



twentyone21

SPRING BOARD
OPPORTUNITIES LIMITED

twentyone interviews celebrating 21 years as a catalyst for change

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Introduction

Twentyone:21 celebrates the 21st anniversary of Springboard, highlighting the impact of the organisation on the lives of 21 of the many young people, who have been the heartbeat of our success.

Springboard was established in 1992, originally in the Shankill and Falls in Belfast and Tallaght in Dublin. Since then we have worked with disadvantaged young people as the horrific end-game of the 'Troubles' were being played out on the streets, through the ceasefires, the evolving peace process and the political agreements (and disagreements). Throughout all of this, our focus has always been on maximising positive choices for young people, building their capacity, an appreciation of diversity and promoting peace on our streets and between our communities.

Over the 21 years we have worked with over 7000 participants, offering innovative learning and transformative opportunities within a local and international platform. It is those young people who have been the soul of Springboard. At times incredibly vulnerable and intensely challenging, they have also been unbelievably creative, startlingly resilient and wonderfully energetic. We can safely say in 21 years 'boredom' has had no home within Springboard.

During their Springboard journey young people have created their own pathway, moving to the future with confidence and self-belief, as well as a renewed sense of belonging and responsibility for their community. Throughout the years there have been many stories of hope and change; and in this publication through the generosity of twenty one ex-participants we can now share some of their stories with you.

Someone once said for 'something great to happen, there needs to be a union of ideas, events and great people'; over the last 21 years this has certainly been the case for Springboard. We have been privileged to have worked alongside so many committed, passionate individuals and organisations within and across communities, both locally and internationally.

We are grateful to our local providers and our overseas providers across four continents, for their precious contribution to the story of Springboard. Their valued professionalism, commitment and friendship have been long-standing and consistent.

We also appreciate the relationship and mutual support of many individuals and organisations, working day and daily in all communities. Working together often in highly difficult and challenging environments we have been strengthened by their steadfast integrity, trust and passion.

We record our thanks to our funders, particularly the International Fund for Ireland, Department for Employment and Learning and FAS who have been key partners in our journey and achievements. We pay them tribute, particularly the early trailblazers whose strategic vision and courage laid the foundations for innovative social, economic and reconciliation programmes of action.

My heartfelt gratitude, as Executive Director, also goes to the former and current Board members for their support. That gratitude especially extends to the incredible staff of Springboard whose talent, ability and commitment to build and sustain meaningful relationships with our young people has been the lynch-pin for positive change.

As we mark this significant chapter in our organisational life, we believe Springboard has much more to do as we look forward to the future. We are committed to continuing our work with young people, the communities and contributing positively to a cohesive, peaceful and prosperous society.

Finally we end by dedicating this publication to all the young people whose hopes, dreams and aspirations have the right to become reality.

'Be the change you wish to see in the world'

Gandhi

Angila Chada
Executive Director

September 2013

Keep Calm and Rise above..

Homeless, with no money and nothing more than a backpack containing just a few possessions Jenna Clarke made her way to the airport to join the Springboard Options group for a six week work placement to Kitchener.

It says everything about how determined she was to change her life that Jenna, 24 joined the trip despite the fact that events had conspired against her.

The night before travelling to Canada an argument with a friend she had been staying with meant she had no access to her belongings, but after a lifetime of facing difficult challenges there was no way Jenna was going to miss out on the one opportunity, she was convinced would help change things for the better.

Life has dealt Jenna some pretty harsh blows from a very young age but with remarkable tenacity she has risen above very challenging circumstances.

After years of drifting from one homeless shelter to another and begging a bed from friends and family she now has her own flat in Belfast and is working as a volunteer with Hammer Youth Club and is focused on following a career in youth work.

Unsurprisingly she was singled out in 2012 as the very deserving recipient of the Springboard Inspiration Award, an accolade which she was presented with at a ceremony in Belfast City Hall.

“I wanted a job but I had no enthusiasm to get a job, it was like I had fallen into a ditch. To me Springboard offered light at the end of the tunnel.”

“those six weeks in Canada changed my life and helped me to believe in myself...”

Jenna doesn't dwell on her tragic background, but the difficult start she had in life puts into perspective just how far she has come.

Her mum died when she was nine and her father suffered from an ongoing gambling addiction and was unable to look after Jenna who was taken into care.

Also in her teens she began to question her sexuality and the fear and trepidation of “coming out” in her local community, together with the difficulty she had in accepting herself led to high levels of anxiety.

Struggling to cope emotionally she turned to drink and drugs, and although initially this appeared to mask her pain it also further complicated her life, making it impossible to hold down a job and she eventually lost her home.

But Jenna never gave up and in the summer of 2011 decided to sign up for a Springboard programme to try and get her life back on track.

She reflected: “I had never stuck at anything before and I felt I needed to do something for myself and see it through to the end.

After I left care, I had no qualifications and I had fallen in with a bad crowd and was drinking and doing drugs in my late teens, using my rent money to pay for it but it started to sicken me how I was living.

“I moved out of supported housing and for the first time started to live on my own and I was so depressed I slept all day and for weeks I didn't see any daylight.”

“I wanted a job but I had no enthusiasm to get a job, it was like I had fallen into a ditch. To me Springboard offered light at the end of the tunnel.”

“The chance to do Options and go to Canada in 2011 seemed perfect to me. I had been staying with a friend and we had a row just before I was due to leave for Canada and I threw all my money in the street in anger and left with no clothes but I was determined not to let that stop me.”

“It wasn't easy turning up at the airport with no money in my pocket but it was worth it, as those six weeks in Canada changed my life and helped me to believe in myself.”

Jenna's bad luck didn't end there. While in Canada she got news that her dad had been beaten up and she spent an anxious few days frantically ringing round Belfast hospitals, desperate for news of how he was.

She recalls: “I was so far away from home and I couldn't do anything. I started to panic and was in tears. I phoned all the hospitals I could think of but no one had a record of him and then I thought of the Ulster Hospital and rang there and found they had treated him and were able to tell me he was alright.”

“I still couldn't get hold of him because his phone had been taken in the attack but I was so relieved to hear he was OK. The worry and pressure of it did put a dampener on the trip but I was determined to make the most of it.”

“There was one leader on the trip Michaela who really helped me, she was so positive and when I said I couldn't do something she would get me through it.”

“I was working at a school for young people with behavioural problems which I really enjoyed and I just wanted to come home and keep what I was doing going.”

“That work experience and Michaela's support inspired me to want to do youth work. I learnt so much doing Springboard. The overseas phase helped build my confidence and we also studied equal rights which taught me not to judge a book by its cover.”

“After years of living out of a small bag I was determined not to have to rely on people to find a bed for the night. I got a flat with the Housing Executive and it's my sanctuary.”

“I have everything I need in it now and it's great to be able to just go home to my own place and shut the door.”

“I'm enjoying the volunteer work and my life is more stable now and I am just going to concentrate on getting a job.”

Springboard Timeline >>

1992

First European Programme

1993

Springboard's Official Launch
First wider Horizons
programme to Canada



First programme to America
'Options Boston'



1995

Recipient of US Ambassador
/IFI award

Springboard reaches 500 participants

1996
Deputy Prime Minister
of Canada Visits
Springboard

Senator George Mitchell
Keynote Speaker
at Graduation



Recipient of
Adult Learners Award
by NICAE

1997

First Programme to Middle East



Pilot of Directions
Programme



TODAY he enjoys a celebrity lifestyle as a famous musician with one of the world's biggest rock bands Snow Patrol.

But 20 years ago as a young Belfast man unsure of what career to follow, Jonny Quinn joined a Springboard programme which to this day he credits for giving him his big break.

As the drummer of multi-platinum, Grammy-nominated Snow Patrol Jonny is enjoying success on a scale he once could only have dreamed of and says he will never forget the role Springboard played in shaping his life.

It was in 1996 at the age of 21 that he joined the Cultural Entrepreneurs programme which involved a four week work placement in London.

He had been studying multimedia at Art College but had no idea what career he wanted to follow.

He loved music and had played in a number of bands around the city and while this is where his heart lay, he knew the chances of finding work in the industry were very slim.

Through Springboard he says he gained the insider knowledge, contacts and most importantly, direction to go on and set up his own Promotions and Management Company in Belfast.

The beat of a special drum..

It was through his company which booked bands from England to play in Northern Ireland that he first met Snow Patrol's lead singer Gary Lightbody.

A year later Lightbody invited Jonny to join the band. "Springboard is the reason indirectly that I got into Snow Patrol. I give them credit for what I am doing now," he said.

"I wasn't really sure what I wanted to do before I joined Springboard. I had this vague notion of being a music supervisor for TV."

"I had been in loads of bands but never thought about it as a viable career as there weren't a lot of bands from Belfast at the time that had made it or had been offered a record deal."

"The Springboard programme was very bold for its time. It got a lot of music industry people to do seminars which was very rare and very valuable in that it gave you a real insight into the industry."

As well as the seminars, Jonny also found his work placement in London invaluable in showing him how the industry works.

He spent a week with a dance label and then moved to the management company of PJ and Duncan, a pop duo who became the huge TV personalities Ant and Dec.

"PJ and Duncan actually weren't the coolest at that time," said Jonny.

