of decades, leaving a legacy which includes paramilitary feuding, interface violence and considerable tension about the traditional marching season. The initiative, which received funding for three years from the International Fund for Ireland, is designed to focus on peace-building in Portadown. Among the projects was an environmental programme designed to consult with local communities on the removal of paramilitary flags and offensive graffiti, in order to reduce tensions. Other programmes involved volunteer development, interface management, youth development and community dialogue.

Belfast Exposed Photography was founded in 1983 and its goal is to develop community photography among all traditions in Northern Ireland. The organisation offers training on various aspects of photography to local communities. The objective is to advise them how to use photography to record and understand their environment. The result is an archive of 500,000 images, a number of which are accessible online. Belfast Exposed also focuses on the exhibition of community photography and serves as a gallery for contemporary photography. The emphasis has always been on commissioning and the publication of new work. The production of socially and politically engaged work and dialogue is the driving force behind all aspects of the organisation.

After years of conflict in north Belfast, prospects look brighter as a new initiative seeks to combine sports education with reconciliation. The Belfast Schools Sports Partnership is a shared education project, bringing together children and young people from schools across Belfast. It provides excellence in facilities, coaching and opportunities, while building a culture of partnership, working toward a shared future. Each secondary and primary school in the partnership has a nominated person responsible for implementing the programme in his or her school. They are responsible for both co-ordinating sporting activities in their own schools and, through time, developing links with other schools, forming broader networks of participation in the project.



Frank Heron got involved with Co-operation North when he took part in the Belfast to Dublin maracycle event in 1998. Since then he has taken part in numerous fund-raising cycle events on behalf of Co-operation Ireland, as it is now known. As a father of three he was determined to make a difference to life in Northern Ireland, and has now participated in cycle events in places as far apart as the Canadian Rockies, France, Germany, Australia, California and South Africa. He says that the personal rewards of such trips are immense, in terms of meeting new people, achieving personal goals and visiting different countries. But this, he adds, is secondary to raising funds towards promoting peace at home. With thousands of miles under his saddle since 1998, he intends to mark his 10th anniversary by travelling with Co-operation Ireland to Nepal in October 2008.

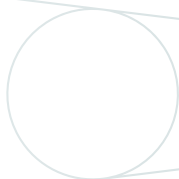
Founded in 2004, Beyond Skin is an organisation designed to counter racial tension in Northern Ireland. It uses the arts to identify the positive attributes of a society made up of different cultures. Music and arts related workshops are run to encourage participants to explore various cultures and to build relationships between people from contrasting backgrounds. The group co-ordinates community festivals and works alongside kindred bodies such as equality organisations and the community relations departments of local councils.



010

Brendan Boyle

Brendan (20) is passionate about football and has played for a local youth team in Derry from a young age. Now he is studying for an HND in sport and leisure management and is keen to set up a street soccer tournament which would involve up to 80 young people from both sections of the community. Soccer in the Streets will consist of two four-day soccer camps on the streets of Derry during the Easter and summer holidays. As part of the planning process, Brendan aims to offer football coaching to under-10s in four Catholic and four state schools, beginning in February. Brendan believes that his project will help to defuse tension between Catholics and Protestants in the city.



011

Bridging the Divide

For years the Stewartstown Road interface between the loyalist Suffolk estate and the nationalist Lenadoon area was blighted by sectarian division and community tension. But in 1998 a cross-community regeneration committee was established with the aim of creating a sustainable community business within a shared space. The £1.5m scheme focused on the construction of a combined commercial/community resource and the provision of temporary crèche and playschool facilities. The £2.27m second phase, which was rolled out in 2007, involved a 50-place children's day centre along with further shops and offices, creating 40 jobs. Not only have new jobs been secured, but there has also been a reduction in the number of sectarian incidents along the interface. Altogether, the International Fund for Ireland has provided funding of £1m. Support has also come from Belfast European Partnership Board, the NI Tourist Board, the Department for Social Development, Belfast City Council, Invest NI and the Belfast Local Strategy Partnership.



012

Brighter Days in Darkley

A village in Co Armagh that has long been associated with one of the worst atrocities of the troubles is now being lifted by a display of new artworks. Darkley & District Community Association collaborated with a local artist to create the artworks and the hope is that they will help to portray the area in a more positive light.

Although she is just 11, Bronagh, who attends an Irish language school in west Belfast, is keen to help the children of migrant families to settle in the area. The channel which she intends to use is dance, which she thinks will appeal to girls of her age in particular. With the backing of a local youth leader, she intends to set up a project called Dancing Around the World. She hopes it will enable young people to explore different cultures. She intends to bring in a dance tutor who specialises in dance from India, China and Europe. Bronagh will then coordinate dance teams with each team choreographing their own routine and this will develop into a competition and a special performance for parents. She hopes that members of the dance school will visit an Indian community centre to widen their horizons.

014

Building Bridges in North Belfast

The key objective of a New Neighbours Programme is to tackle hate crime against ethnic minorities in north Belfast. Its instigator, Bill Kennedy (58), who works part-time with a small credit union in the area, believes the programme will help educate the community on issues surrounding hate crime. He also wants to create greater awareness and appreciation of the different ethnic minority communities and focus on promoting good relations throughout the whole community. The first step is to conduct research and then workshops will be held to bring locals and minority ethnic communities together. The aim is to give training to 70 people, and ultimately to recruit 12 community leaders to act as 'hate crime prevention officers.'

015

Colin McCahey

Zeros to Heroes is a scheme devised by 20-year-old Colin to target young men who gather for drinking sessions on the streets of the Glen Road in west Belfast. Colin, a volunteer soccer coach at St Theresa's youth club, is a trainee chef and his two passions in life are cooking and football. He finds the coaching rewarding and is keen to give something back to the community in which he grew up. His idea is to offer weekly football training which will encompass discipline, team building and leadership skills, and he hopes this will reduce the incidence of anti-social behaviour in the area. He hopes to identify leaders within the teams to eventually take over and run the project.

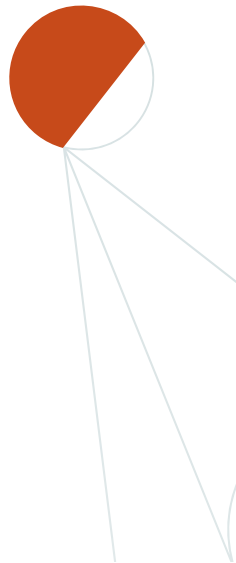


I'd like to salute every Northern Ireland fan, who has bought into the idea that football is football; not Catholic, not Protestant, not political, not a colour, not a creed. I'd like to recognise all those supporters who realised that change was, and still is, needed. All those who continue to sing the most vibrant, passionate and at times hilarious football chants from home and away stands all across Europe, without resorting to bigotry or political rhetoric to support their football team. Why? Because they are all, in my eyes, brave ambassadors for a different way forward. The proposed FIFA rule change unsettled me but I believe that, in a decade from now, any talk of 'which Ireland should he play for?' will be a sentence for the history books. To achieve this, other issues will need to be addressed in order to make the Northern Ireland football team even more accessible to everyone in Northern Ireland. I am sure there are debates and disagreements to follow, but as long as they remain constructive and are discussed between real football fans, rather than politicians, the Football For All campaign will go from strength to strength.

017

Common Purpose in Co Cavan

North Cavan Community Development Initiative is a coalition of six independent community groups from different traditions, each located in small villages in north Cavan, which had previously operated in isolation. It was formed in 2002 with the support of the International Fund's Communities in Transition programme. Backed by a community development officer, the initiative has involved programmes such as the provision of educational and leisure activities, the delivery of new capital programmes and support for youth projects, along with a scheme to provide elderly and vulnerable people with odd-job and maintenance support. In addition, the initiative participates in the rural transport scheme, which enables people in the area to access transport services to Cavan town.



