

# Leaving Certificate Applied 10 Years of Success

## Snapshots of LCA Graduates

### Profile: Emma Lyons, St. Michael's Holy Faith Secondary School, Finglas, tells her story.

"LCA.....I think it's the best thing ever" ...says Emma Lyons.



Emma graduated from school in 1999 with her Leaving Cert Applied with Distinction level. She was very proud of her achievement but was determined to continue and follow her dream.

Emma decided to do LCA because she always found the 'build up' to exams very stressful. She recalled being very nervous about her Junior Cert exams and finding it difficult to remember, even what she had been studying the day before. The LCA programme was exactly what she needed. She was a great worker. The fact that her schoolwork over the 2 years would build up credits and these would go towards her final leaving cert result, suited Emma perfectly. She felt that this would take the dreaded pressure of a final exam away from her.

She really enjoyed doing 'the tasks' and saw each of them as a challenge. But she found the 'work experiences' very helpful in choosing her career. She first went to work in an office and when the 2 weeks were over she knew office work was not for her! Her next 2 work experiences were in the beauty industry and she loved them. From this she was certain of the career she wanted to pursue.

After school she did a diploma course in beauty therapy in Portobello School in Dominick St. Then went to work for L'Oreal and became their beauty representative in Arnott's shop in Dublin. From there she went to work for Clinique Cosmetics and during that time, Emma did another course in Portobello in make-up artistry. She is now the only make-up artist employed by Clinique in Ireland. She is in high demand as a professional make-up artist for weddings, debs, fashion shows and TV shows like 'Off the Rails'. She also does some voluntary work for a cancer charity called 'Look Good Feel Good' and does the make-up for fashion shows that are run by the 'Marie Keating Foundation'. At the moment Emma is doing her 3<sup>rd</sup> course in fashion and photographic make-up at 'The Make-up Room' in Pembroke Place. This she will complete in June 2006 and who knows where this might take her in the world of beauty and cosmetics!

### Profile: Mike Mulvihill, Community School, Carrick-on-Shannon.

#### Shannonside Northern Sound Radio DJ

My name is Mike Mulvihill. I am a Presenter and Technician with Shannonside Northern Sound Radio. We broadcast to the Midlands, West and Border Counties. I am now in my seventh year with the station. I was among the first class of students to take part in the Leaving Cert Applied (L.C.A) in the Community School, Carrick-on-Shannon in 1998. The LCA at the time was a great alternative instead of the traditional Leaving Cert - thinking back would I have completed the traditional Leaving Cert without the LCA, that one still has me thinking? Although it was different, everyone involved worked as a team and that was a crucial factor especially when we set up our Mini Company. It's great to think that here we are 10 Years later and it's still extremely popular with so many. The concept for the Leaving Cert Applied is great. After completing mine and looking back it has been a great help to me. If I was asked what did I enjoy most about it I would have to say I enjoyed doing the Specialism Tasks. The interview exam techniques were a great help and something I really enjoyed. What we learned about computers was very useful when I went to work in Radio. The work experience was another part of the Leaving Cert Applied that helped too. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the teachers and staff of the Community School, Carrick-on-Shannon and all those associated with our class. At this stage good luck to everyone thinking of or already taking part in the Leaving Cert Applied. Here's to another ten years!

Mike Mulvihill

### Profile: Denise Martin, Margaret Aylward Community College, Dublin.



Denise Martin sat her Leaving Certificate in 1999 and went on to do a Diploma in Nursery Nursing. After graduating she went to work full-time in a childcare centre in Beaumont and then to the V.E.C crèche in Whitehall College for Further Education. She has been there for the past 4 years and has gained a lot of training and experience. She has also completed the FETAC Level 6 Supervisor's

course. Due to rebuilding work the crèche has been relocated to Margaret Aylward Community College and Denise is now working in the classroom where she studied for the L.C.A. Denise feels LCA helped her gain an interest in childcare and that work experience gave her confidence and an understanding of what the workplace is all about. In sixth year she got the opportunity of running a mini company, which really required teamwork. She feels they all got so much experience from doing it. Denise would highly recommend the LCA course to anyone and says her experience proves that you can go on to bigger and better things afterwards.

