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TY TIMES

The Davitt College Official Transition Year Newspaper



TY's Italian Adventure

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This year's Transition Year students set their sights on something special – the stunning shores of Lake Garda. Nestled in northern Italy, it was the perfect setting for a week of exploration, laughter, and memories that will outlast any souvenir.

From the ancient streets of Verona to the crystal waters of the lake, each day brought something new. Students soaked up the culture, sampled Italy's finest (especially the pizza), and navigated foreign streets with confidence and curiosity. Whether cruising the lake or relaxing with friends, the spirit of TY was alive and well.

This trip wasn't just about travel – it was about independence, bonding, and stepping into the wider world. The group rose to the challenge, embraced every opportunity, and came home with stories they won't soon forget.

AN HOUR IN VERONA

BY AVA DUFFY

It was like entering a scene from a romance story when I spent a day in Verona. I began my brief stay by going directly to Juliet's Balcony, one of the city's most famous landmarks. I was immediately drawn to Casa di Giulietta's serene beauty as soon as I entered its tiny courtyard. The buzz of eager tourists filled the air as they gathered around the bronze statue of Juliet and stroked her figure in the hopes of gaining a little more love and luck.

The balcony above me – where Juliet is said to have called out to Romeo – was as magical as I had anticipated. It's not as large as I had imagined, but it has a timeless charm: a small, graceful structure overlooking the busy courtyard. I couldn't help but stop for a moment and think about all the couples who had stood there, just like me, admiring the grandeur of this Shakespearean location.

People were taking pictures, acting out that well-known balcony scene, and reading the messages left by previous guests in the courtyard. Time seemed to slow down as I strolled around the tiny museum inside. The nostalgic ambiance was enhanced by antique furnishings, vintage costumes, and walls covered in handwritten love notes from around the world. Being surrounded by historical artefacts and the echoes of a fictional romance that so many people still find real made me feel as though I was travelling back in time.

Even though I only had an hour to spare and knew I couldn't stay forever, I felt a connection – to Verona, to Juliet, and to the idea that love is a timeless emotion. The cobbled alleys of Verona beckoned me to discover more of this lovely, romantic city as I left the courtyard. In a place that felt like a dream come true, it was a brief but perfect moment.

Verona's cuisine was truly delicious. I couldn't help but try a proper pizza for lunch – a regional speciality. Deep, earthy flavours, a creamy texture, and the perfect amount of cheese were all expertly balanced in the meal. The sbrisolona, a flaky, nutty cake that paired perfectly with a glass of sweet cola, was the real standout. Simple, authentic, and completely satisfying, each bite seemed to tell a story of its own. I left Verona with a new appreciation for its flavours, whether from a light snack or a hearty meal.

As the day came to an end, I returned to Lake Garda, where the cool sea breeze welcomed me and offered the perfect contrast to Verona's lively energy. The peaceful setting of my lakefront hotel was the ideal way to round off the day; as the waves gently brushed the shore, I was able to reflect on a wonderful day full of cuisine, culture, and the timeless charm of the Veneto region.



NORTH CONNAUGHT ATHLETICS – TY HITS THE TRACK

By Conor Fleming



On the 10th of April, a group of TY students travelled to ATU Sligo to compete in the North Connaught athletics event. Let's just say I wasn't exactly gunning for gold – I spent most of my race battling it out for second-last place. Honestly, I think more people were watching my showdown with this one lad than the actual front runners.

Out of all of us, only three TY students managed to qualify in their events – fair play to Aaron Cafferkey, Aaron Rice and Ben Fitzsimmons. Legends.

The weather was absolutely scorching. Everyone got sunburnt, even me – and I'd practically bathed in sunscreen. I've now got a weird tan line on my neck that won't go away. Cheers, sun.

The only event I took part in was the 1.5km run. Painful, sweaty, slightly humiliating ... but still kind of worth it.



VENICE VIBES: GLASS, GARDENS AND GREAT PASTA

BY ANASTASIJA URBANAVICIUTE

We spent one day of the tour in Venice, the floating city. We arrived in Venice on a vaporetto – a water taxi – and set a meeting point for when we needed to return for our tour of the Murano glass factory.

We had a few hours to explore on our own. Our group headed off to visit the local shops. There were many selling beautiful glass pieces, Venetian masks, and a huge variety of magnets to buy as souvenirs. Restaurants were everywhere, and the food was amazing – especially the pasta.

We walked along the water and found a lovely garden with blooming flowers near the meeting place. The architecture was mesmerising, and the buildings seemed to tower over us.







PEDALS AND PALS: A DAY ON THE GREENWAY

By Najna Kwitowska

I had the opportunity to take part in a class cycling trip along the Greenway to Turlough, and it turned out to be one of the most enjoyable school days. It wasn't just about riding bikes – it was about bonding with classmates.