018

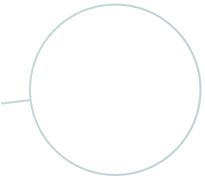
Community Building on the Hoof

To celebrate the millennium in 2000, Cairncastle Community Association north of Larne promoted a joint church service. The venture involved people from the hamlet taking part in a four-centre church service, all making the 15-minute journey in a group on foot from church to church as the service progressed. Although Cairncastle has only 64 adult residents there are four churches, two Presbyterian, one Catholic and one Church of Ireland. All four were involved in this exercise, and at the final port of call, the Old Presbyterian Church, members of the Community Association were on hand to serve refreshments to the worshippers as they sat in the pews. The exercise was deemed a successful bridge-building exercise and with the co-operation of clergy from the four churches, it has been repeated on two occasions since.


New recruits to the PSNI have armed themselves with buckets and brooms as part of a tidy-up exercise in the Garvaghy Road area of Portadown. The initiative, a Business in the Community Cares Challenge, involved the removal, with the local community's approval, of graffiti from gable walls. In addition, three skips were filled with discarded refuse. The officers tidied up open space by cutting back bramble, hedging and gorse which was viewed by local people as an eyesore. Community development worker Yvonne Sterritt said locals were delighted to see the area spruced up. Sgt Roy Burnside of the PSNI said it was important for students attending the police training college to learn about the practicalities of developing relationships between the police and the local community.

020

Concentrating the Mind



Two hundred schoolchildren from Belfast were in for a school trip with a difference when they went to Auschwitz in Poland, the site of the former Nazi concentration camp. The students, from schools in both sections of the community, were addressed by a Rabbi and then had a tour of the camp, where 1.6 million prisoners, mostly Jews, were brutally killed during World War Two. They inspected the sole surviving gas chamber but what they found particularly moving was the heap of victims' shoes, abandoned suitcases and children's clothing. Another case contains the hair of 14,000 victims, used for making socks for U-Boat crews. A visit to Auschwitz is a harrowing experience but a deeply moving one. It is a reminder of the dangers of dehumanising people and projecting the idea that other people are a threat to you.



Corrymeela has been a flagship for the reconciliation movement ever since it was founded in 1965. The charity's objective is to promote reconciliation and peace-building through the healing of social, religious and political divisions. Although its main centre is in Ballycastle, Corrymeela operates throughout Northern Ireland and beyond, developing and delivering focused community relations work through single-identity, cross-community and cross-border community and residentially based programmes for all ages. At a recent residential in Ballycastle, teenage girls from the Girls Model School and Our Lady of Mercy Girls School in Belfast shared their thoughts. One said: 'I learned about King Billy, who he was and why people march on the Twelfth; I thought it was just to cause trouble.' And another said: 'I feel differently about the Catholics I have met, I was surprised that we made friends but we did.'



Maria Vinagre (46) is originally from Portugal and moved to Northern Ireland in 2007 with her husband and four children. Her poor written English means she has had to put journalism on hold, but she found work as a care assistant. Although she enjoyed working with older people, she had to give up this work because of a heart condition. Now she is developing a Craft for Ladies project which enables migrant women to come together to cultivate their native crafts in their new environment. Maria is targeting women from Poland, Lithuania, Portugal and Brazil and is providing them with an opportunity to develop new skills and an outlet for displaying their goods, and potentially make some money for the project to continue. Many migrant women feel isolated and Maria wants to empower them to feel more involved in their local community.

023

Creating Harmony in Tyrone & Donegal

Removing Barriers to Rural Development is a programme designed to break down barriers between small communities in two counties which are separated by the border. In operation since June 2005, it has provided mentoring for 70 schemes and funding for 37 through the small grants programme. An example of the connections that have been made is the link between Ballyshannon Brass and Reed Band and Roughan Band in Ballygawley, which led to some of the Roughan members crossing the border for the first time in many years to play in Rossnowlagh. Ballyshannon band was equally well received during a return visit. Another happy match was between Villages Together in Ballymagroarty and St Johnston. Although the two communities are separated by a river and many miles of road, they found they had a great deal in common. The £625,000 project was part-funded by the International Fund and the EU's Interreg programme.

Tinderbox Theatre Company has facilitated creative community outreach programmes across Northern Ireland since 2000. Workshop programmes attached to specific professional productions of new Northern Irish writing for the theatre have been facilitated alongside distinct participant and community centred programmes which can involve creative partnerships developing across a number of years. Workshop sessions have taken place in church halls, community centres, schools, even in people's own homes. Conflict and difference are vital to any creative drama process whether you are working with the most experienced professional actor or the most inexperienced community programme participant. Entering the workshop space will always involve risks and challenges for the participant but what follows one small step? The answer is simple; another small step, followed by another. Pretty soon you and those you are working with will realise you've travelled further than you thought possible before you entered the room. No one can take your journey away from you, and you are not travelling alone.

025

Cross-Community Mosaic Project

Shantallow Community Residents Association and Steelstown Primary School in Derry came together for a programme which resulted in the creation of seven large mosaics for display in a Church of Ireland prayer garden. The project was the concept of Church of Ireland Bishop Ken Good and his wife Mary, and as things developed, three more schools were involved: St Paul's from the city side and Lisnagelvin Primary and Ebrington Primary from the Waterside. Workshops took place twice a week over a four month period in the art rooms of Steelstown School and the mosaics took shape as mixed groups of children were assisted and overseen by Shantallow Association staff, artists and local volunteers, as well as classroom assistants and teachers. The project culminated in a presentation day at the Prayer Garden, and all the young people celebrated by taking part in a joint visit to a bowling alley.



026

Declan Hanna

A-Level student Declan (17) has played Gaelic football since the age of six, and is now a qualified foundation level coach. He now wishes to impart the skills to others, from both sections of the community. He is confident this will break down sectarian divisions. Under the Aldergrove youth mentoring programme, he intends to recruit 30 teenagers from six surrounding villages who will become Gaelic football mentors. His idea is that they will organise training to pass on their skills to run weekly training sessions to 7–10 year olds. Acting as mentor coordinator, Declan will encourage the teenagers to become leaders within their communities. He believes that this programme will encourage teenagers to mix more easily.

The story of Oakgrove Integrated College in Derry/Londonderry can be traced back to 22 January 1992. Since the start of the year, 13 people had been killed in the troubles. A small group of parents, representing just 10 families from both sections of the community, held an informal meeting to consider opening an integrated school, but the first obstacle was money. The Department of Education put the cost at £250,000 in the first year, which looked like an awful lot of money. After much agonising and heart-searching by the parents, the Department succumbed to the pressure and agreed in August of that year to provide the funding for Derry's first integrated school and the 15th in Northern Ireland. The following month the school opened with 79 pupils on the roll. It now has 850 students, and a waiting list. But none of this would have happened without the determination and commitment of the original group, namely Jim & Kathy Laverty; Rita & Andy Meenagh; Bert & Anne Montgomery; Derek & Nuala MacLochlainn-Row; Vincent Brown; Marie & Ronnie Cowan; Bernie & Tim Webster; Jim & Jen Simpson; Mary & Gerry Walpole; and Anne & Colm Murray-Cavanagh.

Katarzyna Deeds (30) is originally from Poland and has been living in a hostel in Northern Ireland for the last two years with her husband and child while waiting for a home from the Housing Executive. Before coming here, she had worked in Jersey for five years, where she met her husband. Having earlier worked in Poland with young children with physical and mental disabilities, she is now a volunteer in Belfast with Homeplus, catering for the needs of homeless people in Belfast. Her initiative, though, is the development of a telephone support service specifically aimed at homeless Polish and Slovakian people in Belfast. Her free interpretation service will be a boon for those who have little English and who are either homeless or in danger of becoming homeless. Katarzyna's role is to act as a go-between to locate new accommodation, provide information on benefits entitlement and complete application forms required for jobs.