**Profile: Jamie Rice, Bush Post Primary School, Dundalk.**

A final Leaving Certificate Applied student in June 2004, Jamie Rice achieved LCA with Distinction. Jamie's ambition was to go on to a sports related course in college.

He is now in his second year studying for his diploma in Sports Science in Newry College of Further Education.

3 universities in England have accepted Jamie's application to complete his honours degree in Sports Science (*Teesside University in Middlesbrough, Manchester Metropolitan University and John Moores University in Liverpool*). If he achieves two distinctions and a merit in his diploma, Teesside University will award him a full scholarship.

He found the LCA course very practical and very hands on. He also liked the continuous use of I.T which has helped him in his current studies e.g. typing up essays, projects etc.

**Profile: Catriona Butler, Presentation Secondary School, Kilkenny.**

Catriona completed her LCA in 2000. She is now a play school Leader in Bluebells Crèche and Montessori. She studied Childcare in CTI in Waterford City where she achieved both a Diploma and a Certificate Level 2.

Looking back on LCA Catriona said she:

*"enjoyed every bit of the course."*

*"I loved doing the Tasks and research."*

*"Our Vocational Specialism was great. Community Care really helped as it was so relevant to my chosen career and prepared me for my college work, introducing me to concepts such as milestones and children's needs."*

**Profile: Damien Lockyer, Mayfield Community School, Cork.**



Damien did LCA in Mayfield Community School in 2000. He liked the practical aspects of the programme and the fact that the Tasks and Key Assignments built up credits over two years which lessened the stress 'at exam crunch time'. The teamwork in class really helped him. He went on work experience assisting a fitter and decided this was the career for him, as he loved metalwork.

When he finished school he was accepted as an apprentice fitter in Glanmire Precision Company, where he now is in permanent employment.

**Profile: Mairead Twohig, Presentation Secondary School, Ballyphehane**



Mairead made a big, difficult decision to change schools after her Junior Certificate and move to Presentation Secondary School, Ballyphehane, Cork to study Leaving Certificate Applied, a decision she has never regretted. She loved 'everything' about LCA especially their mini company where they decorated and sold Easter eggs and made a nice profit. She got on well with her classmates

and found her teachers very supportive. She would recommend LCA to anyone who 'doesn't want to take on the points system'. Mairead went to a crèche on one work placement and liked it so much that she is now studying Childcare in St. John's College, Cork. She is proud of her merit in LCA (received in 2004) 'that I have for the rest of my life'.

**Profile: Merlyn Mc Carthy, Tralee Youthreach.**

Merlyn completed LCA in Tralee Youthreach Centre in 2000. She liked the 'different way of learning' and her teachers' support when needed. She found some tasks a bit difficult but 'with work you get through it'. Teamwork was an important part of LCA for her and she also enjoyed her work experience as a receptionist but Merlyn's real interest lies in young people. She now has a Diploma in Youth and Community Work and is a part-time youth worker with the Kerry Diocesan Youth Service. She teaches nine to fifteen year olds Arts and Crafts, Sports, Games and 'whatever they're interested in'.

**Profile: Christopher Carew, Greenhills College, Dublin.**

Christopher Carew from Drimnagh completed his Leaving Certificate in 2005. He is currently an apprentice carpenter. He was offered this apprenticeship during one of his work experience placements. Christopher had a keen interest in carpentry. One of his chosen specialisms, Graphics and Construction Studies enabled him to develop his skills and interest in carpentry during the two years in school. Christopher enjoyed the trips and task work, whilst doing the LCA. He feels that the method of continuous assessment suited him and took the pressure off the final exams.

**Profile: Michael Walsh, Christian Brothers Mitchelstown.**



Back in 1998, Mike was a potential school drop out but luckily his school, Christian Brothers, Mitchelstown introduced LCA for senior cycle pupils. Mike decided to give it a go and is delighted with the outcome. Mike had no idea then of a career path but his favourite aspects of LCA were computers, Agriculture & Horticulture and Graphics and Construction. His work experiences gave him a great

insight into these areas and he decided that he wanted to be an agricultural mechanic. He realised that ambition and spent two terms in the Institute of Technology, Tralee, as part of his apprenticeship. He came second out of a large number in the Fas National Skills Competition. Mike was 'delighted with LCA and would recommend it'. His fellow classmates have all done well, while he enjoys a permanent job with Farm Power Ltd. with the added bonus of a company van. He also thinks that the experience of enterprise in LCA is very beneficial as one day you may be self-employed. Learning about the reality of working life was his favourite part of LCA.