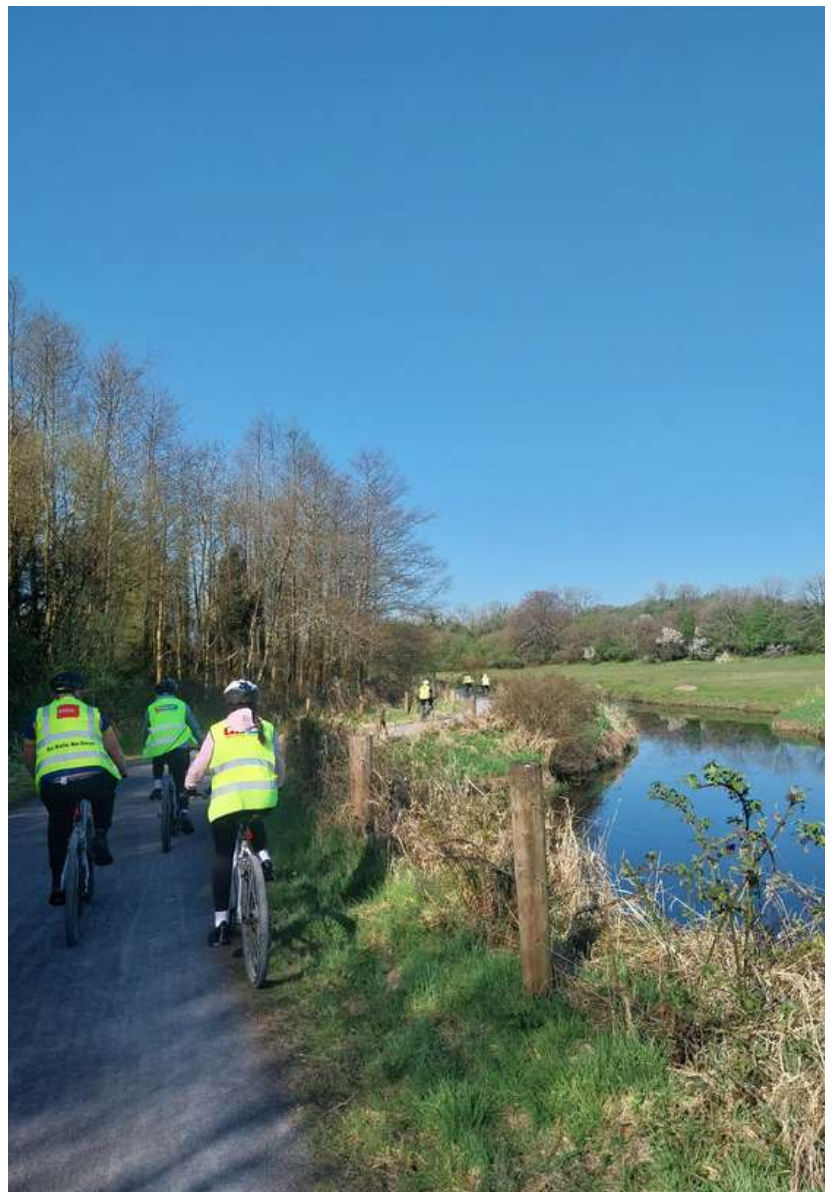
We started the day early, getting our bikes, helmets, and high-vis jackets ready for the journey ahead. We set off along the Greenway, cycling through some of the beautiful countryside in the area. As we rode, the atmosphere was full of laughter and chatter. The teachers kept a close eye on us to make sure everyone stayed together, but I really enjoyed being out of the classroom – especially because the weather was so nice. The sun was shining, and it was hot outside.

The route to Turlough was great fun because we got to cycle with our friends

and chat along the way. We took a few short breaks to catch our breath and grab some water. Eventually, we arrived in Turlough, where we stopped at a shop to get ice cream! After all the cycling, it felt amazing to cool down with a cold treat. We sat outside in the sun, laughing and chatting with each other.

We were definitely feeling it on the way back – slower, quieter, but still smiling. The trip wasn't just about physical activity – it brought us closer together as a class. By the time we returned to school, we were exhausted, a bit sunburnt, and more than ready to sit down.

Cycling to Turlough on the Greenway with my class wasn't just about the ride – it was about spending time together, enjoying nature, and making memories. It was a day I won't forget!



JULIET'S HOUSE: A ROMANTIC STOP IN VERONA

By Cameron King

During our visit to Verona, Italy, the TY group had the chance to explore Juliet's House – an iconic site tied to Shakespeare's legendary Romeo and Juliet. Whether you're a fan of the play or a lover of history, this location offers a unique glimpse into Verona's romantic past.

Outside the house stands a statue of Juliet, where visitors traditionally touch her breast – a gesture believed to bring good luck in love and fertility. Inside, the house features paintings depicting scenes from Shakespeare's play, a model of Shakespeare's head, and books dedicated to the timeless story of Romeo and Juliet.

The main attraction, however, is Juliet's balcony. Overlooking a charming open space, it's a popular spot for photos, especially on sunny days. Standing on the balcony, it's easy to imagine the famous scene where Juliet calls out to Romeo. The atmosphere is undeniably romantic, making it the perfect place to capture memories with loved ones.