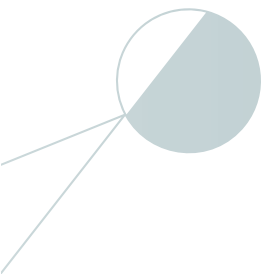
Slowly but surely, the Orange Order has been embracing change over the past six years. One example is the opening of Orange halls across the province to more than 300 community and cultural groups which involve people from the wider community. In Co Armagh, the birthplace of the institution, a community development organisation was founded, comprising representatives from 60 plus community groups and the Order. This grouping is involved in a cross-border partnership arrangement with Monaghan Community Network, and it is facilitating improvements to halls in both counties, to increase the community infrastructure particularly in isolated rural communities. This initiative has resulted in several cross border exchanges, and on one occasion a celebration of the work took place in Castleblaney which included performances by bands and drums from the Orange tradition. It was the first time that any of them had performed in the Republic, and also first time that members of the audience had sat to listen to such music.

Like many towns and villages in the border counties, Emyvale in Co Monaghan suffered economically and socially over the last couple of decades as big employers moved their facilities elsewhere or closed down. But a cross-community group that had previously been involved in the construction of a leisure centre in the village came up with a plan to combat unemployment. In 2004 Emyvale Development Association opened an enterprise centre which comprised a crèche and six enterprise units, all of which are occupied by businesses ranging from an IT Centre to a launderette. It is now proving successful. The International Fund contributed £217,000 to the total cost of £676,600 of the project, with other funding coming from Area Development Management, Enterprise Ireland, Monaghan County Enterprise Board and local contributions.

031

Faith into Action

Habitat for Humanity threw open the gates of its construction site in north Belfast to church groups for a special week in January. More than 50 teams from 12 churches, Catholic and Protestant, took up the challenge and joined the house-building project. Under the guidance of site supervisors Danny and Rab and apprentices Davey and Stevie they donned hard hats, thick gloves and sturdy boots, and worked as a team on the site. Some had DIY skills, others had none, but everyone found it a fulfilling and worthwhile venture. From hoisting scaffolding to installing rafters, it was all action. During the lunch break, as they were munching sandwiches and supping tea, clergy from the various denominations dropped by to chat about the Faith into Action programme and to help motivate the volunteers.





Féile an Phobail

Féile an Phobail (community festival) was established in Belfast in August 1988 as a direct response to the conflict in Northern Ireland. The event coincided with the anniversary of internment and the aim was to reduce street tension by celebrating the positive side of the community, its creativity, its energy, its passion for the arts, and for sport. The first Féile involved a relatively humble parade of floats, bands and GAA clubs walking in their club regalia to an open-air party in Dunville Park. The August Féile has developed into a year-round event and has inspired other troubled areas to organise similar festivals. Nowadays, the Feile carnival parade routinely attracts more than 50,000 participants for a colourful, musical procession with specially designed floats representing a chosen theme, dancers and children in costume and colourful facemasks.

Football For All is a programme designed to make football in Northern Ireland more inclusive. It is supported by the Special EU Programmes Body, the Community Relations Council and The Amalgamation of Official Northern Ireland Supporters Clubs and involves three key steps. One step is working with Northern Ireland football fans to eradicate sectarianism from international matches. The second is involvement in the Irish Football Association's World United anti-racism programme and seeking to provide pathways into amateur league football for people from ethnic minorities. And thirdly Football for All has played a pivotal role in founding a new UK and Ireland-wide anti-sectarian and anti-racism network called Football Without Frontiers.



Football is universal
Football has no boundaries
Football in certain ways is an expression of freedom
Football has no nationality, race, gender or age
Football does not divide people socially
Football brings people together and bonds communities
Football is the expression of a free human being

Football is a powerful tool
let's use it well and respect it
respecting our differences.


Aruna Djalo World United



Martin lives in Finglas in north Dublin and is employed in the FAN project, organised by the Garda to divert people away from potential conflict. Under the auspices of the programme, he has taken part in several exchanges with east Belfast, which have involved bringing young people from Dublin to visit community groups and organisations, observe Orange parades and discuss equality issues. He says: 'These exchanges have given all participants a better insight into a more balanced view of what people living in the North have experienced. They heard opinions and experiences from loyalist and republican viewpoints. For almost all of them, this was the first time they had been able to speak with people who lived in the North of Ireland and thought of themselves as being British. It encouraged the young people from Finglas to think more independently and to challenge and question many of the opinions they had grown up with but had never previously questioned.'

The Clonard/Fitzroy Group began in 1981 as an inter-church Bible study group set up by the Rev Ken Newell, Minister of Fitzroy Presbyterian Church in the university area of Belfast and the late Fr Christopher McCarthy of Clonard Monastery on the Falls Road. Fr Gerry Reynolds later took over as leader of the Clonard group. The aim of the fellowship is to promote contact, mutual understanding, respect and common witness between the two churches. Striving to live out the prayer of Jesus that all his disciples might be one, the group organises meetings, meals, trips and social events and a deepening friendship has developed. The annual programme includes a weekend retreat and a St Patrick's party, and members take part in joint worship at each other's churches. The engagement has enabled the group to study and debate topics which could have been painful and divisive, such as policing, education and justice, as well as theological issues such as the role of Mary and the Eucharist. More recently, the discussions have expanded to look at issues concerning race and also other faiths.

The Future Together initiative is an inter-community advocacy working group that draws membership from across Belfast. The objective is to raise community development to a new level by initiating a positive conversation, and giving local communities the opportunity to input on how best to shape a future together. The Future Together Initiative is committed to dialogue and exploration as a vehicle to challenge prejudice and build confidence in our new political dispensation. It believes that collectively, everyone shares a responsibility to create a positive environment for informed debate that will bring people together, build alliances, understanding and new sets of working relationships.



St John's Gaelic Athletic Club in Co Down has long taken a pro-active approach to community relations and as a result of its equality policy adopts an open-door approach to the whole community. To help spread the message copies of the club's monthly bulletin are circulated throughout the club's catchment area to all the local schools (controlled, integrated and maintained) as well as to libraries, some of the larger local employers and other organisations across the community. As part of its outreach, the club runs an annual special needs summer camp. A group of scouts unfamiliar with Gaelic football were also invited to join the club's under-10 teams for training and after a few ice-breakers everyone enjoyed some coaching in the basic skills and then put those skills into practice in a series of mini-games.

Game of Three Halves

Three Belfast churches got together to organise a week-long Game of Three Halves summer sports camp for young people in Belfast, the name reflecting the fact that it involved football, rugby and gaelic sports. The initiative was jointly developed by Knock Presbyterian, Saintfield Road Presbyterian and St Colmcille's Catholic churches, which between them enlisted a number of sporting stars from the three codes. Paul Brown, a youth worker at Knock Presbyterian Church, said the camp, which was held in August 2007 at Ashfield Boys' School, had attracted 120 youngsters from primary and post-primary schools in the area. The focus was on fun but the programme also gave the budding stars an insight into sports which they would not usually play. It also enabled bridges to be built and gave people the opportunity to form new friendships.

040



Greenhill not so Far Away


Located in the foothills of the Mourne Mountains, near Newcastle, Greenhill YMCA residential centre was opened in 1974 as an outdoor education centre. Since the mid-1990s, the centre has developed and sustained community relations programmes and activities. It also acts as host for one of the International Fund's camps, attended by young people drawn from youth organisations, primary and secondary schools, community groups, YMCA and church organisations from areas on both sides of the border. Since 1993, Greenhill has employed a community relations worker and in 2003 it received funding under the Community Bridges programme. Work has now started on a £1.95m expansion of the facilities at Greenhill which will increase capacity from 80 to 150 with five new chalets for groups. This scheme is being supported under the International Fund's legacy project.