"It was good to get working with professionals and get that experience. While I was there I was asked who in Belfast could book a band called Gold Blade and I offered to do it."

"That experience gave me the idea to set up a promotions company and Springboard was a huge help in giving me business advice and guidance on applying for grants."

Jonny's business - which specialised in booking English bands to perform in venues in Northern Ireland - was going well when a year into it he got a call out of the blue from Gary Lightbody.

He had met Gary when he booked his band Shrug to perform in Belfast.

The invitation to join new band Snow Patrol was one which Jonny says he very nearly didn't accept.

He tells the story: "I had booked Shrug for a gig in the Crescent Arts Centre and that's how I got to know Gary. He called me a year later to say the band had been given a record deal and they needed a drummer and asked if I would be interested."

"My company was doing OK so I wasn't sure what to do. It was a bit of a hard decision to make as it meant giving up my business to move to Dundee and I think it was a case of my heart ruling my head

It is really important for Northern Ireland and young people in particular that we have organisations like Springboard that in most cases provide people with a real chance and Northern Ireland needs those opportunities.

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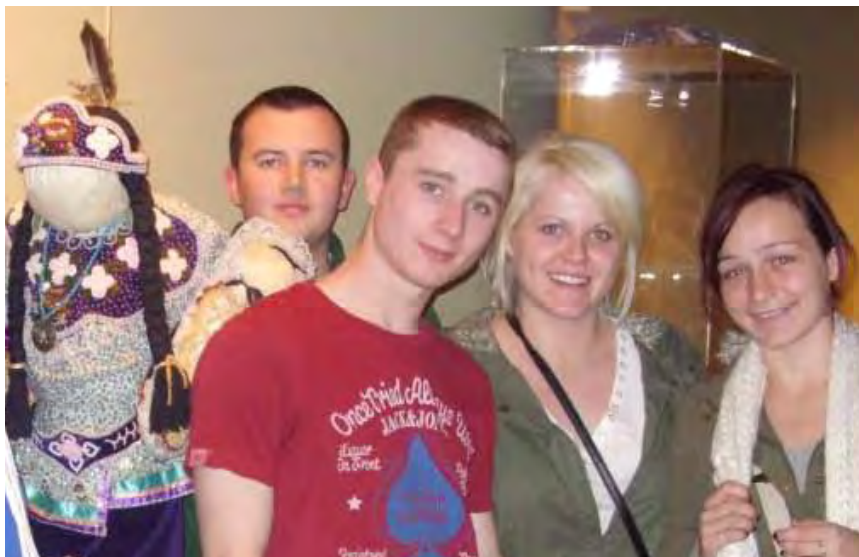


and I went for it and I'm glad I did. It did seem like a huge gamble but I knew Gary was pretty special."

In those early days with Snow Patrol Jonny confesses that the band could never have predicted how phenomenal their success would be: "At that time we thought if we got to 60,000 record sales it would be a big achievement. It's been unbelievable."

Jonny now lives in London but says no matter how far he travels he will never forget how important a role Springboard has played in his life.

He added: "It is really important for Northern Ireland and young people in particular that we have organisations like Springboard that in most cases provide people with a real chance and Northern Ireland needs those opportunities."



Jim came to Springboard with a basic level of education and low confidence. He had some customer service experience but had been out of work for some time and was eager to get into employment. Involved with the 'wrong crowd' when younger, he needed some motivation and wanted to get back on the right track.

After spending over a year on unemployment benefit and applying for countless jobs without success, a despairing **Jim Markey had started to give up on his future.**

He enjoyed the independence of having to stand on his own two feet while working overseas and found a new confidence in himself which he says has stayed with him ever since. He said: "In the youth centre I've never seen people with so little. It was hard to see people living like that but they seemed to be so happy and making the most of it."

"I think being in Canada really made me grow up and gave me a lot more independence."

"I know its clichéd but Springboard really did work with me on the unemployment issue and helped me with my confidence. I had lost direction and started to believe that I was never going to work again and felt really drained and was convinced there was nothing for me."

"I have worked with lorries since I was a child so it is something which I have always enjoyed and I have now completed two years of my apprenticeship as a mechanic."

"It was like I was stuck in a rut and Springboard opened the door and gave me a push. It was the best experience of my life. I've made friends for life and I will always remember it and cherish it."

confidence repair...

The North Belfast teenager had reached such a low that he didn't want to get out of bed in the mornings as he felt he had nothing to get up for. He signed up for the Options Montreal programme in 2010 which he said completely turned his life around.

Now aged 23 and working as an apprentice mechanic, Jim credits Springboard with giving him hope again and helping build up the confidence which he had lost.

He said: "Life is great. I'm working away and I love the job, it's nothing too exciting, just normal but I am learning a trade I will always be able to fall back on. Springboard helped me get the hunger for work and made me want to do well in life." In Montreal Jim worked in a youth centre in a deprived area of the city and says the experience taught him a lot.

Life focused...

From Tallaght in Dublin, Claire came to Springboard in 2006. With a Leaving Cert and some previous experience working in the community sector, she wanted to develop her skills in this area. She has been a strong advocate of working class issues and this passion and commitment supported her through her programme and into her current job in Stewarts Hospital.



Claire Byrne spent her teenage years and early 20s drifting from job to job with no real idea of what she wanted out of life.

She took part in Springboard's Youth Apprentice programme in 2006 when she discovered she had a passion for working with people, especially people who were disadvantaged.

The day after she finished the programme she started a new job in a mental health hospital in Dublin where she has worked ever since as a social care worker.

It is a job she says she loves and which totally fulfils her and which she combined with studying for a Degree in Applied Social Studies with the emphasis on Equality.

Coming from Dublin with no experience of the north, Claire, 32 welcomed the opportunity Springboard provided for her to mix with different religions and gain an understanding of the divisions in Northern Ireland society.

She explains: "Those of us on the course from Dublin knew what had gone on in Northern Ireland but in a sense saw it as an English problem, we didn't really understand it and so finding myself with people from both sides of the divide for the first time was a great experience."

"I was struck by how very open everyone was about how the situation had affected them and it made me realise it was a lot more complicated than I had thought and from that point of view it was very incisive."

"After the course when I went on to do my degree, part of our studies was on Northern Ireland and we visited Belfast for two nights to talk to some community workers."

"We just went to the Falls Road which struck me as wrong as we were only seeing one side and I suggested that we should also be going to see how people lived on the Shankill Road, but my thoughts were completely lost on the group as there was this

perception that the Catholics were all poor in the north and the Protestants were all rich."

"It made me realise I actually do know a bit about this from my time at Springboard having seen the other side and I just thought that for a University course it was a very conservative view and you would have expected them to be a bit more broad minded."

Claire loved the programme, especially the fun element, and as well as a better understanding of the complexities of life in Northern Ireland she took away a clear focus on what she wanted to do with her life.

She added: "I had floated from job to job mainly in offices which I found really boring and just knew wasn't for me, but before Springboard I had no idea what I did want to do and the programme helped me to realise I may as well pick something I enjoy and I now love my job, everyday is different and that's what I like about it."

Springboard Timeline >>

1997

Cross Community, cross border Youth Conference 'Making a Difference'



Community Apprenticeship Programme



1998

Cross Community, cross border Youth Conference 'Shaping a New Society'

Community Leadership Programme - Hungary



Cooking with new ingredients...

Desmond joined the programme when he was 20 years old, with some GCSEs.

He was homeless from the age of 19 until 2 months prior to joining the programme and during this time lived in Flax Foyer, a sheltered accommodation centre for young men. He recently won the Volunteer Spirit of the Year Award.

Desmond Smyth, 23 from North Belfast was unemployed and homeless when he applied to take part in Springboard's Options Toronto 2011 programme, hoping that it would change his life. He tells how he not only discovered a sense of self-worth while on work placement in Canada, but the programme also gave him the confidence to accept his sexuality which has given him a newfound freedom.

He tells the story: "I lost my family when I was 16 through problems at home and moved into a flat on my own. I was always interested in cooking and went to catering college in Belfast and got a job working in a hotel but after two years when the recession hit I was paid off and lost my home.

I had been living in a hostel for the homeless for two and a half years before I joined Springboard.

I had also been looking after my granda who was going through cancer. He wanted me to do something for myself that would lift my spirits and so I applied to take part in the Alternative Directions programme.

I started the programme and really enjoyed it but when we went to London for two weeks, we had been there just one day when my granda died and I had to come home.

I was very lost after that and decided to apply for the Options programme in 2011. I didn't know what I wanted to do with my life and going to Canada really helped me to find myself.

I got a work placement with an organisation which looked after the homeless.



As I am passionate about cooking and love to cook I was given the job of teaching the residents in the homeless shelter how to cook on a budget.

Because Toronto is so big the homeless problem there was huge and I really enjoyed the experience. Also meeting people from different backgrounds on the course really opened my eyes. Living in a hostel I had never met so many people with such different personalities.

I had been confused about who I was and my sexuality and Springboard helped me to accept who I am and that has made such a huge difference to me. I felt comfortable with myself for the first time in years and I got my confidence back. There was one leader in the programme who really supported me and helped me to find myself.