Admission to the house is €8.00 per person, and for the price, visitors get to step into the world of Verona's most famous love story. Juliet's House is a must-visit for anyone drawn to romance, literature, or the enchanting history of this beautiful Italian city.







HORSES, HISTORY, AND HATS – TY TAKES ON KILDANGAN STUD

By Noah McNamara

On the 13th of May 2025 TY students were invited to visit Kildangan Stud Farm in Co. Kildare. We left at 7:30 a.m. for the three-hour bus journey. After a quick 15-minute stop at Junction 14 to stretch our legs and use the bathroom, we were straight back on the bus and on our way again.

When we finally arrived, we were brought to the main building of the stud and given a short history lesson. The stud's origins date back to the More O'Ferrall family, who established it on the grounds of Kildangan Castle. The original castle, built during the Anglo-Norman period by Maurice Fitzgerald of Allen, was part of a defensive line along the River Barrow. In 1882, the old castle was demolished and its stone reused to build the current Victorian Jacobean-style house.

In 1986, Roderic More O'Ferrall sold Kildangan Stud to Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the ruler of Dubai. Interestingly, the Irish government had the chance to buy the stud before the sale, but let the offer lapse. Under Sheikh Mohammed's ownership, Kildangan Stud became the headquarters of Godolphin Ireland and now spans roughly 1,500 acres of fertile, limestone-rich land – perfect for breeding thoroughbreds.

After our history lesson, we hopped back on the bus and were brought to another part of the farm where the pregnant horses and foals are kept. Before seeing the animals, we were given a talk about how the horses are bred and cared for. Horses are pregnant for around eleven months and can weigh up to 650 kg before giving birth. The foals usually weigh about 45 kg at birth. All foals are born after January to be ready in time for spring.

Then we were finally brought to see the horses. They were split into two groups: one for the pregnant mares and one for the mares who had recently given birth. We were allowed to pet the pregnant horses, who were noticeably calmer. The mares with foals were more anxious – they spent a lot of time pacing and running around the pen, and some swung their heads out through the fencing when people got too close.

Next, we visited the Stallion Yard, where we saw some of the farm's most famous racehorses. The first stallion was Space Blues – a smaller, younger horse at just nine years old. He's already travelled the world and won 16 races. The second stallion they brought out was older and much larger, but far more relaxed. At 15 years old, he still looked in great condition.

We were also shown the dome where the horses are kept in winter and told about the process of moving and housing them during colder months. After that, we visited Space Blues' pen for a closer look – though we weren't allowed to pet him as he's known to bite. We learned a few more interesting facts, like how you can tell where a horse is looking based on the direction of its ears. At the end of the tour, our guide gave us a quiz on everything we'd learned – and if you got a question right, you won a hat!



Before heading home, we took one last tour around the farm. Then it was back on the bus to Junction 14 for a longer 50-minute break. We had the option to get food from Supermac's, Subway, or Insomnia, and school lunches were available too!

We got back to school around 5:00 p.m. – an hour earlier than expected – after a busy, educational, and genuinely interesting day.

KILDANGAN STUD FARM





BEHIND THE GATES OF KILDANGAN STUD

By Oisín Butler

On May 13th, a group of TYs went to Kildangan Stud in Co. Kildare. We had about a two-hour tour of the horse farm, where we learnt how they raise and care for the horses and train them into notable racing champions. The journey there was uneventful – just a long bus trip to Kildare. When we arrived at the farm, we met our tour guide, who began by taking us on a short walk. One of the first things we saw was the house of Sheikh Mohammed, the owner of Kildangan Stud and also the Vice President of the UAE.

Next, we went into the stables to see the foaling units – special stalls with one-way glass so staff can supervise pregnant horses without disturbing them. After that, we headed out to the stables where the horses sleep and are weighed. On average, a horse weighs about 660 kilograms – we joked that it would take more than 10 of us to match that! Some of the stables had gold plaques with names on them to mark where famous, award-winning horses were born. Every horse at the stud is named personally by Sheikh Mohammed.

Then we got to see some of the pregnant horses outside, along with a few of the new mothers. Most of the pregnant horses were calm, although there was one that seemed quite nervous and jumpy, backing away when anyone got too close. The new mothers were more cautious and protective – they spent a lot of time running around the field with their foals, and if anyone came near, they'd panic and swing their heads out through the fence.

Next, we visited the Stallion Yard, where we saw the racehorses. The stallions were much larger than the mares and noticeably more aggressive. Their handlers had to be strict and kept them on very short leads. We learnt that training a horse at Kildangan can cost anywhere between €60,000 and €200,000! On the way out, we passed one of the stallions in its stable. A few people tried to go up to him, but he started jerking around and nearly bit someone – not the friendliest of horses!

Our last stop was the farmland area, where they use the horses' manure to grow hay, which is then baled and stored. The smell was awful – and somehow it even managed to follow us onto the bus, long after we'd driven away. Before heading home, we were lucky enough to stop at the plaza at Junction 14, where we had about an hour to get food and relax. The stud was a beautiful place, and getting to see the care and detail that goes into looking after the mares, foals, and stallions was a fantastic experience!