041

Gritty Approach

The Gerry Rogan Initiative Trust or GRIT as it is called, was established to honour the memory of a man who was dedicated to working with young people, particularly those who had not engaged with education and training systems. During his lifetime, Gerry Rogan believed that given the opportunity, the necessary back-up and support, it was possible to help such young people reach their potential and find employment and fulfilment. As a result the GRIT experience was devised and initially targeted young people at risk who had not succeeded in their formal education. A key aspect of the GRIT experience is the intensity of the group experiences by spending 70 hours together.





The Drumcree disturbances of the mid 1990s prompted the Church of Ireland to take a long hard look at how it was addressing the problem of sectarianism. A working party was set up in 1997 with the brief of determining how to promote tolerance, dialogue, co-operation and mutual respect between the churches and within society. This led to the setting up in 2001 of an education project designed to help individual parishes tackle issues such as sectarianism and difference, and its report entitled 'The Hard Gospel: Dealing Positively with Difference in the Church of Ireland' was adopted by the church's Synod in 2003. The Rev Earl Storey was appointed as full-time director of what was called The Hard Gospel Project, and it has promoted numerous parish-based initiatives throughout Ireland. The vision is a Church of Ireland which gives positive leadership in addressing the issues of sectarianism and difference that face society.

043

Holding One's Nerve

The origins of the Nerve Centre in Derry/Londonderry can be traced back to a musicians collective which was active in the North West in 1990. At the time, Derry was a deeply divided city, and the Nerve Centre saw its role as being to tackle the differences through the arts. Young people were empowered to explore their cultural and political heritage through animation, music, film and multimedia. Since the project started, thousands of young people and older learners have participated in the venture. They have used the Nerve Centre's resources to look at themselves and society, whether by using a website or producing full blown animations. The overall objective has been to help people understand why Northern Ireland is the way it is, and to work to bring about change.

As a result of an agreement between the NI Housing Executive and the Derry Travellers Support Group, agreement was reached on a project involving the construction of 10 new houses for travellers at Ballyarnett in Derry. In December 2003 the Housing Executive took over responsibility for managing the travellers site at Ballyarnett and work has started on the three and four-bedroom properties and a transit site. The new houses are for settled travellers, while the transit site will accommodate nomadic travellers. Already, six travelling families have moved their mobile homes onto the hard stand units with pods containing a shower, toilet and laundry unit. Margaret Boyle, director of the Support Group, said the partnership approach which had been developed would act as a model of good practice for projects elsewhere.

New ground was broken in October 2006 when the Housing Executive and Ulidia Housing Association launched the first mixed community social housing scheme in Northern Ireland in a generation. The 20 families who moved into their new homes in Carran Crescent near Enniskillen signed up to a Shared Future charter for their community. One of the new tenants, Michelle Johnston, said: 'Everyone on the estate gets on so well. We are all mixed, we are all different religions, we get on so well and the children play together, that's the way I want to live.' Paddy McIntyre, the chief executive of the Housing Executive, said they were providing Northern Ireland citizens with an opportunity to live in an integrated housing community if they chose to do so. He said: 'It's about how people want to shape their area and how they want to share with their neighbours. They are to be widely applauded.'



Belfast Cuchullains hurling team was set up by the Ulster GAA Council and brought together about 20 young players from Protestant and Catholic schools in socially deprived areas. The team is due to take part in the GAA North American Youth Games in Philadelphia this summer. Ryan Feeney, the council's community development officer, said a lot of the young people came from strong Protestant traditions. But he said it was not about changing anyone, simply about fostering the kind of mutual respect that had been missing. The success of the project has led the Ulster GAA Council to set up similar schemes in major towns in Northern Ireland.

Teenagers in the Woodvale and Clonard areas of Belfast came together to organise a photographic exhibition which explored the pros and cons of living in an interface area. The programme, which was supported by the NI Housing Executive and the Community Relations Council, resulted in an exhibition at the Farset International Centre on Springfield Road. Teena Patrick from the Interface Residents Group, who helped co-ordinate the project, said the project gave the young people from either side of the peaceline an opportunity to see how much they had in common, and an understanding that diversity should be respected, not feared. Deirdre McMahon, a youth worker with Forthspring Inter-community group, said the young people's confidence was boosted as they learned new skills.

The actor James Nesbitt proved to be a man of his word. He was introduced to a group of children and young people in spring 2005 at the WAVE Trauma Centre. All of the children had lost a parent in the conflict and they had just finished work on the exhibition Every Picture Tells A Story, which featured the children's stories of loss and trauma. Jimmy, impacted by the stories, immediately pledged to do all that he could to raise money to ensure that the work of WAVE continued, this at a time the organisation was suffering from financial uncertainty. At considerable cost to himself, both in terms of money and time, Jimmy helped to raise the profile of WAVE, via Art WAVE, the huge fundraiser in 2006, bringing in £250,000. Through Jimmy and his friends the organisation was able to resolve its financial crisis and to establish a sound financial foundation for the foreseeable future. As if that wasn't enough, Jimmy has stayed involved as patron of WAVE and is currently campaigning on behalf of the families of the disappeared. James Nesbitt could have chosen not to get involved as WAVE were hardly a big sexy charity. There was nothing in it for him, but the steps he took prove that he is a man of his word and WAVE will always be indebted.

Jason (19) lives on the Seacourt estate in Larne, Seacourt being a Catholic estate located in the middle of a predominantly Protestant town. When the first youth club on the estate opened last year, Jason was determined to join so that he could meet young people from the Protestant community, and he soon made new friends. That was the springboard for Football for All, an initiative conceived by Jason to bring together young men aged 16–21 from the Seacourt estate with their counterparts from four surrounding Protestant estates. Jason has already seen the positive impact of a project in which a PSNI football team came to Seacourt to play against a local team, and hopes the new scheme will emulate that success.

050

John Andrews

John Andrews is a local businessman who was introduced to WAVE by the actor Jimmy Nesbitt. While Jimmy Nesbitt was responsible for encouraging people (particularly fellow celebs) to get involved in large scale fundraisers for the organisation, it took John's drive and commitment to get the project off the ground. John Andrews unselfishly gave of his time and business expertise to make Art WAVE the largest fundraiser for a small charity in the history of Northern Ireland. His small steps included writing letters, making phone calls, calling in favours, using friends and heading up a large team of staff and volunteers, many of whom had never been involved in such ventures before. The middle classes have often been accused of adopting a 'nothing to do with me attitude' while Northern Ireland descended deeper and deeper into violence. The name bystander could not be applied to John Andrews, who journeyed from his middle class comfort zone to help a charity assist those suffering the direct effects of the violence.

051

Kathleen Gillespie

Kathleen Gillespie's husband Patsy was killed on 24 October 1990 in an IRA attack on a British Army border check-point at Coshquin, Co Londonderry. Patsy was used as a human bomb and was killed at the scene along with five soldiers. Kathleen has more reason than most to be bitter and to seek revenge. However, showing impressive generosity of spirit and real character, she has spent time since the atrocity at the Glenree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation engaged in dialogue with loyalists and republicans. Kathleen's small yet substantive step has contributed to a better understanding of the conflict and its effects on ordinary men and women. She has also been the catalyst, on at least one occasion, for a face-to-face meeting between a victim of terrorism and the person responsible for the atrocity.



052

Kyle Bradley

Despite being just 12 and in first year at high school, Kyle Bradley is thinking big. As a member of the under-13 team at Moyola football club, he aims to organise a mini world cup tournament for 13 teams from 12 clubs throughout Co Londonderry. Living in a rural area Kyle finds it difficult to meet other young people from different cultural backgrounds but is proud that the football team for which he plays is mixed. The Co Derry world cup will involve up to 120 young people and Kyle hopes to challenge young people's perceptions towards different religions and to show others that mixed communities can come together and engage in a positive activity.