**Profile: Ann-Marie Keane, Margaret Aylward Community College, Dublin.**



Ann-Marie completed LCA in 2000. When she finished her exams she was offered a full-time Clerical Officer position in Larkhill & District Credit Union. She had been working there on a part-time basis, a position she got from her Work Experience placement. Anne-Marie has since been promoted to Office Administrator and is in the process of buying her first home. The Credit Union has sent her

on a number of courses, which have included First Aid and Web Site Design. Anne-Marie believes LCA really helped her and felt being assessed over the two years was very beneficial. She also says that the programme gives you the feel of the work place as you do Work Experience in the two years. Anne-Marie says she is delighted she did LCA and would recommend it to anyone.

**Profile: Alanna Morgan, Bush Post Primary School, Dundalk.**

Alanna Morgan did LCA in Bush Post Primary School, finishing in June 2005 with an LCA with Merit. Her ambition is to achieve an honours degree in Computer Studies. Alanna is now in her first year of a two-year course at Newry College of Further Education studying a B-Tech/National Diploma in Computer Studies. Alanna wants to complete her diploma and is hoping to complete her studies at Coleraine University where she wants to achieve an honours degree. Alanna enjoyed the group work and the task work. She found that this experience helped her in meeting deadlines and handing up assignments on time. Alanna also said that she missed out on her distinction in the LCA by 1% and this is a big regret for her. She admits the fault lay with her, as her attendance fell away in the last term and she lost a number of crucial credits. Her advice to LCA students is "make sure you attend right up to the end of term."

**Profile: Aidan Foley, Ballincollig Community School, Cork.**

Aidan is a past pupil of Ballincollig Community School, where he completed Leaving Certificate Applied in 2005. He appreciated the opportunity to spend 4 blocks of work experience in farming, his favoured career choice. These included working with/in a dairy farm, a dry farm, a farm supplier and a veterinary surgeon. He believes that LCA gave him 'courage and self confidence when interacting with people'. The interviews as part of LCA were a great asset and he is now studying Farm Management in Clonakilty Agricultural College with two of his fellow LCA classmates. Aidan's preferred task was the Practical Achievement Task and is delighted that LCA improved his literacy skills.

**Profile: Joanne Morrison, Tralee Youthreach.**

Joanne completed LCA in Tralee Youthreach in 2004. She 'loved' her involvement with the Special Olympics and attended the official opening in Dublin as part of one of her LCA tasks. She found some of the tasks 'tough' but put in lots of work, which meant that she felt 'no pressure' for the final exams. Her work experience gave her lots of confidence and she appreciates that LCA gave her an insight into 'the world of work'. Joanne thinks that LCA is a 'good stepping stone' to a PLC and she completed a PLC in Administration in Tralee Community College and now has a good job in Noyeks. Joanne would recommend LCA as she liked group work and the small number of dedicated teachers.

**Profile: John Coyle, Greenhills College, Dublin.**

John Coyle from Kilnarnagh, Co. Dublin completed the Leaving Certificate Applied programme in 2000. John is currently Marketing Distribution Systems Manager with Dublin Tourism, Suffolk Street. John developed his interest in the tourism area from his work experience placements, during the Leaving Certificate Applied programme. He loved his work experience placement with Dublin Tourism which was followed by a work experience placement in Dublin Castle. John completed a PLC course in Travel and Tourism immediately after the LCA. John feels that the LCA programme gave him a better chance of doing a Leaving Certificate. "The LCA programme allowed me to get the best Leaving Certificate I could get. It was a chance to do things differently."