FROM SWITZERLAND TO TY: MY IRISH EXCHANGE EXPERIENCE

BY NELJA ESCHER

I'm an exchange student from Switzerland, and I'm 16 years old. For the first two weeks of this school year, I was in 5th year, but I changed to TY because 5th year was too much work. It was hard to settle in at first, but on my second day in TY I met Victoria and Aoife. They were always helpful and kind – especially when I got lost!

On my first day in TY, we practised a few dances for the musical. It was difficult at the beginning because I hadn't been in TY from the start and everyone else already knew the dances. But the musical helped me to meet more people in my year who weren't in my class. It was a wonderful experience, especially because we never do musicals like that in Switzerland. I didn't want a big role, so I was a background dancer.



At the start of the exchange, my English wasn't great. One of my favourite memories was when I was talking to my friend Victoria about the main roles in the musical. She thought I had no English, so when she tried to tell me who the lion was, she made claws with her hands to show me – because she thought I didn't know the word 'lion' in English! That still makes me laugh. At the end of those early days, I was really tired from translating everything in my head. But now my English is much better – I understand everyone and my pronunciation has improved a lot.

Another big difference is the uniform. In Switzerland, we're allowed to wear our own clothes, but in Ireland we have to wear a green uniform – and I'm not a big fan of that!

This year has been full of great experiences, and I'm really glad I moved to TY. I've made lovely friends, learned so much, and had the chance to do things I never imagined when I first arrived in Ireland.





CHAOS IN SIRMIONE: A SWEET AND SPEEDY SEND-OFF

by Ava Duffy, Callum Dawson Conaty & Megan Healy

On the last day of the school tour – the 9th of May – we went to Sirmione. Well... technically, we went to a shopping centre first. Unfortunately, we didn't get to go to the Orio Center like the other half of the year. Instead, we ended up at GrandeMela, which was only slightly bigger than the SuperValu shopping centre in Castlebar. In other words, it was disappointing, to say the least. There was a GameStop and a toy shop, so it wasn't that bad. The Lego didn't fit in Callum's suitcase, so sadly, no Lego for him. We then elegantly boarded our double-decker, luxury Italian bus and set off on our final adventure – Sirmione Town.

Once we arrived, we were in the biggest, fattest rush. The teachers herded us to the tour boat at exceptional speed. We clogged up the only street in Sirmione so badly that a car beeped at us – presumably in unfiltered Italian rage. Once we flooded the dock, we were sectioned off and flung onto these very cute little speedboats. By the dock, there were loads of sweet, petite ducks of varying species. Very cool. Very nice.

We set off across Lake Garda. The tour guide was great, though he didn't speak fluent English – but he gave it a go. He asked if we wanted music, and no one replied ... except the teachers, who were way too enthusiastic. He then blasted the loudest house music known to man. The boat instantly felt like an early 2000s disco – but on water, and also not in the 2000s. Still, a vibe.



We all put our hands out to touch the water, and just as we were doing that, the boat sped up, splashing us all. It was class. Everyone was laughing. Then the guide told us to stop, which was humbling, but fair. He tried to tell us about castles on the shore, but none of us had a clue what he was saying. We just nodded politely.

We circled the tip of the peninsula and passed under two bridges in the middle of town. The second one was ridiculously low – we had to nearly lie down in our seats to avoid smacking our heads off it. Once we were safely helped off the boats, we were given just under an hour to explore the town.

I (Callum) asked Tara and Oisín if they wanted to go over the castle bridge into the town centre. They said no. So, I went with Megan and a few others. We crossed this tiny bridge, maybe 2.5 metres wide. To our surprise, it turned out to be a road. Out of nowhere, an Italian traffic warden appeared and shouted, “Car! Car!” We had to flatten ourselves against the wall as cars slowly rolled past, with the drivers giving us the longest, slowest stares imaginable. Proper awkward.

After that, we found an ice-cream shop in the centre of town. They were selling these colossal cones – the length of your arm. Joe and Megan obviously got one and demolished it in about five minutes. By the time we got our ice-cream, it was already time to head back to the bus. We only got 45 minutes in town – unlike the other group who got FIVE extra hours. Still, we ate loads of ice-cream, saw loads of water, and somehow still had a brilliant time.