Fermanagh Trust is an independent foundation established in 1995 to promote social and community developments by offering grants and providing a mentoring service plus a community leadership/citizen programme. The trust has also helped local groups to deal with tense situations and conflicts through the provision of support and facilities, and recently it commissioned a report on how to address the issue of the use of flags and emblems in Enniskillen. In April 2007, the trust opened a networking centre in Enniskillen which will provide space for community based organisations to meet, interact and to plan collaborative projects. At least 10,000 people a year are expected to use the facility, the development of which was assisted by funding of £300,000 from the International Fund for Ireland.

A common desire for better playing facilities has brought together two football clubs from opposite sides of the divide in north Belfast – Irish Premier League club Crusaders and Amateur League premier outfit Newington FC. Along with other parties, they are seeking to develop to establish a £30m 4,000 seat community stadium and sports complex. This social economy business will be delivered through a separate stadium company which will include representatives of the key partners. The proposed facilities will include office accommodation for sports and educational usage, a soccer dome, two third generation pitches, a sports residential village along with food, bar, entertainment and hospitality opportunities. The project is aimed at creating and managing a shared sporting space for young people in north Belfast and Newtownabbey. A concept plan and a business plan have been prepared, and requests for a partnership arrangement have been submitted to Belfast and Newtownabbey Councils.

The Ulster Folk and Transport Museum and One Small Step joined forces to create a community relations programme for schools. This forms part of the curriculum and more than 30,000 students participate every year. The programme encourages pupils to commit to putting what they learn into practice. Everyone taking part in the programme receives a certificate, asking them to make a pledge to take One Small Step towards understanding the different customs and traditions of the people in their schools and local communities. Examples of the programmes are Ignorance is Bliss, an interactive workshop showing how prejudice impacts on society and Faithfully Yours, an exercise in which students use the three churches in the museum to compare and contrast buildings, artefacts and symbols of various denominations.



056

Long way from Lithuania

Since moving from Lithuania to Northern Ireland in 2004, Ringaudas (24) has got to grips with English, and is fully aware of how important language skills are. A machine operator at a Craigavon engineering firm, he hopes to study aeronautical engineering next year. As a volunteer with Craigavon Intercultural Programme, he has helped provide translation services and has run several social events to integrate Lithuanians and locals. Now he has launched the Lithuanian Support Service, which will provide advice and guidance to 1,000 migrants who have settled in the area. The service is being led by Ringaudas and run by volunteers. Help is on hand for completing application forms for jobs and benefits. Also on the cards are sporting events and a child minding service.

Helping to make a drama out of a crisis are the 120 artistes from six local groups who took part in The Healing Well, a musical about reconciliation which was staged at four venues in the North West in May 2008. None of the participants had met before rehearsals started the previous autumn, but they combined so well that the show attracted full houses. One encouragement was that nobody in the audience took offence at the playing of Orange and Green tunes as part of the show. The Healing Well initiative was promoted by the Oakleaf Rural Community Network and was part financed by the European Union through the EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation. It was managed for the Special EU Programmes Body by the Northern Ireland Rural Development Council.

058

Mark Kelly

Mark Kelly has been a peace activist since the mid 1970s, primarily as a result of his twin passions of music and boxing. Along with songwriter Bap Kennedy he worked on the visionary Christmas Star record which brought together children from primary schools on the Falls and the Shankill. It simply posed the question: 'Why did we only have peace on one day in the year?' What makes Mark's story truly remarkable is the fact that he is a double amputee, having lost both his legs in a no-warning UVF bomb attack on the Glen Inn in 1976. In spite of this trauma, Mark has refused to become bitter and has gone on to work with young people, the unemployed, those with disability and victims and survivors. Taking small steps has become a way of life for Mark, and he has become a role model for many. A mark of his standing was the award to him in 2000 of an MBE in recognition of his services to training and employment.

059

Margaret McKinney

Margaret 'Mags' McKinney's son Brian and his friend John McClory were murdered by the IRA in 1978. For 21 years their bodies lay undetected in a bog in Co Monaghan, and for 21 years Mags refused to give up campaigning for her son's body to be recovered. She was shunned by her community, unsupported by the Catholic Church and dismissed by Sinn Fein. Without a body, she had no grave to visit and sometimes went to the graveside of another boy to grieve there. It was not until after the IRA ceasefire in 1994 that things started to change. Mags got the opportunity to meet President Clinton at the White House in 1998 and he pledged to do all that he could to bring pressure on republicans to reveal the whereabouts of the bodies. The bodies of Brian McKinney and John McCrory were eventually discovered in 1999. The small steps taken by Mags McKinney finally paid off. Her persistence made her a beacon of hope for the other families of the disappeared.

060

Matter of Trust

The 174 Trust is a non-denominational Christian organisation that facilitates a variety of essential community projects in North Belfast. Located in the New Lodge community in a former Presbyterian Church, the Trust offers opportunities and assistance to people of all ages. The 174 Trust is committed to a process of community development based on building relationships with local people, working together to identify and meet local needs. Founded in 1982 by a group of concerned Christians, including members of two local Protestant churches, the Trust's mission is to effect change in north Belfast so that the area will become a centre of co-operation, prosperity and hope. To this end, the Trust engages with the local communities in what is a materially and socially disadvantaged area.



Since the age of 11, Matthew, who is now 16, has volunteered with the Irish Football Association (IFA) to act as a ballboy. In this role he became aware of the sectarianism and racism which often blights local football matches, and on some occasions, he was even the target of the hate squads himself. Determined to bring about change, Matthew set up a website to campaign against sectarianism and racism in football. This in turn has inspired Matthew to start a scheme called Movement Against Sectarianism in Football (MASIF). His hope is that it will bring together young people from eight schools in Belfast with football providing the common bond which will break down the barriers. Matthew hopes that MASIF will move on to organise an integrated football tournament.

Representatives from a variety of nationalities and organisations came together in the New Mossley estate in Newtownabbey in June 2007 for an all-day event aimed at promoting cultural awareness and understanding in the borough. The enterprise was organised by the NI Housing Executive's local office and residents groups within the Housing Community Network. More than 30 groups were represented at the event, and a repeat run is planned for 2008. Sharon Parkes from the network said the aim was to promote understanding of different cultures in a fun atmosphere. The programme included demonstrations of dance, music and sampling of various types of cuisine. Brian Newman of the NI Housing Executive said the agency was committed to promoting community relations and neighbourliness.

Bridie and Michael's son Michael junior was murdered by loyalist paramilitaries in Lurgan at the height of the Drumcree protest in 1996. As a couple rich in faith they prayed for their son's killers and publicly stated that they forgave them for what they had done. Sometimes, in the aftermath of an atrocity, families have rushed into statements of forgiveness, only to regret later having said it. Not in the case of Michael and Bridie. Not only did they say they forgave, but the life that they lived backed it up. Michael and Bridie contributed to building peace and reconciliation by speaking at various events up and down the country, appealing to individuals and communities to find a better way to live together. While this was too major a contribution to be adequately described as a small step, anyone meeting Michael and Bridie would be struck by their humility, for them they were doing the only thing they knew how. Sadly, Michael passed away in 2006, but not before he had left his mark.

Michael (17) and 15-year-old Gerard are passionate about sport, but now have a new goal in mind. As Catholics from the isolated Mount Eagles estate in west Belfast, they had not met any young people from the Protestant community. In order to bridge this gap, they have come up with a proposal for a Game of Three Halves tournament. The fixtures will involve football, GAA and rugby, and the idea is that it will appeal to young people from both sections of the community. Outings to professional games will also be organised to help the young people to get to know each other. Michael and Gerard believe the three-month venture will help break down barriers.

A link between the Boys' Model School in Belfast and Magh Erne College in Bundoran has taken the participants all the way to Capitol Hill in Washington DC. The first contact was a joint project which focused on the problem on underage drinking. As they met and chatted, the students found they had more in common with each other than they imagined. The culmination of the rapport came when four of the sixth formers from the civic link class in Boys' Model were invited to represent Ireland, north and south, at the International Project Citizen Showcase in Washington. There they met other young people from South America, Africa, Russia and the Middle East and horizons were broadened. Among the issues raised were HIV in South Africa, the shortage of drinking water in Senegal and sustainable energy in Estonia. The Belfast students still keep in touch by email with their new friends.