When the Springboard programme ended I knew I wanted to do cookery and if possible work for a charity or community group. I volunteered to work

in the kitchen with the Corrymeela Community and after a year of volunteering, I was offered a job training volunteers how to cook.

I loved volunteering but its great now to be doing what I want and getting a wage for it. I am very happy and content now and very comfortable with who I am and it's all thanks to Springboard."



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Spring... into Art



'Bogwood Art'

This collection was created by participants on the Directions Germany programme in 2010 as part of the Art in Diversity Project, which incorporated elements of mutual understanding, Native American culture and intergenerational building.



'Peace Through the Window'

Created by participants Loretta, Emma and Lynsey from the Directions Belgium programme in 2011. The painting represents activists who have fought for human rights. This was inspired by mutual understanding training delivered on the programme.



Directions Germany 2011

This brass art piece was created by Cormac, Karl, Daniel, Jenny and Levi while on the Directions Germany programme in 2011. They were each asked to create a piece reflecting something that is important to them. Each square represents the individuals' identity and the personal values that they hold.



Directions Belgium 2011

This is a representation of graffiti artist Banksy's piece on the rioter. It was part of a mosaic art project created by participants Kevin, Phil and Aaron. The flowers the rioter is throwing symbolises the softer side of young people.



This individual art canvas was created by Karl on the Directions Germany programme in 2011. This piece of art represents how Karl sometimes feels time is against him and how he can feel lonely and closed off.

Before Suzanne started the programme she was unemployed for three months and dealing with some serious family problems as well as personal issues.

When she started she was a shy person with low confidence and no self esteem. As the programme progressed Suzanne began to relax and her confidence grew and participation increased.

SunShine from Shadow...

Her teenage years were overshadowed by great personal tragedy which eventually pushed Suzanne Mooney into a dark and lonely depression.

Eating for comfort, her weight ballooned and her bedroom became her only sanctuary.

Her worried mum encouraged her to contact Springboard to try and lift her out of her depression and help her find a focus for her life.

Today at 25, a bubbly, happy, much slimmer and more confident Suzanne is a breath of fresh air to the customers she serves in Marks and Spencer's Boucher Road cafe where she is a much valued member of staff.

She credits Springboard and the Directions Belgium programme she took part in during 2007 for helping her to turn her life around.

"I left school at 16 with nothing," she said. "My brother had just been shot and I stayed at home to look after him."

"In 2006 my nephew, granny and granda all died within six months. It was really tough, especially losing my nephew."

"I sort of became a recluse and was being treated for depression. My mum wanted me to have a life and she spotted the Springboard advertisement and persuaded me to go for it. She told me I had nothing to lose."

"When I first went to the Directions programme I didn't know anyone. One of the first things we did was a scavenger hunt in Belfast City Centre where we had to look for hidden clues and that was great fun and everyone bonded."

"We had culture days and visited the Indian community's centre on the Antrim Road and got henna tattoos on our hands and tasted lots of different food."

"We also did alcohol and drug awareness courses. After what I had gone through the programme really brought me back to myself. I got my confidence back and made new friends."

"The course made me get a life again."

"I had shut myself off from everyone and I was overweight and very self conscious about it. In the group we had people from Dublin and all parts of Belfast and all shapes and sizes and I realised I am not the only one overweight and that everyone had their own problems."

The complete change of scene which her two week trip to Belgium provided, proved a real balm for Suzanne's raw emotions and for the first time she

found herself relaxed and having fun with her peers.

"Belgium really got me away from everything and allowed me to have a laugh," she said.

At the end of the programme during graduation, Suzanne was presented with the award for the most changed person.

It is a change which is evident in her bright smile and relaxed conversation. She loves her job in Marks and Spencer's coffee shop and is the first one there every morning to open up at 7am.

She added: "There is always someone worse off than you. I just get on with it now and I am the only one in my family who works."

"I went to the gym and have slimmed down from a size 16 to a size 12 and feel much more confident now."

"The sadness of my loss is still there but the difference is I don't let it get me down anymore."

"I would say to anyone who is feeling down or needs a different direction in life to go to Springboard, they are there to support you."

“ anyone who is feeling down or needs a different direction in life... go to Springboard, they are there to support you.”

Springboard reaches 1000 participants

1998

50th Wider Horizons Programme
Springboard wins 'Inter-Aiding Awards' 'Inter-Community Category'
Secretary of State Mo Mowlam, Keynote Speaker at Graduation



Taoiseach Bertie Ahern Keynote Speaker at Graduation

1999

First Programme to South Africa



Belfast, Dublin, Turin Youth conference 'Celebrating Diversity'

Springboard reaches 2000 participants

2000

'Tell It Like It Is' Cultural Diversity Project
25th Wider Horizons Programme to Toronto



Launch of Millennium Ventures Project: Developing exchange between world citizens



Writing the story of your 'Life...

Dermot Nelson from Kells started taking drugs when he was just 14 years old and by the age of 22 was addicted to heroin. He had just completed a methadone programme and was battling alcohol addiction when he was persuaded by a friend to apply for Springboard's Performing Arts programme in 2009.



'These Things I Imagine' Cover Art by Lisa Conlan, former participant

“

It made me do things I would not normally have done and showed me that everyone else has issues as well...

...it completely changed my life”

Now the sky's the limit for the 30-year-old who is writing plays and poetry while studying for a Bachelor of Arts Degree at Edinburgh University.

Dermot tells his story: "I started taking cannabis at 14, moved on to other drugs from the age of 16 and was addicted to heroin when I was 22.

I wasn't really free from it until I was nearly 26, when I completed a methadone programme.

From my early teens to mid twenties I often felt I was letting down or hurting those closest to me.

It was a horrible stage in my life and I often felt that I didn't want to exist. Following the completion of the methadone programme and in the year before Springboard, feeling quite lost, I began to drink heavily.

When I joined Springboard I wasn't expecting that much as I just saw it as a way of getting away from drinking. I had a very negative view of myself but Springboard inspired me with a lot of confidence. It made me do things I would not normally have done and showed me that everyone else has issues as well. The programme also helped me to realise I wasn't trying before. It completely changed my life. I was full of regrets and trapped in the past but Springboard made me see that in order to have a future I had to stop living in the past. I didn't feel I deserved a future but the programme helped me to realise that everyone deserves a second chance. Even after the programme ended the support continued and people from Springboard would be in touch with me to encourage me, even attended events I was involved in on both sides of the border.

When I left I went to Belfast Met and did a Higher National Diploma in Performing Arts for two years and then started a BA Honours Degree at Edinburgh University. I was always day dreaming as a young man and suddenly it felt that my daydreams were coming true. My first collection has just been published and I am still writing. I would like to see my plays performed as well as direct plays myself. I would also like to own or part own a theatre company and take plays to vulnerable youths in deprived areas and maybe get them involved in acting, or drama therapy. I've lots of ambitions now and my life couldn't be more different."

Dermot's collection of plays and poems "These Things I Imagine" is available from Amazon and mainstream bookstores.

Kelly participated in Springboard's one and only programme involving parents and their children in 1998. From the Shankill Road, Kelly had two children and had been unemployed for four years prior to the programme. Joined by her 4 year old daughter Meghán on the programme, both embraced all the opportunities offered by the Choices programme.

As an unemployed single parent in her mid 20s Kelly Henry was at the point of despair before she joined Springboard's Choices programme in 1998.

“

The experience made me realise just how much I had been struggling and helped me become a much stronger and more capable person.

"My relationship with my children's dad had just broken up and it was a very hard time. Looking back it was the lowest point in my life," she said.

The programme she took part in was set up especially for single parents.

It aimed to examine their training and education needs as well as provide a platform for young parents to meet each other and work together.

It was also tailored to helping them to understand each other as individuals as well as their respective cultures.

As well as training in Belfast, there was a three month residential work experience trip to Canada where child minding was offered to give the young mums the freedom to participate.

Kelly took part in the programme with her four year old daughter Meghán.

It was to prove a major turning point in her life as she explains: "It gave Meghán a chance to spend time on her own with me and I think we developed a special bond."

"I couldn't have gone to Canada if I hadn't been able to take Meghán with me. She was in child care every day while I worked in an IT company and she loved it."

"She still talks about it to this day."

"The experience made me realise just how much I had been struggling and helped me become a much stronger and more capable person."

"It was brilliant, I believe it also made me a better person and gave me more confidence."

"The training before we went to Canada was invaluable. We covered so much – mentoring, personal development, employability – and it helped me to realise that I didn't want to sit at home anymore."

When the programme ended Kelly successfully applied to train on the Adult Job Skills Programme with the organisation Impact Training.

Shortly afterwards she was offered a job in administration with Impact Training and has remained with them ever since.

She added: "I love my job and any opportunity I get I promote Springboard, especially to the young people in my area."

"I would advise any young person to do it. Being from the Shankill Road, I think young people from this area need to open their minds to life outside the Shankill Road and Springboard allows them to do this."

Springboard Timeline >>

2002

4th Community Reconciliation Programme to South Africa



100th Overseas Programme

Springboard Publishes 'The Way It Is'

Springboard Hosts Australian Exchange

Springboard Celebrates 10th Year Anniversary



2003

Launch of Urban Services Project



Jeanie Johnston Sailing Voyages



Springboard reaches 3000 participants

1st Directions Programme to Belgium





Chris, from West Belfast, joined Springboard at a time when he was disillusioned with formal education and wanted to approach life from a different angle.

that's Entertainment...