GROWING TOGETHER: TY STUDENTS BUILD GARDEN WITH ST. BRÍD'S

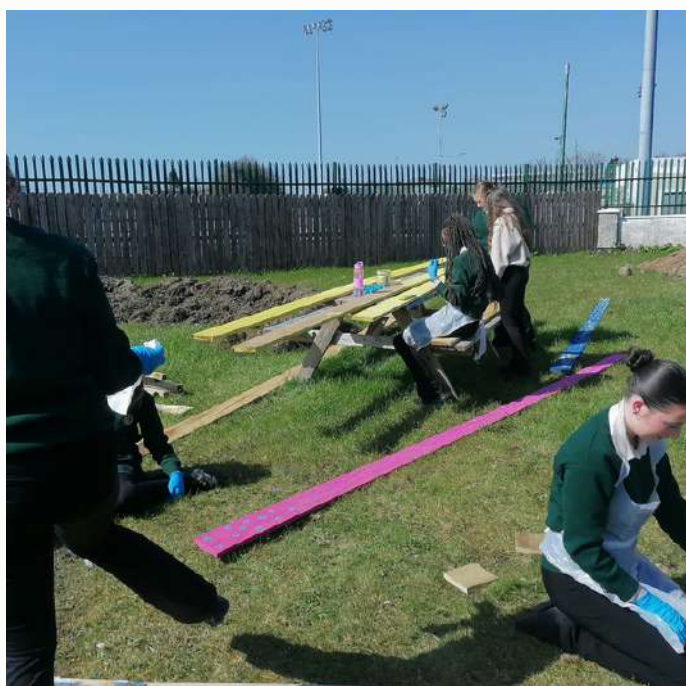
By Antonina Zak & Nikola Stencel

This year, our Transition Year class 4C took part in an unforgettable and meaningful project – we helped build an accessible and fun garden for St. Bríd's School. What started as just a small idea during science class turned into a full-on transformation of their outdoor space.

We got stuck in straight away, digging out space for flower beds and preparing the ground. It was definitely hard work! We built wooden flower beds and even worked alongside the students in the school to decorate and paint them. One of the biggest parts of the project was installing a polytunnel. It was great to see everyone working together and enjoying the process.

We owe a massive thank you to Ms O'Connor, who brought us to the school nearly every science class and guided us through the whole project. We also really appreciate Mr Murphy for letting us miss some of his classes to keep the work going. Without their support, this wouldn't have happened.

The garden is set to be completed by the end of May, and we can't wait to see the finished product. It's been an amazing experience to give back to our community, learn new skills, and – most importantly – spend time creating something special with the students at St. Bríd's.



GLIDING THROUGH VENICE: A GONDOLA RIDE TO REMEMBER

by Seán Moran

Our school tour from Davitt College to Italy was an unforgettable experience, filled with culture, stunning sights, and great company. Among all the incredible moments, one of the most memorable days was Wednesday, when we visited the city of Venice. It felt like a scene straight out of a postcard – sunlight on the water, narrow canals weaving through old buildings, and the mix of boats, tourists, and locals all blending into the atmosphere of the city.

After some sightseeing and wandering through the streets, three of my friends and I decided to do something iconic: we booked a 30-minute gondola tour. None of us had ever been on a gondola before, and we were excited.

Our gondolier was a friendly, warm-hearted man. He greeted us with a wide smile and took a photo with us before we got on. He was dressed in the traditional striped shirt and hat. He had a great sense of humour and shared stories about the city as we glided through the water. He spoke fluent English

and added a few Italian phrases here and there, even explaining how gondoliers call out before turning a corner so others know they're coming. As he rowed us through the back canals and under bridges, he pointed out hidden architectural details, historic buildings, and even the house where Marco Polo once lived. He told us about the history of the gondola, how each one is handmade, and how the city has changed over time. The ride was peaceful and incredibly scenic in the afternoon light.

At one point, he began to hum a traditional Venetian melody, and for a few brief moments, we slowed right down and took it all in.

By the end of the 30 minutes, none of us wanted to get off. We thanked the gondolier sincerely – he had made the experience unforgettable and even better than we imagined.

That gondola ride was just one part of our school tour, but it was easily a highlight.





RUNNING TOGETHER: TY GIRLS JOIN THE MINI MARATHON

BY GRACE CARROLL AND KATIE O'MALLEY

On the 27th of February, Davitt College hosted the launch of the Western People Women's Mini Marathon in association with Mayo County Council. All girls who were interested from Davitt and St. Joseph's attended the launch in the Davitt College canteen. This event was specifically aimed at teenage girls, encouraging them to take part in the Mini Marathon and the public training programmes organised by Mayo County Council.

The event was MC'ed by Ms Angelina Nugent of the Midwest Radio sports department. Two panels were present, made up of student representatives and invited guests who spoke about their personal sporting experiences.

On Monday the 3rd of March, we signed up for the Mini Marathon through the school. Ms Carney gave us a 9-week training plan, which included walking, jogging, and running options. The plan had four running days and three rest days each week.

We collected our T-shirts from Lough Lannagh Leisure Centre the day before the 10km race. On the morning of the event, we met at the Mall for a group photo with all the staff and students from Davitt College who were taking part. There was a group warm-up before the race, which started at 12:00. We moved to the start line at 11:50 and got going right on time.

Along the course, there were water stations and loads of people cheering everyone on. The atmosphere was fantastic throughout the day. After finishing the race, there was water and fruit for everyone, and then you could collect your medal.





Molten Magic: A Visit to Vecchia Murano Glass Factory

by Joseph Loftus

Following our self-exploration of Venice on the second day of our TY tour, we were brought to the Vecchia Murano Glass Factory for a tour and demonstration. The factory itself was only a short walk from St Mark's Square, right in the heart of the city.

