

Limerick Junior Chamber  
Is proud to present

The Outstanding Young Person  
of the Year awards  
2003

(TOYP)

At The AIB Bank  
106 O'Connell St  
Limerick

28<sup>th</sup> July 2003  
6.30pm

Sponsored by:  
AIB Bank

## President's Introduction

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the 2003 Outstanding Young Person of the Year awards (TOYP). We at Limerick Junior Chamber run these awards each year with the aim to highlight the wealth of young talent that exists.

We are delighted to welcome back the AIB as the sponsors of this event, they have been our TOYP sponsors for a number of years and we are particularly grateful to have such a distinguished and established Irish company lend it's support to our Awards ceremony.

We would also like to thank Councillor Joe Leddin for agreeing to officiate at tonight's proceedings.

The TOYP awards are divided into ten different categories, tonight we are giving Awards in 5 of these categories, these are: Academic leadership and/or accomplishment; Cultural Achievement; Moral and/or environmental leadership; Humanitarian and/or voluntary leadership; Scientific and/or technological development.

TOYP is also a National and International project within the worldwide Junior Chamber organization and we will be submitting all our winners tonight to the National awards finals in 2004 which will be held at our National Convention. If any of the Limerick winners were to win a National award next year (fingers crossed ☺!), their names will then go forward to the International TOYP awards which will be held at the Junior Chamber World Convention in Japan in November 2004.

Thank you very much to the members of Limerick Junior Chamber who have helped in organizing tonight's event from interviewing the winners, to writing up their achievements, the summary of which is included in this pack. Limerick Junior Chamber is a member driven organization, we are involved in a variety of different social, charitable and self-developmental activities throughout the year, TOYP being a highlight! Anyone interested in further details about Limerick Junior Chamber please call (087) 7718861, or our Monthly Meetings are held the first Wednesday of each month in the Ryan Hotel on the Ennis Road.

I would like to thank everyone for coming tonight, the staff of AIB, the Junior Chamber members, the local press, the friends and families of our Winners and of course the Winners themselves!

After the awards have been handed out, I will be calling on Councillor Joe Leddin to make a few remarks. Then Mr. Michael Sharkey of our sponsors AIB will also take this opportunity to say a few words.

And now on to the Awards.....

2003 TOYP Winners:

Academic leadership and/or accomplishment

Caroline Nolan

Cultural Achievement

Amanda Minihan

Moral and/or environmental leadership

Sinead McDonnell

Humanitarian and/or voluntary leadership

Timmy Hennessy

Scientific and/or technological development

Michelle McKeon

## Academic leadership and/or accomplishment

Caroline Nolan

Caroline first became involved in the subject of the bible and theology through her neighbours, she grew up in the shadow of the Society of African Missions (SMA) society headquarters in Cork. After writing a few articles for them, they asked her to go to Africa to report on the Irish missionary work there from a Youth perspective. She became interested in the idea of becoming a missionary and felt that to be an effective teaching missionary she needed to study. Once she started studying Theology, she found it fascinating. She spent the next ten years of her life furthering these studies.

Caroline achieved an Honours BA. in Theology, followed by an Honours Masters in Theology (Hons) from the Pontifical University, Maynooth. Next on her list of successes was an Honours Licentiate in Sacred Scripture (LSS) in Rome. Most recently she completed her PhD in Biblical Theology from the Pontifical University of Maynooth where she is the only person so far to be awarded that particular Doctorate.

It is because of her studies that Caroline is unique in the world of Theology. She is the only Irish lay woman with a LSS - Licentiate in Sacred Scripture. When she was studying for the Licentiate, she was the only native English speaker and the only woman in the class in Rome, all the other students were clerical men.

Caroline was also the first appointed Post Doctoral Fellow in the Dominican Biblical Centre of Mary Immaculate College here in Limerick, her next post will be in Canada this Autumn and she will be the first Irish appointed professor of Old Testament in Newman college in Edmonton, Alberta.