LIKE many of today's most successful business figures, Chris Hughes was still a child when he started to come up with ideas for making his own money.

At the tender age of 11 he was selling programmes for boxing matches at the Waterfront Hall and by late teens he was running his own events – setting up a disco for young teens that became so successful it made newspaper headlines.

Brought up to believe that a good future would be secured only by obtaining a University degree, Chris instead was convinced that he could learn more in the world of business than in the halls of the best education establishment.

Although he did well in his A levels, his grades were not high enough to secure a place at University and while he felt he had let his family down, deep down

he knew his heart lay in working for himself and learning the ropes of running a business.

"I got a C and D in my A levels and it wasn't the standard my family expected of me and I was very embarrassed but I was too busy learning business to focus properly on my studies and I suppose I felt I sacrificed my education a bit to do that," he said.

In 2005 at 18 and having decided University wasn't for him, Chris needed experience in business and signed up for the Springboard Media Skills Vancouver programme.

With his appetite for learning he totally embraced the opportunity offered while working in an entertainments company in Vancouver with Springboard for two months and made such a good impression that he was offered a full time job at the end of it, which he turned down.

He said: "The company was like the Botanic Inns of Vancouver and I was based in the head office and was fortunate to be working under a lady called Christine who was hugely successful in her field and very well respected and talented."

"She really took time to explain things to me and involve me in the company, giving me responsibilities and as it was a company which had the attitude for success, I learnt so much. I learnt how extremely important presentation is and especially how you present your product and I learnt about financial control as well as the principles of selling people a good entertainments package."

"I went to Canada wanting to set up my own events company but not knowing if it was viable and I came away more confident about doing it."

"There is a lot of fantasy involved in providing entertainment for people and I didn't know if I was getting caught up in the fantasy or if it was viable and Canada helped me to clarify that in my mind and Springboard extinguished the uncertainties."

"It also helped me come to terms with the guilt I felt about not going to University and made me realise that when it comes to business why would you pay to learn something you could get paid to learn elsewhere and having now set up my own events company I am working with no student debt, in fact no debt at all."

Before setting up his company Hughes Leisure Event Productions Chris wanted to get more experience and worked as a concierge where he learnt valuable lessons on how to present himself and how to deal with people.

His chosen "on the job" education continued with a Public Relations post for licensed premises in Belfast before going on to secure the post of Business Development Manager with a digital media company.

He then set up his own company and organised his first event running a disco for young people in their mid teens.

Using the lessons learned during his Springboard programme, he focused on making sure he had a good product, hiring top radio DJs and providing a first class night.

“Springboard is filled with people who genuinely care about young people and I would recommend it to any young person, especially if they are feeling a bit lost.

At £7 a ticket it sold out and the event soon took on a life of its own so much so that when he switched venues to cater for a larger crowd, a phenomenal 6000 young people turned up for an event which could only cater for 600.

"It was actually pretty devastating for me that something went wrong and so many people turned up and the media were all over it, but it proved to be a huge learning curve," he said.

Chris's company specialises in devising and setting up innovative events and concepts for which he has forged links with one of the UK's biggest firms, Industry Music Group who are responsible for shows like X Factor and Britain's Got Talent.

He has also played a part in helping out when the massive MTV Music Awards came to Belfast's Odyssey Arena.

An event he hopes will put him on the map is the Enterprise Factor for Schools in Northern Ireland which he is currently focused on.

It is a six week programme for pupils offering training in finance, marketing and management and culminating in a charity concert at the school featuring finalists from top TV talent shows such as the X Factor.

The charity element is important to him as he explains: "I believe if you are going to make money you have to make it the right way by doing the right thing and the schools programme provides a platform to raise money for charity."

He also has set up a very successful charity boxing event which has raised over £30,000 for local charities to date.

The very successful young man credits Springboard with helping him to find his niche in life: "Springboard is filled with people who genuinely care about young people and I would recommend it to any young person, especially if they are feeling a bit lost. I think what has happened in my life has proven how much of a difference they make."



secure direction...

A 23 year old, when he joined Springboard, Daniel had struggled with formal education throughout his life. He had low confidence and led a very secluded life up to applying for the Springboard programme. He had a keen interest in becoming a security guard and he hoped the programme would help him develop the appropriate skills to support him in gaining a career in this area.



It is the people closest to Daniel Neill who most appreciate the dramatic transformation in his life since he completed two programmes with Springboard.

Now 24 and enjoying a career he loves as a security man, his dad Millar describes his son's experience on the Directions Germany 2011 and the Options Kitchener 2011 programmes as "life changing."

He said: "Before Springboard Daniel spent most of the day in his room not knowing what to do with himself and to see him like that as a parent was soul destroying.

"Springboard has been such a positive experience for him in helping him get away from it all and

decide what it is he wants to do with his life and also in letting him see that difficulties could be overcome.

"Directions, his first programme, provided him with a foundation to change his life and then Options really built on that and gave him the experience and knowledge and confidence he needed to make changes.

"Daniel lacked self belief and he was always the type who would do anything for anyone except for when it came to himself, then he found it difficult to see where he wanted to go and Springboard changed that. It has made him a different young man.

"Now he is happy and settled and content and has found something which he likes doing."

Life now for Daniel couldn't be more different and his new career - which sees him travelling to England to work on security at some of the UK's biggest music festivals - has given him a sense of achievement, adventure and purpose which just two years ago would have been unthinkable.

He said: "Directions gave me so much - on a practical level it helped with my Maths and English which I had always struggled with but there was also a huge fun factor.

"I had always camped with my dad and when we went camping with Springboard there were a lot of people who hadn't camped before and so I was able to help out which made me feel good.

"Directions helped me realise what made me tick and how I could develop personally. It gave me a lot of confidence."

Daniel discovered his vocation when he was placed for six weeks with the security police at a University campus in Canada and also living with a host family helped him for the very first time to experience an independence which he had never had before living at home with his parents.

He said: "I am a people person and the work was right up my street, meeting the students and mixing with new colleagues. I enjoyed every minute and got a real adrenalin rush when we were called out to incidents and got the chance to assist with an arrest which for me was a very big thing.

"Staying with a host family was a real eye opener because I didn't have my mum and dad there and had to do my own washing and get myself out of bed in the mornings."

“if I could get everybody in the world who lacks confidence to go to Springboard I know it would change them...”

Daniel has recently secured his Door Supervisor Licence and is working as a Casual Stewart with leading security management company Select.

He added: "Every day is different now in my life. Springboard saved my life in a sense and I don't know where I would be today if it hadn't been for Springboard.

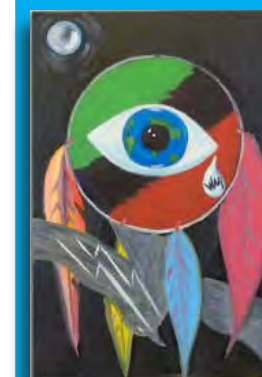
If I could get everybody in the world who lacks confidence to go to Springboard I know it would change them."

Creative 'Board...

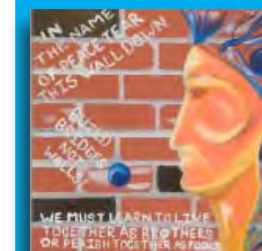
'Peace through Music'

Created by participants Paudraig and Martin on the Directions Belgium programme in 2011, this piece of art represents how music can unite young people across the divide.

Inspiration came from the participants' love for music and its' calming effects.



This painting of a Native American Dream Catcher was created by participant Amy on the Directions Germany Programme in 2011. This was inspired by the learning of Native American cultures during the programme.



This individual art canvas was created by Demi on the Directions Germany programme in 2011. It is a representation of working together across the divide in Belfast.

Springboard Timeline >>

2005

11th Programme to Boston



78%
participant
completion rate

Who Cares Music CD
Directions UK, all proceeds to
Marie Curie Cancer Care



President McAleese and
Dr. Martin McAleese meet
Springboard group



2005

Participants perform
'Another Hole in the Wall
ASERT' to raise funds for
Cancer Research



2006
Exhibition 'Who Am I?'
in the Waterfront Hall

71%
progress to
employment/
education/
training.

Springboard receives
Group Learning Award

2007
First Holocaust Education
Programme to
Germany



dr @entre



New Horizons 2011 - 'Human Lights'

The aim of this drama project was to get the group participants to explore their personal and individual stories of growing up in the conflict.

Each participant designed their own individual monologues around their experiences of growing up in the conflict and the peace process. Many of the monologues looked at issues such as sectarianism, interface riots, trauma and tragedy, culture, Loyalism, Republicanism, and single identity.



The final drama piece took place in Farset International Hostel during the return phase and proved a major success attracting an audience of over 150 people.





Performing Arts 2008 - 'I.D.'

This play was performed by the Performing Arts group in 2008. It was an interpretation of the groups' individual experiences of growing up and the issues that had an effect on their lives.

Each participant performed a series of monologues telling a story through their eyes.