Upon our arrival, we were greeted by an impressive display of intricate statues and figures made entirely from coloured glass. A guide brought us into a showroom where we watched a live demonstration. One of their glassmakers walked us through the process of creating a vase, explaining which tools were used and when. The demonstration was absolutely captivating – every movement was smooth and deliberate. In less than five minutes, he had produced a beautiful vase.

We also learned about the cooling process: the glass must rest in ovens so it doesn't shatter as it cools. After the demonstration, we were given a brief tour of the facilities and their stunning collection of artwork. Every piece was unique and handcrafted with incredible precision.

The tour continued into another showroom, where we were given more insights – this time into the factory's history, the trademark stamp used on each piece, and how various metals and chemical compounds are added to colour and strengthen the glass.

At the end of the visit, we had the chance to browse and buy some of the glassware if we wanted to. It was very high-end, with some of the cheapest cups starting at twenty euros. For those of us who did buy something, we skipped the colour-changing jewellery and glassware and chose smaller items like glass beads and pins instead. Personally, I would have loved to buy one of the glasses, but I couldn't justify the cost – or the risk of it breaking in my bag – despite how durable they are.

This was by far my favourite experience of the TY tour, and I honestly can't recommend it enough.





An Exchange Year of Wizards, Workshops and Potatoes

by David Matthes

I am David, and I am from Germany. I've spent the last eight months in Davitt College as a TY student, and I've experienced so much more than my peers back home – and far more than I ever imagined when I first came here. My English has improved a lot too, and now I'm much more confident in conversations.

Ireland, surprisingly, is not that different from Germany. We have a lot of the same products, brands, and cars – though not nearly as many strawberry-blond people! The biggest difference for me was the school uniform, which was quite a change. I've also noticed that teachers in Ireland value punctuality more, and they take a much more hands-off approach compared to teachers back home. My exchange year didn't actually start in TY – it started in 5th year – but it became clear very quickly that TY would be the better experience. The excursions, the musical, and the big trip at the end of the year definitely helped convince me.

Right at the start of TY, Mr Gallagher came into the class with the opportunity to audition for the school musical. I was very interested in doing anything but class, so I gave it a go. Three days later – to my surprise – I got the part. I was cast as the wizard. A few days after that, I received my script. There were a lot of lines to learn, especially since English isn't my first language, and I was unsure about how to pronounce half the words.

The musical turned out to be a great experience. I got to sing a short solo with choreography, I battled with my understudy (because I was sick during a few rehearsals), and I made some good friends along the way.

Later in the year, we went ice skating in Galway, where I promptly tested the structural integrity of the ice with my buttocks (good news: the ice held up). Galway was a beautiful city.

For Christmas break, I went back to Germany, where I confirmed my long-held suspicion that German beer is, in fact, superior to Irish beer. I'm joking, of course. I spent two lovely weeks with my family in my hometown of Wuppertal – which isn't really famous for anything, except one of the world's only suspended train systems, built in the early 1920s by some overenthusiastic city planners.

January and February were packed with workshops, short courses, and talks. We had a drumming workshop, where an energetic and very nice man taught us some catchy rhythms on African percussion drums. We also had a first aid course (which included bandaging our arms to our bodies), a social justice talk, a cancer awareness talk, and a trip to Dublin to see Romeo and Juliet on stage.

Later in the year, we went to a driving school, where we got to try a theory test and then drive cars around a go-kart track. Everyone did well, and now a lot of us are seriously thinking about getting our licences.

Overall, this year was a complete success. My English is stronger than ever, I've made lots of new friends, and I've learnt to appreciate the things I used to take for granted in Germany. I've also learnt how to navigate a totally unfamiliar environment – and I've eaten way too many potatoes for my liking.

Though it's time to return to Germany, the memories I've made in Ireland are coming with me.



A Day in Venice

BY OLIWIA LOSIAK

On the second day in Italy, we went to Venice. The bus ride from our hotel in Verona took about an hour and a half. We left around 9:30 a.m. and arrived at about 11 a.m.

As soon as we got there, we took a boat to reach the actual island of Venice. The boat ride didn't take long. When we got off, we went straight to St Mark's Square, where the teachers told us to meet later – after we'd had three hours to explore on our own.