Caroline's achievements as an Irish lay person in a traditionally Clerical domain are truly to be admired. She showed a true tenacity to endure throughout her studies. Her students both here in Mary Immaculate College and also in her new post in Canada, are receiving a unique lecturer whose breadth of knowledge and understanding of Theology and the New and Old Testaments has been validated through the many degrees she has achieved.

## Cultural Achievement

### Amanda Minihan

Amanda always loved to sing, according to her mother and numerous babysitters, she used to sing her other two triplet sisters to sleep with 'I don't know how to love him' from Jesus Christ Superstar! Amanda began taking school singing lessons at the age of 12 and continued with these lessons until she went to London. She competed in the singing competitions in Feile Limuini and joined Amadeus Dramatics whilst at secondary school. At first, singing and drama were just a hobby, but later she realised that they were her passion. In the various amateur productions that she was involved in throughout the years, she started in the chorus and worked her way through the audition process to playing lead parts.

The final decision to leave her full time job and become a professional singer and actress came after attending a summer course at 'Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts' in London. She had to go back. She felt that she had found her niche. The Audition process to win a place on a full-time course in Mountview was daunting, so many people want to study there. Amanda persevered and was awarded a place on a one year Postgraduate Diploma course in Musical Theatre! Next came the challenge to find funding to pay for the course (£12,000 sterling), but with the help of family and friends, through a variety of fund-raising events, the money was finally raised and Amanda's dream became a reality!

Studying at Mountview involved classes in all kinds of artistic endeavors and while there, Amanda won a singing scholarship for one term and was allowed two extra singing lessons a week.

Once she had graduated, Amanda got her first job in London in Victoria Pantomime at the Player's Theatre for three months. She was also involved in two charity concerts and role-playing for Coutts bank. But her major achievement was truly a dream come true, she won a part in her favourite musical, the London professional production of 'BloodBrothers' where she played a number of different parts for eighteen months.

Amanda also teaches children drama and singing on a part-time basis to give back some of what she has been given. Having now left Blood Brothers, she is currently on the audition trail again, but with her talents and work ethic, there is no doubt that she will go very far in her chosen career!

Amanda has said that having the support of all her family and friends from home have helped her to be where she is today and she loves them all for that.

## Moral and/or environmental leadership

Sinead McDonnell

Sinead has always had an interest in the natural environment and qualified with a bachelor of science degree from UCG. She then went on to UCD where she completed a H dip in Equine Science. For the next 3 years Sinead worked in the UK and America in the thoroughbred horse industry.

In 1993 Sinead returned to Ireland and got involved in environmental conservation. She was one of 10 students to be accepted on a pilot European union project in Environmental Conservation & Countryside management in Knocksink Wood in Enniskerry, Co. Wicklow. She obtained a certificate in environmental conservation and countryside management. The following year this pilot project was ratified as a diploma course by UCD.

While studying on this course Sinead worked part time on an education project for schools which was based at the centre. This work involved work with school groups, scouting organisations; teacher training courses, leadership training courses aimed at increasing awareness of our natural environment and engendering an appreciation and respect to enable us to manage it better. After this Sinead became the Information Officer for the Office of Public Works where she carried on with similar environmental education projects.

In 1997 Sinead went on to work with Bird Watch Ireland strengthening the volunteer and branch network. In 2000 Sinead successfully applied for the job of Environmental Awareness Officer with Limerick City Council

Sinead has seen a change in peoples attitudes to the environment and the problem of waste. She works to encourage people to become more environmentally aware. She feels it is important that people become more responsible for their waste and recognise the fact that they have the power to do something about it. Sinead feels working with the school children is important because the earlier the education starts the more beneficial it is for the environment.