The play was performed in Belfast Metropolitan College, Tower Street Campus and was a huge success.

Celebrating 21 Years!
SPRINGBOARD
 OPPORTUNITIES LIMITED



Horizons Play 2012 - 'Big Trouble in Little Belfast'

Participant designed their own individual monologues around their experiences of growing up in conflict and peace process. Many of the monologues looked at issues such as sectarianism, the riots, trauma and tragedy, culture, Loyalism, Republicanism, and single identity. A full drama piece took place in New Life Church during the return phase and proved a major success, attracting an audience of over 75 people.



Stage

Stepping into the unknown...

Tracey Lane, 22 from Belfast struggled with dyslexia throughout her school life and left with no qualifications. Her self esteem was so low she didn't have the confidence to apply for jobs until she entered **Springboard's Directions Germany 2011 programme**. She has since achieved her NVQ Level 2 in Youth Work and is now studying for her Level 3, while volunteering with her local youth club.

She tells of the impact the programme has had on her: "I have dyslexia and left school with no qualifications and education. I hated school and was told in fifth year I should be in a special needs school. I thought I was stupid. I used to be the dumb one in school. I went into a catering course but I didn't really have an interest in it. Barnardos put me in for a cookery competition in Dublin and I got overall winner and won a gold medal."

"I heard about Springboard and applied for Directions which was the best thing I have ever done. It showed me that I could go for what I wanted to. It opened my eyes to a lot of things

and gave me the opportunity to see the way other people live. Before I was afraid to apply for jobs or go for interviews because of my reading and

writing. Springboard gave me confidence I never had. They took us up the mountain for a week when we had to make shelters and get into groups to make dinner. The whole week was about looking at yourself and the little things you take for granted. When we sat around the fire the craic was brilliant and that's how the group came together. There were some people finding it hard, we had to move to a different stop every day and make up a new camp."

"Springboard gave me confidence I never had."

"By the end of the week everyone was busted. Everyone looks back now and loved every bit of it."

"The day I stepped into the unknown was the day during our trip to Germany that we looked around these fields in a concentration camp. Shivers started to run up my back. There were so many different headstones. This place was so inspirational and it showed me that while the people who died there didn't have a choice, that we do and so don't let anything stop you, the sky is the limit. Later on we met one woman in her 90s called Sonya who told us what it was like in the camps. It was unbelievable. It's hard to put into words... Tell the people you love that you care about them. Say thanks because this costs nothing. We cannot predict tomorrow. Do it, don't wait. Nothing lasts forever. Hug them. Don't miss a chance life is giving you to spend with people you love. There are no rewinds. Cherish every moment until it becomes a memory... I learned all this and more doing Directions and much more than I ever did in all my years of education at school. It made me a better person and who I am today."

"Directions or any course with Springboard is a journey. We all learned to overcome our fears and challenges and that's one of the best things about Springboard. It's a once in a lifetime opportunity and an experience that you will remember for the rest of your life. You'll not see the changes but

the people around you will. It puts everything into perspective. It made me realise that I shouldn't take anything or anyone for granted and it taught me to be thankful. The staff had a big impact on me. Their advice still keeps me motivated. I met the most inspirational people I'll never forget for the rest of my life - Josey, James, Paul and Steph. I would like to say thanks to Steph, she has inspired me and has shown me that I can do anything that I put my mind to. Steph - you'll never know how grateful I am. Everyone who works in Springboard is friendly and warm and they're always asking the young people to call in and let them know how they are getting on."

"Once I finished Springboard the staff encouraged me to continue to reach my goals and helped me to focus and supported me to reach them. I volunteer with my local youth club and I now take any opportunity which presents itself to me to make my dream of becoming a full time paid youth worker a reality. The things which keep me motivated are music and quotes. Since Springboard I have gone on to do my OCN Level 2 in Youth Work and I am determined to get my Level 3. I now volunteer

"We all learned to overcome our fears and challenges and that's one of the best things about Springboard. It's a once in a lifetime opportunity and an experience that you will remember for the rest of your life."



Painted by Tracey Lane

in Rathbone which is a youth detached organisation engaging with young people on the streets,

to get them involved in learning, discovering their ability to succeed, achieve their potential and possibly progress to further education or employment - all the things which Springboard taught me. I achieved my peer mentoring training and also got a young leader award through Rathbone. I wouldn't have done any of this without Springboard. It has changed my life."

Springboard Timeline >>

2007

Launch of Global Peacebuilders Project
Launch of Peaceday Campaign

92% of participants felt more open to people of different backgrounds.

Publishes 'Peace? Approaches to Peace Building

2008

Springboard reaches 4000 participants
Performing Arts Youth Group perform 'ID' Play at Belfast Metropolitan College



99% of participants were more determined to get a job.

International Peacebuilders Conference in Europa Hotel

2008

Peace Day Campaign Website launches at Stormont



First Peace Day Concert with local bands



Springboard young people complete service projects in Carlisle Day Centre and Fairhaven Residential Centre

Participants lead first cross community sports day for school children



new thinking...

James was from Crumlin in Dublin and wanted to do a programme to get some direction in life and have an opportunity to learn more about the conflict.

Initially very quiet within the group, the programme gave him the opportunity to grow in confidence and even develop his public speaking skills!

As a young member of Sinn Fein living in Dublin James Moore never really had an opportunity to meet or mix with members of the Protestant community.

Being a political activist he wanted to gain a better understanding of how Protestants think and how they felt about the conflict in Northern Ireland.

It was for this reason that he signed for Springboard's Community Reconciliation programme in 2003 at the age of 21.

It was an experience which was to change his outlook and open his mind to a new way of thinking about divisions in Northern Ireland.

He said: "I suppose my thinking was very two dimensional. I also had a curiosity about Unionists and wanted to have a better understanding of their community."

"The programme really served its purpose for me and I found that Unionists were interested in the conflict from a different point of view."

"I had believed that Unionists were simply all anti-catholic but having a chance to talk to them and meet them on the programme

showed me that that wasn't the case and that it was more layered than I had thought, there were a lot of different strands to each individual and their beliefs."

"It really expanded my knowledge and political outlook."

The cross community aspect of the programme wasn't the only one from which James says he learned valuable lessons.

During the overseas phase of the programme he was placed with the charity Habitat for Humanity on a house building project in South Africa.

He said: "South Africa was absolutely brilliant, one of the best experiences of my life. We were building houses in a shanty town and it was the simple things which struck me, like building in an area where electricity wasn't readily available and trying

to connect it so that young students could study at night."



"Usually when you go away it is very self gratifying and this was so completely different, it was selfless and that was nice, such a worthwhile experience." Before Springboard James was unemployed and since completing the programme he has gone back to University to study for a degree in Media Production Management and has recently graduated."

His dream is to set up his own media production company and make documentaries for TV and radio.



Q&A

Alicia McTeggart, 23 from Carrickfergus dropped out of University. While brave, it was also a decision which greatly knocked her confidence and left her feeling unsure about her future. She joined Springboard's Performing Arts programme in 2009 and is now back at University studying for another degree while working as a self employed make-up artist.

Q1. When were you happiest during your programme?

A: I loved the dance workshops and the different types of dance that I was introduced to. I had always danced since I was two or three years old but had given it up when I went to University. As a result of Springboard I rediscovered the pleasure I had in dance and joined a class again.

Q2. What were you most worried about before coming onto the programme?

A: I started late when someone else dropped out of the programme so I was anxious about being the new girl and everyone else having already bonded.

Q3. If you could go back in time to a point during the programme, where would you go and why?

A: The two weeks we spent in London, it was fantastic from beginning to end. We packed so much in and everyday was so good you thought you couldn't beat it only to find that the next day was even better. It was brilliant getting to see 'Wicked' in the West End, and getting a backstage tour of the National Theatre. I just felt so lucky to be there. Really close friendships were formed during that time and so many new things experienced.

Q4. Who do you remember fondly from the programme and why?

A: Lots of people. We all got on really well as a group, everyone had a role to play and added to the group dynamic. One person I found fascinating was Lisa Conlon who I have the utmost regard for and who is now a friend. Alan McGarry was great fun at keeping everyone entertained with his singing and dancing! I also got on well with Dermot Nelson and Chris O'Neill. Thankfully most people on the course have Facebook, so even though we aren't always great at meeting up we can still keep in touch.

Q5. If you could change anything about your experience with Springboard what would it be?

A: I would have been there from the start. I missed the first interview because I was away and couldn't make it and only got the place when someone dropped out. I missed the residential when people were telling their stories which I regret although I don't think my experience is any the poorer for coming in late as I still had a fantastic time.

Q6. How did you feel when the programme ended?

A: Really gutted. I even missed having to get up early to go to class. I had lined up my make-up training for straight after the programme so I had something new to focus on, but I missed everyone on the course.

Q7. What one word describes your experience on the programme?

A: Life changing.

Q8. How did you/your life change after being on the programme?

A: I had been so unhappy before Springboard and it gave me the confidence and focus to realise what I want out of life and to go for it. I am a mum now and I enjoy being a mum. I was able to set up my own small business as a make-up artist and after going back to University to complete a degree I am graduating in July 2013. I feel like I have got focus and have proven to myself that with hard work I can have both a successful career and a family.