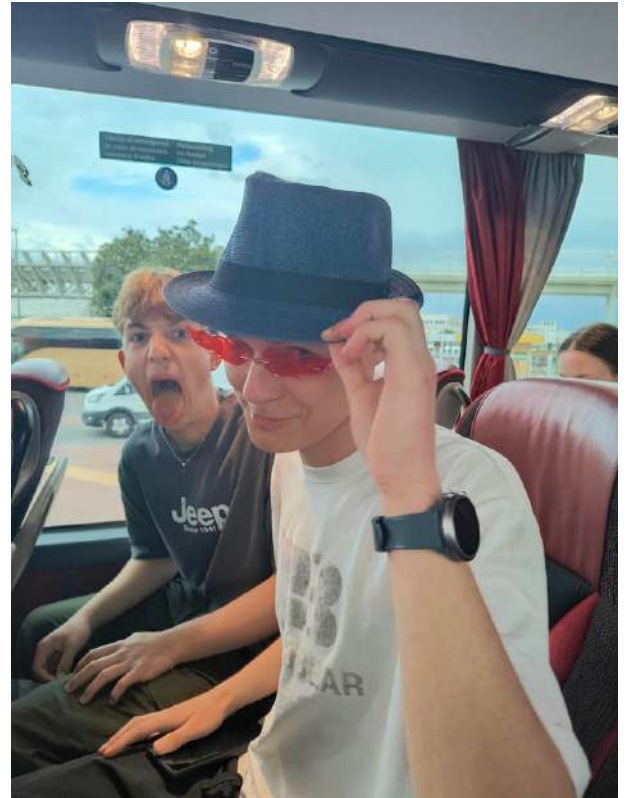
There were lots of landmarks to see, like the Rialto Bridge (which can be seen in Spider-Man: Far From Home), the Basilica di San Marco, and the Palazzo Ducale. This was also our chance to get food and drinks and go shopping.

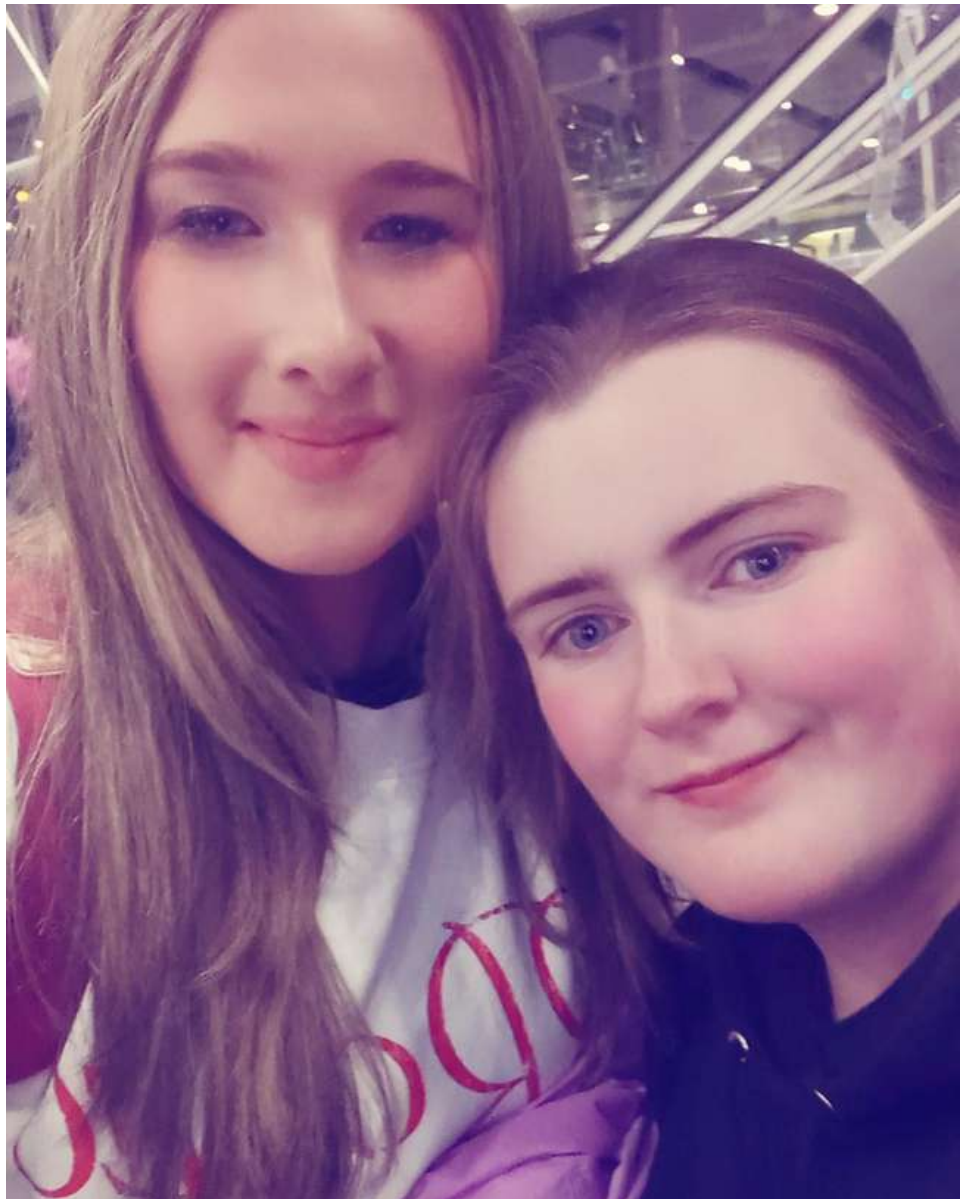
After three hours of walking around, we met back at St Mark's Square and walked to the Murano Glass Factory. The glass factory was really interesting. We learnt how the glass is made and who makes it. We also got a tour of the different glass creations that have been made there. At the end, we were allowed to buy something if we wanted to.