A scheme to turn derelict land at Ligoniel into a small park in which people can share space was one of the last major Urban II projects, but by no means the least. The site is adjacent to the Carnegie Library, a landmark building adopted by the local community as its symbol. Now consideration is being given for a new take on the Belfast mural tradition to provide a neutral and unifying symbol of a shared future. Cross-community activity and themes will be explored and the opening event will include festive and child-friendly events.

In recent years Springfarm estate near Antrim has not had its troubles to seek. It has suffered from social deprivation, racist attacks and vandalism. Now, however, life is changing, thanks to a joint initiative launched in 2006 by Springfarm and District Community Association in conjunction with the Community Relations Council.

The aim was to designate Springfarm as a shared neighbourhood, and to this end various programmes were run, challenging stereotypes and misconceptions, and promoting communication, trust and cooperation among residents. The result has been to give residents more of a sense of involvement and mutual respect, which has improved community relations and is helping to produce a safe and secure environment.

As part of the process, the Community Association consulted widely with adults and teenagers who welcomed the initiative. The objective now is to achieve a voluntary charter for all residents in the area. More recently, Springfarm has been selected as one of the first five estates to participate the IFI funded NI Housing Executive Shared Future Neighbourhood Programme.

068

Niall Dempsey

Niall (20) has suffered many taunts and abuse as a result of having lived his life with Albinism. Despite having low vision, Niall has remained positive, and he is currently completing a degree course. His passion in life is helping others with sight problems, and as a result he volunteered with the RNIB and ran a successful project to make Lisburn city centre more accessible to people with impaired sight. Now his vision is to establish the first mixed Futsal (football for the visually impaired) team in Northern Ireland for young people aged between 11 and 21. The team will bring together young people with and without a visual impairment and will also comprise people from different religious backgrounds. His goal is to send a team to the May 2008 Games in Dublin.



Urban II, a European Union urban regeneration programme, has helped people in north Belfast take a big step forward. The £12.4m programme, which kicked off in 2002, has seen investment being made in 200 projects in inner city areas which were hit hard by the troubles. Urban II never adopted a total solution approach to the problems of north Belfast. Rather, it has role-modelled basic socio-economic infrastructure such as child-care, community transport and training. Effective cross-community interaction has been created and the concept developed of shared space between the two sections of the community. Solid relationships and networks have been formed and the programme may now be used as a template for other areas affected by the conflict.

070

Omagh Community Choir

The Omagh Community Youth Choir was formed in October 1998 in the wake of the Omagh bomb of August 1998. The initiative was the brainchild of local music student Daryl Simpson, in conjunction with local musicians and youth leaders. Daryl, who is now musical director, said his vision was to bring together young people from various backgrounds and traditions, to raise a positive awareness of a community working together for peace and reconciliation, and to provide some comfort in those dark days. He said: 'The aim of the choir was simple, to provide a cross community effort through music. Little did I realise the positive impact that this simple idea would make on so many people's lives.'

Couples in mixed marriages usually do their best to integrate with both families' traditions. Despite the obvious difficulties, they seek together with their children to remain true to their Christian traditions, to both cultures and to both identities. Yet when they are counted or classified by Government they find themselves boxed into stereotypical definitions. Most job applications, for example, require people to identify themselves as a member of a single religion, failing to recognise the reality of those who regularly attend different denominations. Similarly, housing applications require people to define themselves as Catholic, Protestant or other. Likewise the census. The Northern Ireland Mixed Marriage Association is campaigning for government and its agencies to include the option of mixed marriage or relationship on all such forms. It would be a small step, but it would enable those in mixed marriages to reflect the reality of their everyday life.

Patch stands for Political Awareness through Citizenship and History and the project has involved a number of community groups from Northern Ireland and the Republic. The programme, funded under the European Union's Peace and Reconciliation programme, has been promoted by Ballymacarrett Arts and Cultural Society from east Belfast and the East Belfast and Drogheda focus group. The Drogheda group visited the Stormont Assembly, arriving on the day that loyalist maverick Michael Stone tried to burst in, while the loyalist bandsmen group paid a visit to the Cenotaph in Drogheda on Remembrance Day. Joint visits were also made to Enniskillen, Derry and to Kilmainham Jail in Dublin and to the site of the Battle of the Boyne. The trips made a lasting impression and most participants reported that they had helped challenge pre-conceived beliefs and encouraged bonding.





Glencree Centre for peace and reconciliation is an autonomous non-governmental organisation located at Glencree in Co Wicklow. The centre works to build sustainable relationships between politicians, churches, victims/survivors and former combatants, women's groups, community groups and schoolchildren from Northern Ireland, the Republic and Britain. Some of the centre's work now has an international dimension and has involved participants from the Middle East, Sri Lanka, Haiti and Colombia. The International Fund for Ireland has contributed almost £1.8m to Glencree over the years, supporting a variety of programmes which bring together people from the different communities and train them in combating sectarianism. The IFI and the Office of Public Works are now both providing further funding which will mean the completion of a project which includes a new reception and administration area along with accommodation for 20 additional visitors.

Since 2002 Peaceplayers International Northern Ireland has used the game of basketball as the vehicle to promote mutual understanding and respect between Catholic and Protestant communities through a progressive, locally-led programme of joint sports and dialogue activities for 10-16 year old children that assist them to work towards a shared future. Basketball, unlike traditional sports in Northern Ireland, is not affiliated to either section of the community. By competing together on mixed teams on a regular basis, children from these historically divided groups are discovering common ground and forging new friendships. Prejudices are being overcome by the desires to play, have fun and win.



Beechfield Parents Partnership is a parents' group based at Beechfield Primary School in east Belfast. The group was formed in response to a mutual desire by the principal and parents to establish a sustainable parents' group. When the parents began work with Stakeholder Development in May 2007 their aim was to establish a committed group who could develop a plan that would improve the quality of life for themselves, their children and the wider community.

Beechfield Parents Partnership is currently involved in a making a peace quilt with women from Cliftonville and Turf Lodge. They will also be involved in a cross-community project this year with St Bernadette's Primary School in Ballymurphy, which will along with other activities take them on fact-finding trips to the Dáil, Stormont and Belfast City Council.

More than 100 cyclists got on their bikes to give a new spin to a more inclusive Northern Ireland. With the support of local community groups, they pedalled their way around a six-mile cycle loop taking in Belfast's Falls and Shankill Roads. The event was organised by Austin Brown from cycle shop Belfast Bicycle Workshop in support of One Small Step. The route took the cyclists across the peaceline and they were accorded a warm welcome in both loyalist and republican areas. Mr Brown's aim is to see the cycle route being developed and designated as a tourist attraction, bringing a new understanding for visitors and hopefully, some prosperity to deprived inner city areas. The next step will be to invite the two sections of the community to come together to provide guides and rent out and repair bicycles. Mr Brown said: 'It has been said that on a bicycle, you have to kick with both feet, and that is something I fervently believe in.'

Sharon-Louise Trimble (14), a student at Banbridge High School, had some pre-conceived notions about students from Carlow who she was due to meet as a result of her participation in her school's civic link project. She reckoned they might disagree about religion, that they would like Irish music and that they would eat lots of potatoes. And it turned out she was right – about the potatoes. Sharon-Louise, who would like to be a journalist, said her trip to Carlow had opened her eyes in that the young people all faced similar community problems, even though they lived more than 100 miles apart. The abiding message, she says, is that you should never judge a book by its cover.