**Profile: Christine White, Presentation Secondary School Listowel.**

Christine loved Hotel, Catering and Tourism and Spanish as part of LCA in Presentation Secondary School, Listowel. She completed Leaving Certificate Applied in 2005 and achieved a Distinction. All her work placements were directly related to the Travel and Tourism industry and this confirmed her future career area. These experiences enhanced her C.V. and greatly assisted her in securing a place in St. John's Central College, Cork where she is doing a two-year Diploma in Travel and Tourism. Her favourite memory of LCA in Listowel was the class recording a CD in a professional music studio. She also acknowledges the great benefit of interviews as part of LCA and would recommend the programme to anyone.

**Profile: Sarah Yelverton, Presentation Secondary School, Ballyphehane.**



Principal Sr Sheila Kelleher presents Sarah Yelverton with the Nano Nagle Award for dedication to working for others and appreciation of high standards. Picture: Larry Cummins

Sarah, a past pupil of Presentation Secondary School, Ballyphehane, Cork completed LCA in 2005. She says that she 'learned a lot with less pressure, because the tasks and key assignments were very beneficial'. She loved her work experiences with children, which convinced her that child care was her future career. She appreciated the 'Evaluation' part of tasks because it helped her to

learn more about herself and to gain greater confidence and her favourite task was the Practical Achievement Task, which has continued to benefit her. She says that her teachers gave her 'great encouragement'. Sarah won the Nano Nagle Award in her school and is now studying for the Cache Diploma in Childcare Level 6 in the College of Commerce, Cork.

**Profile: Mark O' Shaughnessy, Killarney Community College.**

Mark completed Leaving Certificate Applied in Killarney Community College in 2004. He enjoyed the experience and appreciated that there was 'little homework' because you were 'doing the work' in school. He liked doing the student tasks especially the Contemporary Issue Task which he did on the smoking ban. The building of credits over two years suited him because your results were not based on 'just one exam at the end'. He found his teachers very helpful and he has advised friends to do L.C.A. He had ambitions to become a mechanic and completed work experience in a few garages and then assisted the school's caretaker in painting and decorating areas of the school as a different work experience.



He realised that this was what he really wanted to do. He and a friend set up their own business in May 2005 and 'O' Shaughnessy & Bowers Painting and Decorating' is thriving with customers from Killarney as far as Carrigaline.

**Profile: Helen Power, Kilkenny City Vocational School.**

Helen is a member of the Travelling Community and completed LCA in 2005. In her First Year in the school, Helen took part in the "Make A Book" project which dealt with her culture and included the making of a traditional travelling caravan. Last year she was chosen unanimously by the staff as our Student of the Year.

Helen is working in Hotel Kilkenny, one of the longest established hotels in Kilkenny City. Helen did her Bar Service Course in Hotel Kilkenny and in the Kilkenny Inn.

Helen says that the LCA helped her tremendously. It gave her great confidence in herself. Passing the LCA and the achievement of a Leaving Certificate was a huge thing for her and she has not looked back.

Helen loved all of the course. She cannot pick out anything she didn't like. She enjoyed the company of the students in the class and is very appreciative of the work of the teachers. The two years in LCA were great fun.

**Profile: Amy Gahan, Presentation Secondary School, Ballingarry, Co. Tipperary.**

Amy, now a past pupil of Presentation Secondary School, Ballingarry Thurles had no interest in doing the traditional Leaving Cert. She loved LCA and continues to be a great promoter of the programme, even doing a presentation for parents when she was in Year 2 and she will be back to do the same again after Easter. She is very confident and motivated.

Her 100% effort in the programme was suitably rewarded at the end of the 2 years with her final result Leaving Certificate Applied with Distinction. She always wanted to join the guards. Now thanks to her great result she has applied and is waiting to be called.

In the meantime she did a Computer course in 'Kilkenny Architectural Society' and worked for a while after that. Her first choice of career is still joining the guards but she feels the course she's doing on Special Needs in the Central Technical Institute Waterford is good as a backup and also relevant to a career in the Gardai.

**Profile: Mairead McCarthy, Presentation Secondary School, Loughboy, Co. Kilkenny.**

Mairead completed LCA in 2002 and is now a Playgroup Leader in Clever Cats Childcare. After LCA she completed Level 2 FETAC Childcare in Ormonde College in Kilkenny and went on to complete the Cache Diploma in Childcare in Carlow College.

