



Talent Spotting

Emer Magee, an Accounting and Business Studies teacher at St. Patrick's takes considerable pride in the achievements of her students who won the Young Innovators Award in 2016. She talks to Silicon Valley Global about the experience and the passion for innovation which 'Young Innovators' has inspired in students

Exactly fifty years on from the death of the man credited with introducing free second level education in Ireland, the 2018 ITLG Young Innovators event is set to showcase innovative ideas hatched by some of Ireland's top secondary school students.

In 1966, the innovative educationalist and former Irish Government Minister Donogh O'Malley produced an educational plan which was to have radical consequences for economic development, social mobility and cultural change in Ireland.

It's a matter of conjecture as to whether O'Malley's forward-thinking led to the Celtic Tiger boom of the 1990s-2000s but what O'Malley's derring-do achieved without doubt

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was the ground-breaking introduction of Comprehensive Schools around Ireland, the first of which was St. Patrick's Comprehensive School, Shannon, County Limerick.

In celebrating the Golden Jubilee of the school's foundation in 1966, St. Patrick's decided to enter the 2016 ITLG Young Innovators one-day competition. It was held just a hop, skip and a jump down the road from St. Pat's at Shannon Airport. Over 600 students from schools drawn from around the country participated in the event.

The entrants were charged with the task of imagining the world well into the future. Specifically, the students were asked to come up with an innovative idea relating to how people will be living, working, shopping, playing and traveling in 2066 – fifty years after



ST. PATRICK'S COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL

SHANNON, CO. CLARE, IRELAND

Silicon Valley

ITLG YOUNG INNOVATORS COMPETITION WINNERS' TRIP TO SAN FRANCISCO / SILICON VALLEY 2016



Early Departure from Shannon



San Francisco bound on Air Lingus flight



Above: Meeting with ITLG President John Hartnett
Below: Intel Tour with Helen Hartnett



Ready for a Road Trip



Evening of Fun & games with Santa Clara Sister Cities Students



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SAN FRANCISCO

Homeward Bound at Journey's End



A Special Thanks to John & Helen Hartnett of ITLG & also to all sponsors of ITLG Young Innovator Competition 2016



the birth of free secondary education in Ireland and, of course, the establishment of St. Patrick's Comprehensive itself!

In truth, St. Pat's was tailor-made for making a big impression at ITLG's 2nd Young Innovators event for it is renowned locally, nationally and internationally as a center of excellence for learning and educational development.

As luck, or fate, would have it, the idea from the team representing 'Pat's to implant a microchip at birth which would deliver predictive diagnostics for health issues blew the judges away; so much so that it earned the 'magnificent seven' students the top award, i.e., an exciting week long internship to Silicon Valley in California which afforded them the opportunity to visit world renowned technology companies such as Google and Intel, experience hands-on learning activities, and meet local entrepreneurs and innovators.

Emer Magee, an Accounting and Business Studies teacher at St. Patrick's, was delighted to accompany her school's victorious team to the States. She says the school's experience of having participated (and coming second) in the inaugural Young Innovators event in 2014 made its participation in 2016 something of a no-brainer:

"The Young Innovators competition is very different from the rest of the competitions we would be familiar with and we were thrilled to take part once more," Emer explains.

"There are so many competitions where the parents do a huge amount of work or the teacher does a lot of the work. That's not the case with the ITLG Young Innovators and that's what makes it that more special.

"Most projects we engage with sees the school having to work on it for months and months. It takes huge time and commitment on the part of quite a number of people, but the Young Innovators is a one-day event which is very refreshing.

"The principal (of St. Pat's) and I spoke about it and we agreed it would be nice for our team of students to leave the classroom for the day, do something different from what would be the norm during the year and enjoy the competition once again.

"Normally, I would enter transition year, but I felt I had a nice group of accounting students. They were a strong academic group.

"In total, we only had one or two conversations together in the classroom. I told

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the students to think about innovative ideas and talk with their parents.

"Of course, taking part in the event was very convenient for us as we can walk to Shannon Airport which was an added plus."

On the day of the 2016 ITLG Young Innovators event - in partnership with LIT - Emer marveled at how the seven schoolchildren who represented the Shannon-based school of excellence in the 2016 Young Innovators event managed to unlock their potential to create and succeed:

"That was the major thing I loved about the event, how the students on the day really got their teeth into it, using entirely their own mind set to develop their idea," Emer enthused.

On the day, the students were forced to think outside of the box?

"That's right, they didn't have any background done. It was just what they could come up with on the day. They didn't know what task they had to do, and they couldn't do any prep work.

"On the day, it was just about thinking outside the box and coming up with something that could be used in fifty years' time. They used a plant to demonstrate their idea. I'd never have thought of that in a million years.

"As I say, I told them to think of ideas

about innovation. That was it. On the day, it was just them. I wasn't involved. It was the students who did the research and work on the day."

And to beat the best of the rest?

"Firstly, we couldn't believe it when they got through to the last six. All six teams had brilliant ideas. It was just incredible, all of these 15 and 16-year old students coming up with such innovative ideas."

"It was amazing. The students were on a stage and got the opportunity to present their ideas to very highly qualified people.

"I remember our school was the last to present their project. The parents were all waiting outside and the next thing it was announced that we had won. Everyone was delighted. We never in our wildest dream thought that the top prize would come our way.

"It was just sheer effort on the day. They worked well together. They're all friends and their camaraderie shone through."

Since sweeping the boards at the 2016 ITLG Young Innovators Awards, the luminous spirit of innovation and 'can-do' ethos at St. Patrick's Comprehensive School in Shannon has never enjoyed such a high profile. The success enjoyed by the Class of 2016 will undoubtedly inspire more teams of technology entrepreneurs to come forth and shine from their Shannon base.

"Winning the Young Innovators overall award was such a thrill for everyone at the school but particularly for the students themselves of course.

"They couldn't believe it when they talked to interns at Intel and Google. The people they met in Silicon Valley were so good to them. It was amazing to discover that a lot of them had gone to UL.

"Being in Silicon Valley gave the boys and girls a great opportunity to share their ideas with successful global entrepreneurs. We were all very proud of all the students and their interest in technology.

"Winning the overall prize is invaluable to the students too in terms of their CVs but I'd have to say that they really enjoyed the trip and of all the trips I have taken part in myself, it was the most fun I have ever had. The students had a ball and it was something they will never forget."

Unforgettable? Well, for 50 years at least, we suggest!



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