A series of workshops is being run with the objective of boosting confidence among working class Protestants living in run-down estates. Rosie, who launched the scheme, considers it vital to empower people in such areas to regenerate their communities. She is concerned about disillusionment and a lack of self-esteem in loyalist districts. As chairperson of the Women's Education and Resource Centre and manager of a Parenting in a Divided Society programme for Barnardos, she believes that she has the skills to alter mindsets. A total of 100 places a year will be offered in a series of workshops designed to boost confidence and encourage people to make one positive change in their lives.

In 1976 a tragic incident led to the deaths at Finaghy in Belfast of an IRA man whose car careered into and killed three innocent children from the Maguire family. The incident attracted widespread anger and worldwide headlines. The result was the establishment by their aunt, Mairead Corrigan and a friend, Betty Williams, of the Peace People, a cross-community organisation. The founders, who were joined by journalist Ciaran McKeown, organised a series of rallies across the province calling for an end to the troubles. The trauma felt by the children's mother was so intense that she took her life at the age of 35 in 1980. Although the Peace People did not bring the conflict to an end, violence was reduced by 70% for a period of several months. Many argue that the peace Northern Ireland now enjoys can be traced back to the events of 1976. Mairead Corrigan and Betty Williams were later awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for the role they played.

The Presbyterian Church has stepped up its peace-making work thanks to a three-year programme funded by the International Fund for Ireland. The project, launched under the Gospel in Conflict initiative, breaks down into five-week courses which small groups can undertake, perhaps at midweek meetings or through house groups. Each of the church's congregations have been invited to appoint a peace agent, and every autumn the peace agents and other congregational representatives attend a major conference to review developments. Laura Coulter, the church's peacemaking officer said: 'The violent conflict is over, but there remains a huge task in building peace and working towards a shared space. I believe that there is a continuing need for Presbyterians to make a greater contribution to peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland.'

081

Rachel McCune

Rachel (14) is serving up an idea all of her own in a bid to give teenage girls in the Mount Eagles estate in west Belfast an alternative to hanging around on street corners and getting involved in anti-social behaviour. She intends to organise a badminton tournament one night a week at the local youth club. She feels this will alleviate tensions between residents and the young people. The tournament will give young girls on the estate a hobby and bring young people together taking them off the streets. Rachel has also organised free gym sessions at the nearest health club. The project will create a feelgood factor and will unleash the potential of young people.

Rachelle (20) has recently completed a degree in dance and now wants to encourage young people from west Belfast to follow in her dance-steps. Around 40 young people aged between five and 16 are already enrolled into her weekly dance classes and she thinks this is already boosting their confidence and building their self-esteem. Her objective is to offer young people an alternative to drinking, taking drugs and getting involved in anti social behaviour. Rachelle will work with children from disadvantaged areas such as Whiterock, Turf Lodge, Ballymurphy, Springhill and Dermothill. Her immediate objective is to get the budding stars to put on a stage show.



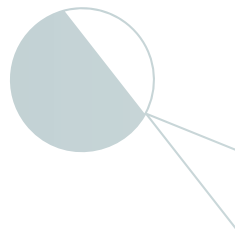
Respect Week takes place in March and is organised by Greater New Lodge Community Empowerment Partnership. Events have ranged from the lighting of candles remembering the victims of violence to the convening of a conference on Investing with Fairness, organised as part of the Future Together Initiative. The aim of Respect Week, which involves both sections of the community in north Belfast, is to provide a platform for open discussion, debate and reflection on important social issues such as economic deprivation, race, sectarianism, age and gender, disability, human rights, the effects of conflict and the physical environment.

Restore was conceived as a one-stop shop counselling service in Belfast specialising in emotional health and other specialist areas. This is seen as a response to the growing need for psychological service as Northern Ireland comes to terms with the legacy of the troubles. Tanya and Lynn started the service, which is based at 174 Trust premises on Crumlin Road. Tanya has experience as a counsellor with NEXUS supporting families and victims of domestic abuse. She works part-time for the Volunteer Development Agency as well as running her own counselling practice. Lynn's background is in nursing, midwifery and health visiting and she volunteered as a counsellor for 10 years with CFC. The long term vision of Restore is to establish a residential facility which will offer counselling, coaching and mentoring.

R We U brought together traveller and settled children from the Monagh area of west Belfast for a series of eight workshops. The project explored through photography and drama, the similarities and differences between the children. Each week the group took photographs of each other, looking at eye colour, hand-shapes, scars and shoes. The children were given disposable cameras to take home and use, mapping out their lives through photographs. The photos they took were used as a focus to compare by, looking at rooms, pictures hanging on walls, gardens, kitchens, pets, parents and presents at birthdays. The children talked about language, accents, who was a Catholic, who was Protestant. The discussions began with uncertainty and ended with laughter and the beginning of new relationships. Ten large images of the children are now displayed at the An Munia Tober after-school site and at the Cummann Iarscoile Na Mona School.

Eleventh Night bonfires have traditionally signalled the start of the Twelfth of July celebrations for loyalists, but sometimes festivities have turned sour when conflict arises. Alarmed by the potential for violence, a number of agencies came together to encourage cleaner and safer bonfire sites, so that people could enjoy the night without endangering themselves or others. This challenging programme involved Belfast City Council Community Safety Unit, Groundwork NI, the Community Relations Council, the NI Housing Executive, the PSNI and Protestant community groups. The programme also aims to raise cultural awareness by enabling the communities to organise festival activities and to participate in cultural discussions. In 2007, Groundwork NI worked with young people to come up with designs for a modern interpretation of the traditional bonfire under the auspices of the Beacon pilot scheme.

Tag rugby is proving to be the common denominator which brings together 80 teenagers, including a number of girls, from both sections of the community in Derry. The group spends four weeks in the summer taking part in a tag rugby scheme organised as part of City of Derry rugby club's youth development programme. Many of the participants are new to rugby and all are encouraged to develop their interest beyond the scheme by joining the club. The scheme was a product of the close working partnership between the Youth Justice Agency, the Irish Rugby Football Union (Ulster Branch), City of Derry RFC and Londonderry YMCA RFC. Some of the participants are setting foot in a part of the city they had not previously visited, and the scheme successfully challenges stereotypes on all sides.



Jim Rainey, a delegate to the Football without Frontiers conference, probably speaks for a lot of Northern Ireland football fans when he admits that he cringes with embarrassment now about the sectarian chants and songs that used to ring round Windsor Park at international matches some years ago. The result was that crowds dwindled to as low a figure as 3,000. Catholics stayed away while many Protestants did not want to bring their children into such an environment. Nowadays, however, thanks in large part to the Football for All programme, everything has changed. New working relationships have been developed between the Irish Football Association and the Amalgamation of official supporters' clubs. Now, as Jim says, even friendly matches are played in front of a packed house at Windsor Park, and the crowd roaring on the team acts as the 12th man.

Sesame Tree is a new media project aimed at encouraging 3-6 year old children in Northern Ireland to explore and appreciate the world around them, and promote respect and understanding. A series of 20 short television programmes is designed to present engaging educational messages through stories and characters, all with a very cross-community theme. Muppets Potto and Hilda answer questions on many topics posed by local children and introduce local live action films that showcase the diversity of Northern Ireland. Funding for Sesame Tree has been provided by the American Ireland Fund, the International Fund for Ireland, the Northern Ireland Fund for Reconciliation and Northern Ireland Screen. In addition, a Sesame Tree website has been developed by BBC Northern Ireland Learning.

In 2007, I was asked to coach basketball at Wheatfield Primary School on the Ardoyne Road. I was all too aware of the unfortunate recent history Wheatfield shared with the neighbouring Holy Cross Primary School but soon an opportunity arose to bring the two schools together at a neutral venue to play basketball.

Disembarking from their buses, the kids ran into the gym at Queen's PEC. This moment was amazing; possibly because it was the first time that many of these kids met face to face. Although they only live maybe 20 yards apart, they have little or no daily interaction. Both schools close at different times of the day so that the kids can avoid one another.

Before they realised what was going on, they were mingling and sharing team shirts and by the end of the day they knew one another's names.