Q9. Is there anything you would like to say to Springboard.

A: I had a fantastic time and still feel so lucky that I was part of it and got to meet so many people. It was a real privilege and I think what Springboard does is fantastic. It gives you such memories as well as the opportunity to better yourself.

Q10. If someone asked you about Springboard what would you say?

A: I would tell them that it offers a fantastic opportunity for you to build your confidence and find a direction in life as well as meet new people. It is so opportunity rich and there is so much you can take from it. I think anyone with the opportunity to do a Springboard programme should take it with both hands and put as much into it as they can; because you get a lot back!



Springboard reaches 5000 participants

2009

First official observance of UN Peace Day by Belfast Lord Mayor

Performing Arts Group perform play 'No Comment' at Black Box

Springboard gains OCN Accredited Centre Status

70% progress to employment/ education/ training.

Peace Day Ulster Hall concert with Brian Kennedy

Linda first came to Springboard in 2008, with basic education and low motivation. She wanted to gain confidence and self belief, as well as develop new skills.

A Caring Light...

Linda Morrison's face lights up when she talks about her job as a project worker with Action On Disability.

Her confidence and enthusiasm as she describes how much it means to finally be following the career of her dreams is totally at odds with the shy and non-committal young woman she insists she was before joining Springboard in 2008.

In just a few years the transformation in Linda has been dramatic and the outgoing, focused young woman she is now couldn't be more different from the insecure girl who almost didn't make it to her first Springboard programme because she was so shy.

"I would have had my head down staring at my shoes all the time; I had no confidence at all and no self belief and I didn't think I could do anything but thankfully Springboard changed all that," she said.

Linda, 28 from West Belfast completed two programmes with the charity - Directions Germany 2008 and Care Montreal 2009.

Having had no interest in learning while at school she had no idea what career to follow and had explored childcare, working briefly as a classroom assistant but found it wasn't for her.

She also found it hard to stick at anything and would start different courses but never finish them which had a profound effect on her confidence, so much so that when she applied for Springboard she almost missed out because she hadn't the courage to attend.

She explains: "I remember I rang Springboard and arranged an interview and then didn't go to it because I didn't know what I was going to say and I then eventually made myself go but after signing up for the Directions programme, I nearly didn't go in on my first day because I was so scared."

"Now I am so glad I did. Everyone was so friendly and we all just bonded so quickly and whereas before I wouldn't get out of bed in the mornings, I found myself enjoying the programme so much that I was bouncing out of bed to get into it."

"When we went to Germany it was the best five days of my life and a time I will never forget, especially visiting a concentration camp which really helped me to value my life more and changed my outlook on things."

"I want to thank Springboard for helping me get the confidence to go for it and find a career I love"

"Everyone got on so well on the course and it was nice to have a mix of Protestants, Catholics and people from Dublin. We had so much fun."

On her second programme Linda was able to discover exactly where her interests lay when she completed a six week placement in Montreal (Canada) with a youth club.

It reaffirmed for her that her heart was in working with people with disabilities and she has since secured a job as a project worker with Action On Disability.

"I just love my job and my life has changed so much for the better as now I want to get up out of bed every morning and go to work. I have an uncle with Down's Syndrome so it is something that is close to my heart

and I want to thank Springboard for helping me get the confidence to go for it and find a career I love."

"I don't think I would be doing what I am if it hadn't been for Springboard. I wouldn't be the person I am now either and the confidence I gained from being on the programme has changed my life so much."

Springboard Timeline >>

2009

Launch of Pathways to Work Programme



2010

Launch of 'What Difference Does a Day Make', Peace Day video

1992 participant becomes Director on Board

69% progress to employment/ education/ training.

First Inspiration Awards



2010

'Dragon Boat Race' with Emergency Services and young people



Intergenerational art exhibition at Red Barn Gallery

2011

Springboard reaches 6000 participants

Bench Project - participants in partnership with Housing Executive





Boston and beyond...

Ciaran came from Tallaght in Dublin. He viewed the programme as a positive opportunity to build on his Leaving Cert and experience the different cultural aspects of the programme. A great character and hard worker, he made sure he made the best of the opportunity he was given.

Ciaran Lawlor is a scientist who plans to specialise in developing new therapies which will help curb the spread of disease in poor countries.

It is a passion which he says came about as a direct result of his experience in South Africa during an overseas placement with Springboard in 2003 when he was 19.

“

those few weeks in South Africa with Springboard helped me to mature as a person and appreciate what I had back in Ireland

Ciaran's role involved working with young offenders in one of South Africa's most notorious prisons. Seeing first-hand how rife disease still is in this developing nation also had a huge impact on him and he decided when he came home that he wanted to help make a difference.

Before Springboard Ciaran had no idea how to build on his Leaving Certificate and what career he wanted to follow but all that changed as a result of taking part in the programme and when it was over he went on to study and qualify as a scientist.

He started work two years ago in Boston in the US as a scientist for a small biotech company studying new antibiotics for people with respiratory problems.

But his heart lies in developing new immunisations and it is in this area where he hopes to specialise.

He recalls his time with Springboard and the impact it had on him: "We were working as part of an education programme with young offenders who were just out of prison helping them to put their lives back together.

"It was pretty intense and very tough to hear about their lives and a real eye opener in terms of what goes on in the world and the things people have to cope with."

"At the time I was relatively young and unsure of the world and in a lot of ways a bit green."

"Those few weeks in South Africa with Springboard helped me to mature as a person and appreciate what I had back in Ireland."

"Before Springboard, I had finished school but wasn't sure what I wanted to do. The experience in South Africa, especially seeing the issues people have with disease, made me realise that I wanted to focus on doing something positive in that area."

"Four years after I returned from South Africa I completed a Masters and in 2011 completed my PhD on developing new therapies for Tuberculosis."

"I realised I had an opportunity to pursue a certain route and contribute towards something that I felt was important."

Initially Ciaran had joined Springboard because of the opportunity to travel north and gain a better political insight into the conflict there through meeting Protestants and Catholics on the programme.

He grew up in the socially disadvantaged Tallaght area of Dublin and was so moved by the struggles of people within his community that in his teens he became an active charity worker.

the experience going across the border was great and I made some great friendships

He also got involved in politics, seeing it as a way to bring about real change for the better. And while the overseas part of the programme was to shape the course of his future career, he also satisfied his initial political motives for taking part.

He said: "The experience of going across the border was great and I made some great friendships and I am still in touch with some of the people today."

"The way we discussed issues and seeing how people dealt with the conflict really helped me in terms of conflict management and interacting with people and seeing other people's perspective and respecting people for their beliefs."

"What I knew about the north before Springboard was what I had read in the papers about it. The experience with Springboard helped me to understand what it is really like."

Ciaran, 28 moved to Boston in 2011 to start his career and he hopes his current position will serve as a stepping stone to realising his real dream of working on new drugs to help curb the spread of disease in the developing world.

Springboard Timeline >>

2011

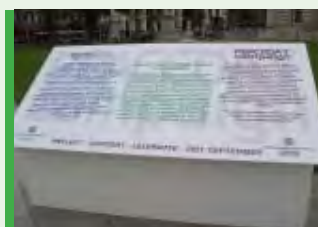
'Imagine' Peace Mural unveiled on Northumberland



Participants perform 'Human Lights Play'



Making a Difference exhibition at City Hall showcasing inspirational local people



2011

Participants produce short film 'Clean & Jerk'

80% participant completion rate

Participants work with Engage with Age on inter-generational project



Participants volunteer at Welcome Centre

Participants produce 'Guide to Belfast'



Independence day...

David joined the programme when he was 23 years old. Originally born in England, he had never stayed in one place for long due to a range of difficult family circumstances. He suffered ill health from several car accidents which has resulted in having trouble with his legs and being unable to walk without the assistance of a walking frame. David wanted support to develop more confidence and gain skills.



“

the biggest thing that Springboard gave me was belief in myself.

”

David Wiggins 26 from West Belfast had struggled throughout his childhood with dyslexia which had impacted severely on his self esteem. He found new strength and self belief after completing the Springboard Trades Germany 2010 programme as he explains.

“I spent four years at Tech in my teens doing a joinery apprenticeship but never got to finish it. I have dyslexia and since I was a kid it has always taken a while for information to go into my head. Application forms were always difficult as I can’t spell and I have difficulty reading. Applying for jobs was a nightmare.

At Springboard I got a basic course in English and Maths and the help I got was unbelievable, I learnt more in those 18 weeks than I did the whole time I was in Tech. I was such a shy person going into the programme that I panicked at the start and wanted to leave but the leaders persuaded me to stay and give it a go and it is the best thing I have ever done. It really helped me with my independence and confidence. I found myself speaking in groups for the first time; I really pushed myself and came out of my comfort zone. I loved the four weeks we spent in Germany; I had a lot of fun there and experienced a lot of new things. I think the biggest thing that Springboard gave me was belief in myself. When you said you couldn’t do something they pushed you to believe you could. I left with more confidence and a determination not to give up.

I have been working as a care worker in the community which I have really enjoyed and life has changed so much for me since Springboard.”



Like so many teenagers Emma Somers couldn’t wait to leave school and felt lucky when she got her wish by leaving at the age of 16.