Sinead is enthusiastic about her work and works with all different groups to get the message out there, that we all have a part to play which can make the difference

## Humanitarian and/or voluntary leadership

### Timmy Hennessy

Timmy first became involved in voluntary work while in secondary school by assisting in the Tidy Town efforts of his home village of Ballymacoda, Co. Cork and founding a local youth club there. Timmy started a BA in Public Administration at the University of Limerick in September 2000 and his voluntary activity took off in a major way when started visiting the elderly in Milford hospice. He also took part in the Disability Aid program in UL and was assigned to help one person, her name is Clare, to get to lectures and to talk to lecturers on her behalf if necessary. Next he started a Society of Saint Vincent de Paul chapter in UL.

At first, Timmy was the UL SvP chapter's only member, so he got involved in general SvP projects such as visiting prisons. The UL chapter's first big project was the Christmas Drive at Christmas 2001, where Timmy roped in a few friends and they each dressed up as Santa Claus and collected money for 24 hours during the Superquinn all-night opening. This has now become an annual event.

Next for Timmy was his Co-op period in UL, for this, he was offered a job in the Houses of the Oireachtas, but he turned it down in order to stay close to his SvP projects and to take up a position in the UL Access Office, which strives to help under-privileged students go to University. Summer 2002 was the first time he was involved in summer camps for under-privileged children, then in September he began a pair-reading program with St. Mary's secondary school, this led to homework clubs and breakfast clubs for children from the Primary schools too. Because of his involvement in the clubs, Timmy is now a member of St. Mary's local Education Committee. Every week 40 children take part in the homework clubs which are staffed by UL SvP chapter members (the SvP chapter in UL is now 40 strong), this involves arts and crafts and the children also get a hot meal, all funded by the local education committee and SvP church-gate collections. As a reward for taking part in the homework club, Timmy also organises weekly swimming trips to UL for the children.

Timmy is also involved in other projects such as home decoration, soup runs and the drop-in centre in SvP's Limerick headquarters in Osnam House. His latest project was to organise a six week trip for 10 volunteers to Haiti. There was a hectic schedule of fund-raising before the trip. Once there, the volunteers worked in a Srs of Charity facility and got involved in a Project for street children. Timmy's group even facilitated the development of St. Vincent de Paul in the north of Haiti. They arrived back from this trip on the 15<sup>th</sup> of July.

Timmy has many plans for future SvP projects, to innumerable to mention here. On the academic front, he is now going into his fourth year at UL and hopes to continue his studies to do a Masters in Community development as eventually he hopes to work in this area.

Timmy is an outstanding young man, whose contribution to the well-being of those less fortunate in Limerick is truly awe-inspiring, his motto is to never give up - things always come together and he has found that a prayer to St. Vincent de Paul often helps!

## Scientific and/or technological development

Michelle McKeon

Michelle's interest in science and nature was nurtured by her parents. As a child they often brought her to the International Nature Reserve of Clara bog. She feels that she has come along her current path thanks to their encouragement and their enthusiasm for nature and the environment. They sowed the seeds of which she is hoping to reap the benefits in the future!

Michelle first achieved a Honours Bachelor of Science at the Cork Institute of Technology and then a Masters in Biochemistry in the University of Limerick. She is now studying for her Doctorate while lecturing in Science at the Limerick Institute of Technology (LIT). She is a member of the Environmental Scientists Association of Ireland.

Michelle's latest project is researching the use of wetland systems to provide a food growth medium for famine-afflicted areas. This also has possible future applications to the Mars colonisation project. Both these aspirations are being researched in tandem and the research is being carried out on location in NASA Bio Sciences Research in Florida. Michelle is hoping that a potential bonus from her work as a project mission specialist on these studies would be that she would become the first Irish Astronaut.

The opportunity to take part in this program first came about when she visited NASA KSC Florida to try to convince researchers there that her idea had good scope and applications with little cost. She was then approached by Irish Government representatives to inform her that NASA had found her ideas interesting and that they believed that she could work with them on her research and, all going well, take it to space for testing.

We, in Ireland, should be proud that one of our own will be representing us in such a prestigious endeavour in NASA. I am sure that Michelle takes with her all our best wishes for a successful outcome of her research and that she succeeds in becoming the first Irish Astronaut!