I knew we had made a difference to the mindset of those young children as on the way home, one of the Wheatfield kids said to me: 'Dave, the Holy Cross girls are actually dead on. I didn't realise that before. When can we do that again?'

ABC is an initiative promoted by the NI Council for Integrated Education which is designed to promote understanding and mutual respect in schools across Northern Ireland. The idea is to promote an anti-bias approach to education and a manual is issued to staff so that they can instruct pupils in the importance of valuing difference. Among the key points are guidance as to how and when to intervene in discriminatory activity, and to understand how issues such as gender, sexual orientation, race, culture, religion, class, physical and learning ability interact with each other. One school principal said the manual was an ‘invaluable resource’ for teachers. He said the anti-bias approach provided a strong foundation for building an inclusive school in which the diversity of all pupils was recognised and valued.



Mary Daly is a former teacher who has spent the past 20 years working in the area of social work with disadvantaged groups. She set up a successful project for the travelling community to enhance their wellbeing and has managed several homeless projects for the Simon Community. Now retired, she volunteers with the Simon Community at a residential hostel in the evenings. Through volunteering to help at a multi-ethnic support centre offering advice on benefits she identified a need for teaching English to migrant parents. Having gained the necessary TEFL qualification, she has set up a project designed to teach English to parents from migrant communities who have child-minding responsibilities. She has linked up with Sure Start who will provide the creche facilities enabling migrant parents to attend daytime English classes. This will enable them to secure better-paid employment.



Established in 1982, the primary aim of Farset Youth and Community Development was to tackle the problems of chronic unemployment and social deprivation in west Belfast. But in 2002 it progressed to the opening on Springfield Road of the 38-bedroom Springvale hostel, which comprised en-suite rooms, a conference centre, a snack bar and a licensed restaurant. The £2.27m project, which received funding of £652,000 from the International Fund for Ireland, was also supported by Belfast European Partnership Board, the NI Tourist Board, the Department for Social Development, Belfast City Council, Invest NI and the Belfast Local Strategy Partnership. The hostel, which has proved popular with tourists and visitors to west Belfast employs 27 people and provides a venue for training and education activities.

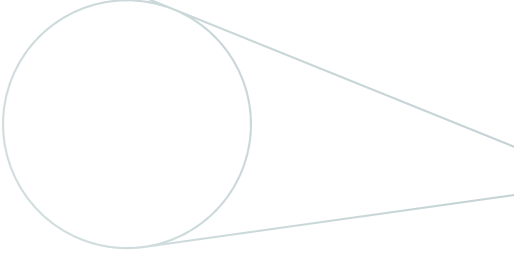
St Patrick's Day is celebrated around the world by people of Irish origin and many others. But in Northern Ireland it can still sometimes be a divisive occasion. However, Down District Council has broken new ground with a more inclusive parade on 17 March. Appropriately, this takes place in Downpatrick, widely recognised as the final resting place of St Patrick. The celebrations have expanded into a week-long cultural festival with a diverse programme which includes a mix of talks, exhibitions, church services, concerts, comedies, music, and dance. On 17 March itself there are special church services, a cross-community pilgrimage, a carnival parade and street entertainment. The parade is a fusion of Italian, Chinese and Indian influences blending with Irish and Ulster Scots influences and the 'Down Through Time' parade theme. Political flags are banned and the only emblems allowed are the Cross of St Patrick and Down District Council flags. This year, more than 20,000 people lined the streets to enjoy the cavalcade.

Picturesque Carlingford found itself economically isolated by the troubles from its traditional hinterland of Northern Ireland. So when peace came, it had to play catch-up. The opening of the Foy Centre in 2005, an initiative of cross-community company Carlingford Community Development, was an important part of the regeneration programme. The centre provides hostel accommodation of up to 32 beds, and self-catering facilities, meeting rooms, a function room/sports hall, and a restaurant. It is now popular with overnight visitors and the local community, which uses it for functions. The £982,600 project received £236,301 from the International Fund with the remainder of funding coming from ADM/CPA – Peace & Reconciliation, the National Lottery, Clar programme, and local contributions.



For several years now, solicitor Terry Donaghy has made it his practice to sample churches of different denominations in his neighbourhood. Although he worships at his own Catholic church on Saturday evenings, he likes to attend a Protestant church on Sunday mornings. He has developed a regular rota which includes seven Presbyterian churches, four Church of Ireland and one Methodist. He says: 'It has been a wonderful experience for me, I have got a warm welcome in every case, and have come to appreciate the first time the depth of the riches of the various Protestant traditions. My dream is that this would become a normal part of Christian faith and worship in Northern Ireland and contribute to the long-for healing of wounds.'

For many years there were areas in which it was difficult for the police to engage closely with the community, and one such was west Belfast. But times are changing and thanks to co-operation between the police, Lisburn District Policing Partnership and community leaders, agreement was reached on a leafleting campaign of the Twinbrook, Poleglass and Lagmore areas of Dunmurry. In all, 7,000 information leaflets were distributed to households, giving contact points and names for neighbourhood police officers. The aim was to build trust between the PSNI and the community, and to curb the incidence of anti-social behaviour, burglary, criminal damage, violent crime and car crime. Among those offering their support to the scheme were representatives of Sinn Fein and the SDLP. Sgt Peter Brannigan, who is responsible for neighbourhood policing in the area said the initiative resulted in 70 calls being made to the police in the first three months. He added: 'This was a small step but it made a huge difference in building relations in the area.'



The Peace Builders course enables students to learn the important lesson of how to deal with conflict in interface communities. Participants explore how a partnership approach between communities and agencies can help address conflict, marginalisation and disadvantage in those areas most affected by the conflict. This Queen's University-accredited course, developed by Intercomm's developing leadership community empowerment programme is a small step in the process of transforming both the people and policies, but for many people it is an important start on the journey to peace and well-being.

Weronika (13) is originally from Poland but moved with her family to Enniskillen less than a year ago. She has learnt to speak English in that time and is now fully fluent. Weronika is keen to offer opportunities for young people from different cultures to mix rather than hanging around the local shopping centre. Accordingly, she is going to bring together young people from different cultures and backgrounds through dance. She aims to offer workshops in Indian Bollywood dancing, Salsa and Moroccan belly dancing. Weronika hopes that this will give local people a more positive outlook towards Polish people, and make migrant children feel more at home.

100

You've Got a Friend

A befriending service that will target lone parents, early school leavers, ex prisoners, socially isolated individuals and those identified with low self esteem is being planned in north and west Belfast. The Community Service Network is the inspiration of Dympna (41), who with her close connections in the area, became aware of the need for such a service. Dympna, who works part-time and specialises in trauma, suicide work and in counselling. The new project will involve developing and running befriending, counselling and trauma skills identification courses and organising four befriending networks.






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Groundwork NI
Habitat For Humanity
Healing Through Remembering
Irish Football Association
Intercomm
International Fund For Ireland
Ireland Fund
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NI Council For Integrated Education
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For many years, individuals and groups in Northern Ireland have been breaking down barriers by taking small - and in many cases not so small - steps towards reconciliation.

In some cases it has been organising a sporting event which involves young people from both sections of the community. In others, church groups have extended the hand of friendship to one another.

As you will discover as you read this book, such initiatives have been taking place in city, town and countryside, at all levels of society, and away from the glare of publicity. The common bond is that all those involved want to make a difference and create a more inclusive society.

Invariably, the participants have discovered that they have more in common than they expected. And they have found that getting to know people from across the divide has not involved any sacrifice of principle. On the contrary, they have found themselves being mutually enriched.

Gathered together within the covers of this book are 100 inspirational examples of practical co-operation. This is but a sample of many such ventures which are taking place and which are planned.

Our hope in compiling this book is that these stories will encourage us all to take steps to challenge bigotry, stereotyping and intolerance. As has often been said, the longest journey begins with the smallest step.

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STEP

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