Mairead found the entire course helpful and relevant to her work. She particularly thought that ICT and Community Care/Childcare, the school's chosen Specialisms, were the best aspect of the programme and were the best part of doing LCA.

**Profile: Roisin Niall, Margaret Aylward Community College, Dublin.**

Roisin Niall was part of our first group of LCA students and she sat her Leaving Certificate in 1998. She completed a three-year course in Multimedia at Colaiste Dhulaigh for which she was awarded a BTEC Higher National Diploma. This allowed Roisin the opportunity of attending the University of Wolverhampton and for her efforts she received, after one year of study, a 2.1 BA (Hons) in Design for Multimedia.

Roisin worked in the IT industry for a number of years but decided she wanted to experience something new and to travel, so she became a Cabin Crew member for Aer Lingus. This career change has allowed Roisin develop new and diverse skills and has provided her with many interesting moments. She has maintained her skills in computers and also designs socks for Dunnes Stores, in her spare time. Roisin believes that there are lots of options available in life, particularly for anyone willing to try something new and to work hard. She comments 'that's exactly what the LCA did for me and what I did with it!'

**Profile: Loretta Kelly, Loreto Secondary School, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal.**



Loretta, a past pupil of Loreto Secondary School, Letterkenny, gained a distinction in Leaving Certificate Applied in 2003.

She then completed the medical secretary's course in FAS Gweedore in August 2004. As part of the FAS course, Loretta worked in Celtic transcripts, a company based in Gweedore which transcribes notes for American doctors.

Following a 3 month contract as private secretary to a respiratory consultant in Letterkenny General Hospital, Loretta then got a job with Ulster bank. After training in Dublin and in a local branch, Loretta had a choice of 3 locations and chose the busy Letterkenny branch, where she now works. She has also done further training in sales and marketing in banking.

Loretta feels that many aspects of LCA were invaluable to her such as Office Skills and Customer Care, IT, Social Education and work experience. The employers' evaluations from four different work placements and the extra qualifications in word processing and Success skills were invaluable in obtaining a job in banking. She would highly recommend Leaving Certificate Applied to any student.

**Profile: Samantha O'Brien, Gorey Community School.**

Samantha is a former student of Gorey Community School and completed the LCA course in June 2004 in which she achieved LCA with Merit. She then pursued a one year PLC course in Childcare in Enniscorthy Vocational College obtaining a merit in FETAC Level 2.

As a result of her work experience in a crèche, school, deli and office, during the LCA programme, Samantha developed a wide portfolio of skills and had no difficulty obtaining part-time work. While pursuing her Post Leaving Cert course, she worked in childcare settings, social care settings and in the local clinic.

As a result of credits obtained, a reference from her course co-ordinator, and an interview, Samantha was successful in her application for a place on the Social Care undergraduate course at Waterford Institute of Technology. She is embarking on this course in September 2006 after spending her deferral year working in a responsible position in Tesco's.

The LCA team at Gorey Community School are very proud of Samantha's success and are very impressed with how she has used the ladder of progression from LCA to Third Level.

**Profile: Clara Fagan, Rochford Manor Secondary School, Blackrock, Co. Dublin.**

Clara graduated from LCA in Rochford Manor in 2004 and is now working as a medical secretary.

On leaving school, Clara undertook a medical secretary's FETAC course in Dun Laoghaire College of Further Education. Clara identifies the work experience component of the course as important, in terms of providing a focus for future career opportunities. 'Learning was more fun' in the Leaving Certificate Applied according to Clara.

**Profile: Ashley McFadden, Youthreach Mountmellick.**

My name is Ashley McFadden and I finished the LCA programme in 2005 at Youthreach Mountmellick. During the two years I was there, I built up my confidence and learnt great social skills. Before starting the LCA I had no clue what I would do after I finished, this all changed when I went out on work experience. After doing two placements in a beauty salon, I realised that Beauty Therapy was for me. I am now in my first year of a PLC Beauty Therapy course. If I hadn't done the LCA I would never have imagined doing a Beauty Therapy course. I am very grateful for being given the chance to try different careers with the help of the LCA.