Fast forward just a few years and today, at 24 years old a very different Emma has discovered an insatiable appetite for learning, mapping out the next few years with a lengthy list of qualifications which she aims to achieve as she fulfils her ambition to become a social worker specialising in working with vulnerable children.

The complete turnaround in her outlook came about as a direct result of taking part in two Springboard programmes - Directions Germany 2007 a foundation programme, followed by Performing Arts 2008.

Emma, from Dublin has gone from wanting nothing more in life than partying with her friends to being hungry to achieve and where once she was happy to use alcohol now all of her time is taken up with study. “The change in my thought system from that first day getting off the train in Belfast to go to Springboard until now is unbelievable. It has completely changed my whole life,” she said.

Emma is refreshingly honest about her life before Springboard when all she lived for was partying with her friends.

She recalls: “At 16 I was basically told by the school that I wasn’t wanted there and to get out and as I hated it anyway and was constantly

Emma came to Springboard and started the Directions programme at 19 years old. She came with low confidence, basic education and a history of low paid employment. Through the Springboard experience she completely transformed her behaviours and situation.

bunking off, I thought it was great that I left. “I had no interest in school or in being there and all I wanted to do was have a laugh with my friends. Around that time our house in Dublin went on fire in the middle of the night, we all got out and no one was hurt but we lost everything.

“Because my parents had to start from scratch they decided to move to Laois and I didn’t want to go so I stayed in Dublin at my nannies and for me it just felt that I had left school and had no rules and no responsibilities and could party. “I was getting the Social and spent it on drink and thought it was great that I had this money for doing nothing which I was using to party with.”

After months of partying flat out for days on end, Emma suddenly realised that there wasn’t any pleasure in what she was doing and even though she had no idea what she wanted out of life she decided to make a change by signing up for Springboard’s Directions programme.

It was a very shy and nervous teenager who boarded the train to Dublin for her first day at Springboard in Belfast in 2007 and a step which took all her courage.

As well as going into the dreaded setting of a classroom type situation she had never before been to Northern Ireland and harboured natural misconceptions about the dangers due to the Troubles.

She said: “I was terrified going to Belfast because I had never been up there before and I thought I was going into a war zone. In terms of the programme, I hadn’t been in that kind of training setting for two and a half years and I remember worrying whether I was even going to remember how to write my name.

“Mixing with different religions was also new for me although I never had any negative perceptions about that as to me a person is a person.

“I would be quite shy and it was scary going into what I thought was a formal setting but I knew that I couldn’t just keep scrounging off the labour for the rest of my life and partying.

“Directions was amazing, it really brought me out of myself and I really felt part of the group.

“We went to Germany for 10 days and it was such an experience and we did so much, every day there was something new.

“I was absolutely devastated when it was over and before it even finished I had decided to come back and apply for the Performing Arts programme because I thought that was where my interests lay.

“I thought I would excel at performing arts but it wasn’t for me although the course was brilliant and again that really lifted my confidence. Springboard made me realise I could do something with my life and it gave me direction.”

Emma finished her programmes and enrolled in college to do her Leaving Certificate. She then went on and did a year’s course in Childcare and Special Needs to FETAC Level 5.

She is currently studying for her Childcare Supervisor Management Level 6 qualification and then hopes to go to University to do a three year degree in Social Care.

“Going back to study was easy because it was my decision; I wasn’t being told I had to go. My goal is to work with vulnerable children and I am really enjoying studying and I am happy to keep studying and it’s thanks to Springboard that my life has changed so much,” she added.

“

Springboard made me realise I could do something with my life and it gave me direction.

”

Q&A

When his small record company ran into difficulties, Desmond Balmer from Belfast’s Shankill Road found himself unemployed. He joined Springboard’s Challenge Canada programme in 1996 which changed the direction of his life. Today, the 39-year-old lives in Dublin where he manages a health service providing support to people with intellectual disability and also continues to run his record label part-time.

Q1. When were you happiest during your programme?

A: When I was away in Toronto with Springboard was arguably some of the best days of my life. I made some good friends, some of whom are still friends today, both people on the programme and locals in Toronto. I really came into my own. There was a sense of adventure, a freedom and a camaraderie that I enjoyed plus Toronto’s night life was superb.

Q2. What were you most worried about before coming onto the programme?

A: It was time to grow up. I was unemployed at the time. My family always supported me and encouraged me but things were difficult. My record label was imploding and a club I was promoting had been closed down.

“few people outside my family have ever shown such faith in me or my potential

I was hoping to go to Jordanstown to become a journalist. My family would have seen me right with some bar work but I felt I had to take a risk and do it myself and that was frightening because the strength, love and support from my family was always there and something I probably took for granted or relied on too much.

Q3. If you could go back in time to a point during the programme, where would you go and why?

A: The record company, Quality Music that I worked for in Canada were the first to release ‘La Macarena’ and I would say that to prevent further human suffering I’d have tried more to stop it.

Q4. Who do you remember fondly from the programme and why?

A: Angila Chada and Sir Jackie Redpath (surely the Queen has given him what he deserves) because few people outside my family have ever shown such faith in me or my potential. They showed faith in the community but I do feel, as I am sure others do, they really supported me to become me. On a personal note, Lee Carroll, Joe Craig, Dave Kavanagh, Fergus, Mandy and the rest of the gang. I got to DJ at Lee’s wedding which has become the single weirdest DJ experience of my life.

Q5. If you could change anything about your experience with Springboard what would it be?

A: I really don’t know. Nothing I suppose, but I have always regretted giving up on the (Springboard) Graduate Committee work.

Q6. How did you feel when the programme ended?

A: I felt motivated, maybe focused; however, it didn’t really end for me like it did for some. I threw myself into the Graduate Committee which was new and continued to work as a volunteer with Springboard for at least 18 months which sort of came to a natural end.

Q7. What one word describes your experience on the programme?

A: Worthwhile

Q8. How did you/your life change after being on the programme?

A: Wow. When I finished I was going to start Journalism and Communications in UUJ. Springboard was involved in a new Peace Scholarship which I was one of the first two people to receive, so the lure of Dublin and Florida trumped UUJ. As a result I moved to Dublin and as part of the course I lived and studied in Boca Raton, Florida (north of Miami).

I went back to Dublin and finished a degree in Psychology and started to work in disabilities. Many other people and things happened during this time to get me here today but Springboard had a major role and in particular the support and confidence building by Angila is something I will never forget. I can’t say where I would be if I had not done Springboard but where I am is pretty good.

Q9. Is there anything you would like to say to Springboard?

A: Thank you

Q10. If someone asked you about Springboard what would you say?

A: “DO it. Don’t hesitate. Go for it.



Springboard Timeline >>

2011

Participants organise 'Celebration of Culture'



Participants work on Logan Valley Educational refurbishment Project

Springboard participants' recipients of Pride of Northern Ireland Awards



Participants organize 'Fuzion' fundraising concert for Families with Ups & Downs



2012

Participants partner Really Rubbish orchestra for 'Titanic' performance



Over 50% of staff are former participants Staff Volunteer Day



Participants lead Inter-generational Project 'Youth Centre for Old People'



ticket to fly

Originally from Tallaght in Dublin, Sandra was a participant on Springboard's first Wider Horizons programme in 1992. She currently sits on the Board of Springboard.

Growing up in a large family where money was often tight, Sandra Kelly yearned from a young age to leave home and stand on her own two feet.

Her dream was to travel and work overseas but having never ventured further than her home city of Dublin she had no idea how to make it a reality.

She was 18 when she heard about the Springboard pilot Wider Horizons programme offering a work placement in Compiègne in France.

"When I realised there was an opportunity to work in France my eyes just lit up, it was the perfect opportunity for me and I so desperately wanted it," she recalls.

"I knew what an amazing opportunity it would be to participate on a structured programme where somebody mentors you and there is financial support."

"When I heard I had been offered a place on the programme I was absolutely ecstatic." That very first pilot programme in 1992 served as the spring board Sandra had been hoping for to set her on the path to what has been a very successful international career.

Even though it was 20 years ago she has never forgotten the role Springboard played in her life

and recently joined the charity's Board and is now helping steer the organisation as it continues to help new generations of young people to change their lives for the better.

Sandra's success story is so typical of the many thousands who have been through the charity's programmes.

Her impressive career has taken her to Miami, South America and Brussels in a range of interesting jobs which she believes would never have come about without the start given to her by Springboard.

She recalls her teenage experience on the programme: "Before we went to France we had three months of intensive training at Management Training Services in Dublin and in Northern Ireland."

"The training was excellent in preparing us for our time away. We learnt a lot about the business

ethics in France, the language and how to hold business conversations."

Sandra spent her three month work experience in France working on the front desk of the local tourist information centre which also served as a hub for the local community.



"the international element is priceless and the staff are so committed and have so much positive energy and in my experience always went the extra mile.

With only limited French and a team of colleagues who spoke no English she found herself very quickly having to master the language – a steep learning curve which served her well in her future career choices.

"There were leaders from Springboard there who helped us at different stages but we were very independent and at the start it was a bit overwhelming."

"We had to open our own bank accounts, take care of ourselves and I think despite the fact that the three months helped to hugely develop my language skills, the personal development was the biggest transformation for me."