**Profile: Stephanie Garvey, Carrick-on-Shannon Community School.**



My name is Stephanie Garvey, I completed the LCA programme in 2003 in Carrick-on-Shannon Community School. I found the programme really interesting and of great benefit to me. After completing the LCA course, I went on and completed a Business Secretarial PLC course which was very enjoyable. I am now in my second year in Sligo IT, doing the Higher Certificate

in Business in Office Information Systems. I would advise anyone to do the LCA because if I could, I would go back and do it all over again, I loved it that much!

**Profile: James Murphy, New Ross Vocational College.**



James Murphy completed Leaving Certificate Applied and achieved a Distinction in New Ross Vocational College. Since then James has been in the fast lane on the racing Circuit. He is racing in Silverstone in May 06 competing in the Porsche GT3 Class. He has had numerous successes on the fast lane racing tracks. He is delighted to have opted for the LCA course and regularly returns

to his school, New Ross Vocational College to update teachers on his progress.

**Profile: Richard Harding, Nagle Rice School, Doneraile.**



A past LCA student from Nagle Rice School, Doneraile, Richard is the only amateur jockey to have ridden two winners in the Cheltenham Race Meeting, which is a great achievement.

His work experience during LCA was all horse-related and since finishing school in 1999 he has worked for Charlie Swan, Michael Hourigan and is now a free lance jockey riding for different trainers. He enjoyed meeting people and developing his self-confidence during LCA. The programme did 'wonders for me' says Richard. He enjoyed the tasks and would recommend LCA to anyone 'who wants to learn different things'.

**Raymond Keane -  
1st in Ireland Leaving Cert. Applied 2005**



**Raymond Keane** receives his Gold Medal and Certificate from **Senator Mary O'Rourke** at the Techno Teachers Student Awards ceremony in the Tullamore Court Hotel on March 11th 2006. Raymond received this award for achieving 1st place in Ireland in his Graphics and Construction studies examination. Also included in the picture is his teacher **Mr. John Gallagher** who also received a Certificate for his achievement. Congratulations Raymond.

**Profile: Caroline Murphy, St. Thomas's Community College, Bray, Co Wicklow**

A graduate from LCA in St. Thomas' Community College Bray in 1997, Caroline Murphy now works as a Beauty Therapist.

After completing the Leaving Certificate Applied Caroline did a FETAC course in St Thomas's in Beauty Therapy. This qualification allowed Caroline to undertake a Diploma Course in Beauty Therapy in the same College.

Caroline continued to study while working and obtained the European Computers Drivers Licence (ECDL) among other courses.

Caroline maintains that the Enterprise component of the programme was very beneficial to her in her work. 'The Leaving Certificate Applied gave me loads of confidence, we were allowed to work on our own, but help was there whenever we needed it' according to Caroline.

**Profile: Pamela Hanlon, Presentation Secondary School, Loughboy, Co. Kilkenny.**

Pamela finished her LCA in 2000 and is now manager in Káfe Katz in Kilkenny city. This is a relatively new business in the city centre and is quite popular and very busy.

Pamela worked in the café during the day and completed a Diploma in Business Management and Employee Relations by night. She has also completed the ECDL which helps with all her administration work.

Pamela said LCA helped her because:

*"I felt that LCA suited me better because I am a 'doer' not a studier"*

*"I never really liked school or school work but LCA taught me more than anything I had done up to that point. In the end I enjoyed school so much I didn't want to leave"*

Her favourite aspect probably was the support and friendship she got from the others in the group.

**Profile: Thomas Lees, St. Joseph's College, Newport**



Thomas graduated from LCA in St. Joseph's College Newport in 2004 and is now working as a Sales Assistant with a major retail outlet. He subsequently did a Cert Management course in Catering.

"As it was the first year of Leaving Certificate Applied in the school I felt excited and apprehensive. However, even after my interview during the selection process, I felt it was the right choice for me. I felt I was gaining more and more confidence. By the time I had completed the 7 Task Interviews over the two years, my communication skills had improved greatly. It's really relevant to the working world.

The work experience modules were brilliant opportunities to try out different areas I was interested in. I really liked the active learning and doing research in our community. We applied everything we learned and it was far more varied than the traditional Leaving Cert would have been.

I had a great sense of achievement each time I received my end of session results as I knew exactly how much I was progressing. It has proved an invaluable experience for me."