"It takes you out of your comfort zone and does wonderful things for your confidence."

"I returned from France a much more confident individual. I remember coming home and feeling ever so proud of myself."

"I felt that I had really achieved something wonderful."

"It reaffirmed for me that I wanted to continue with the language and to work overseas."

Despite it being a time of high unemployment in Dublin, Sandra managed to secure a job in the marketing department of Ryanair which allowed her to save the money to make her first real move overseas.

She joined a cruise company in Miami and spent a year and a half travelling to many far flung destinations.

She then spent time volunteering in a refugee camp in Cuba where she learnt to speak Spanish. In 1995, she secured a position in Brussels where she worked for the European Commission in the Directorate General for European Trade as PA to the Director of Anti-Dumping and Anti-Subsidy Investigations.

"I was there for two years and gained so much wonderful experience."

"I made some good friends from Northern Ireland during that time and after a couple of years I started to feel that I wanted to come home but I didn't want to give up a good job."

"I applied for a secondment to Dublin or Belfast and was offered a job as PA to head of the European Commission in Northern Ireland."

Since 2000 she has worked in the economic development agency Invest NI in Trade Development, assisting new and inexperienced exporters to access European Markets.

At 39 she says her wanderlust has been satisfied and she has made Northern Ireland her home.

Sandra has no doubt that the opportunity she enjoyed as a teenager with Springboard gave her the confidence, skills and opportunity to follow her dream to leave Ireland and carve out a good career for herself overseas.

She said: "Springboard has played a massive part in the direction of my life. I think not only are they very skilled in delivering training programmes but mentoring and the international element of the programmes is priceless."

"The staff are so committed and has so much positive energy and always went the extra mile."

"They always made a point of keeping in touch with me and following my development."

"I can honestly say if anything happened to me I have zero regrets. Travel to me is the best education in the world."

"Going to France with Springboard opened my eyes to the divisions at home and made me realise that we are only a dot on the ocean."

"To be in a city where so many nationalities were living together harmoniously really brought it home to me that there was no reason why it shouldn't happen here in Ireland / Northern Ireland."

"Before participating on the Wider Horizon's programme I had never been over the border and had no desire to go. Now Belfast is my home and I believe it's one of the best cities in the world."

"Springboard has played a massive part in the direction of my life.

Springboard Timeline >>

2012

Mourne Heritage Trust selects Springboard youth group for Phoenix Programme for pilot Forest scheme

Positive Mental Health week partnership with Cool FM

Participants perform 'Big Troubles in Little Belfast' play



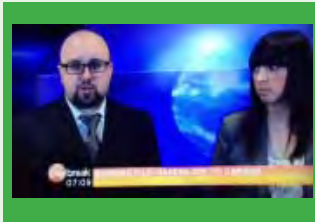
85% participant completion rate

Olympic Authority award Springboard 'Inspire Mark'



2012

Participants short film features on 'Daybreak' and Radio Ulster



Participants produce 'Imagine' documentary on Peace Walls



Participants and CSAW organise inclusive sports day



Q&A

Nyaradzo came onto the programme aged 23 years old. She came to Northern Ireland under difficult personal and family circumstances. Nya as she is known, was unable to go on the overseas phase as she did not get her visa passed. However her attitude remained positive and she continued to commit herself to the programme, despite being separated from the group while they were overseas.

Nya Muchina, 26 from East Belfast took part in the Options Montreal programme in 2010. She came to the UK with her family under difficult circumstances. Since completing her programme with Springboard, Nya has gone onto to set up her own Events Company and online shop www.lovebenboutique.com.

Q1. When were you happiest during your programme?

A: The whole time. It was the best part of my life to be honest. The first two days spent on an outdoors pursuit trip to Gortin were the best ever. Meeting such a mixture of all different characters that you would not normally get the chance to meet was fantastic.

Q2. What were you most worried about before coming onto the programme?

A: Integrating. Because I had not met any of the others I was a bit worried about how they would receive me but that didn't last long.

Q3. If you could go back in time to a point during the programme where would you go and why?

A: Again those first two days. It was just amazing how quickly everyone bonded and became friends. Everyone really opened up and talked about themselves in an honest way – not the way you would speak about yourself when first meeting someone to try and give a good impression.

Q4. Who do you remember fondly from the programme and why?

A: Tina who became my friend from the start. She listened to my problems and was there to look after me and is now more of a sister than a friend.

Q5. If you could change anything about your experience with Springboard what would it be?

A: I wouldn't change anything. It has made me who I am today. I would never have had the confidence to set up my own company. The programme pushed me to go after what I want and taught me a lot of things.

Q6. How did you feel when the programme ended?

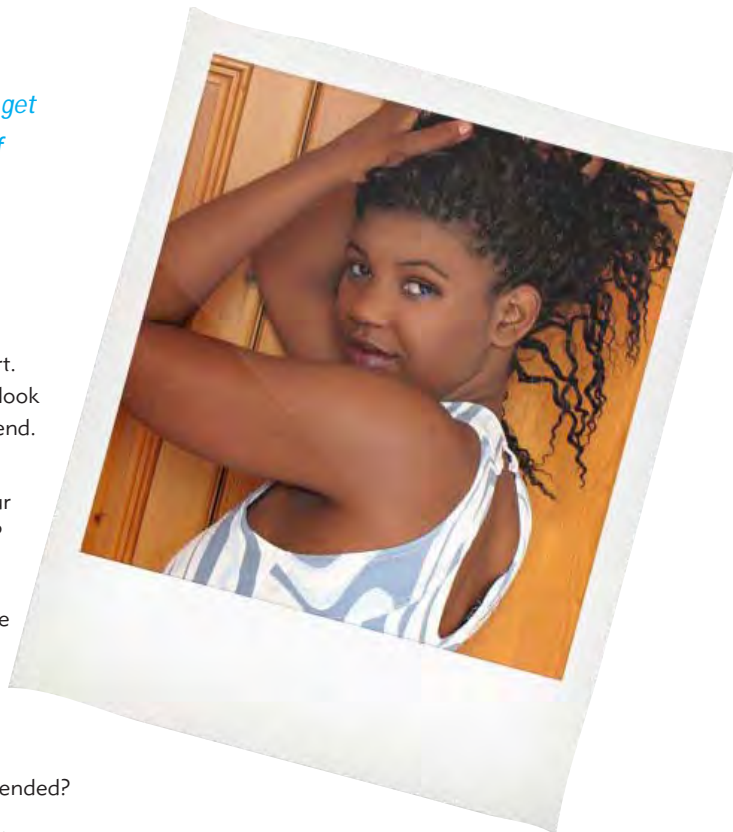
A: Gutted. I didn't want it to end and I would go back anytime. It was the best time of my life.

Q7. What one word describes your experience on the programme?

A: Extraordinary.

Q8. How did you/your life change after being on the programme?

A: I was always a confident person but Springboard has taught me to channel that into something positive and encouraged me to do something I loved. Springboard changed my whole outlook and taught me what to do out there in the business world.



Q9. Is there anything you would like to say to Springboard?

A: I would like to thank them for the opportunity and to say how good an organisation it is and to keep up the good work. The leaders are brilliant the way they look after everyone. I am a foreigner in this country and they never ever made me feel like a foreigner, they made me feel like I was at home.

Q10. If someone asked you about Springboard what would you say?

A: I would tell them it is brilliant and they should give it a go.



'Bogwood Art'

This collection was created by participants on the Directions Germany programme in 2010 as part of the Art in Diversity Project, incorporated elements of mutual understanding, Native American culture and intergenerational building.

Spring... into Art



Bronze Art Work created by Directions Germany 2009

Participants were asked to sculpt inspirational leaders / peace figures. The sculpture on the left represents President Barrack Obama and the piece on the right is Buddha.

Springboard Timeline >>

2012

Springboard partners with Culture Night



Participants Organise Peace Day Sports Day with Special Olympian Michelle Coyne



Springboard becomes part of the Inspire Legacy Plaque at Olympic Park

Five Year Results Show

97% participants were more determined to get a job

Springboard reaches 7,000 participants

2013

Springboard presented with Investors in People Award



Here Today, Global Tomorrow Participants organise Pop-up Store



Peace Day Campaign Partners with Cool FM



What will you do to mark

International Day of Peace

on 21st September

Join Springboard's local campaign to raise awareness of the International Day of Peace and promote non-violence where we live, work, learn and play.

Sign up to our campaign on: www.peacedaycampaign.com and find out how you can get involved.



Springboard Timeline >>

2013

Jonny Quinn of Snow Patrol receives Inspiration Award

Peace Day Sports Day endorsed by Dame Mary Peters

Launch of twentyone:21 Publication at Stormont

special thanks

To all the participants featured within this special publication, thank you for sharing your personal journeys.

Aine Croarkin of Springboard, herself a former participant, for her superb administration and tireless attention to detail in the development of this project.

Stephanie Bell for her professionalism and insightful interviews.

Craig McQueenie of Giant Design

for his inspirational creativity and vision for the design and development of this publication.

Thank you all for making this publication 'Spring into Life'.

twentyone21

twentyone interviews celebrating 21 years as a catalyst for change

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