We went back on the boat, which was also really fun. We arrived back at the hotel around 6 p.m., had dinner at 8, and then we were ready for whatever the next day would bring.











The Weather Report

BY RICARDAS SESKUS

Day 1:

It was a memorable start to the trip. As we landed, it felt just like home – rain. Miserable, endless rain. Spirits were low. Everyone had hoped for blue skies and sunshine, and instead we got drizzle and despair.

But wait... what was that? The rain stopped?

Suddenly, the mood lifted. The sun appeared, and just like that, it turned into a full day of glorious weather. Crisis averted.



Day 2:

The morning was rough. Everyone was sore and exhausted from the day before. I opened the blinds and saw a sky full of grey clouds. My mood dropped instantly.

But then – slowly – the clouds started to clear. The sun came out.

Temperatures hit 25 degrees. I was excited... until I wasn't. It got too hot. I found myself wishing I could just stay in the shade, maybe nap through the heat. But no – I had to go out. It was me versus the sun.

Let's just say: the sun won.



Day 3:

Woke up sunburnt. My arms, face – everything hurt.

But the weather looked good, so we got on the bus to GardaLand. The vibes were high, the sun was shining, and everyone was buzzing.

Then... the sky started to change. The wind picked up. Grey clouds rolled in like a horror film.

A few raindrops landed. I froze. Not again.

But just when it seemed like the heavens would open – the sun came back out. I could've cried with relief. Sunshine returned, and all was well.

Day 4:

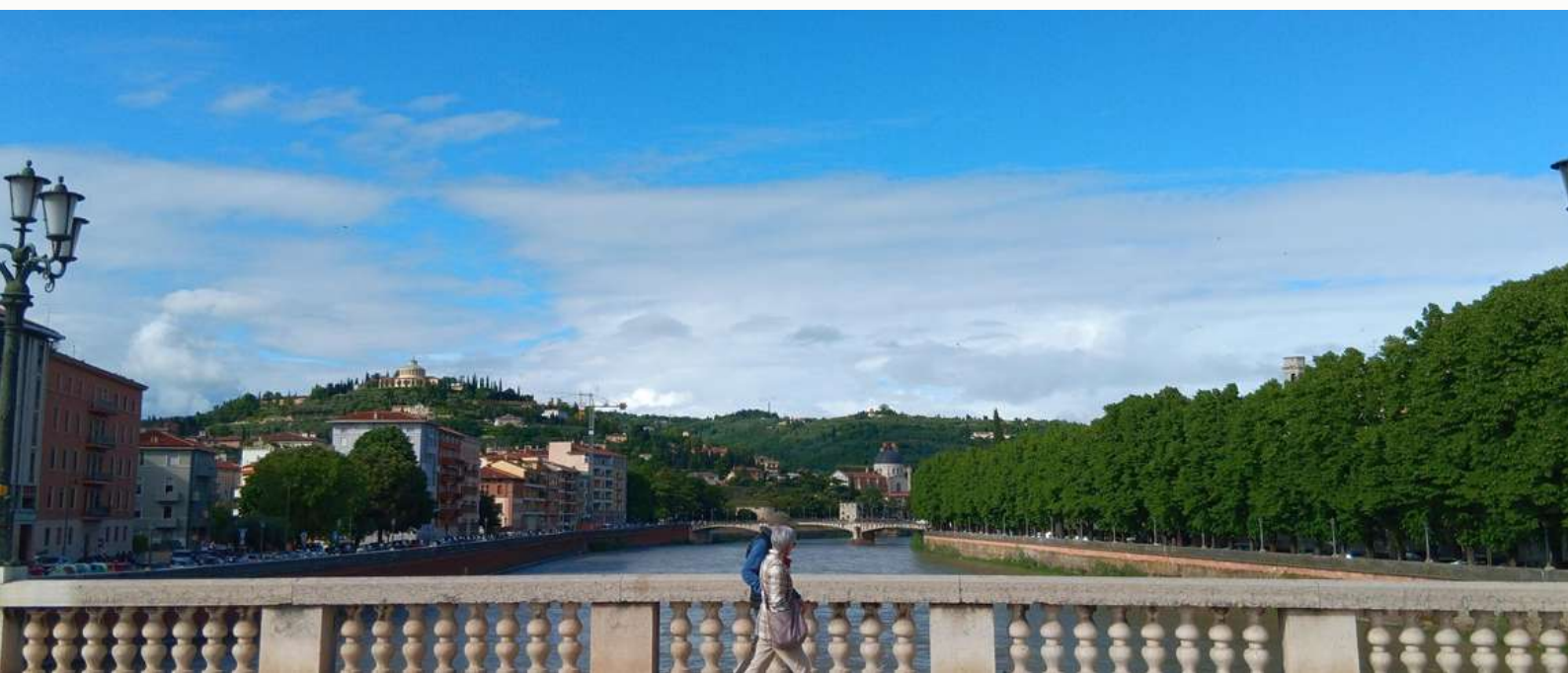
I woke up feeling a bit sad – it was the last day of the tour.

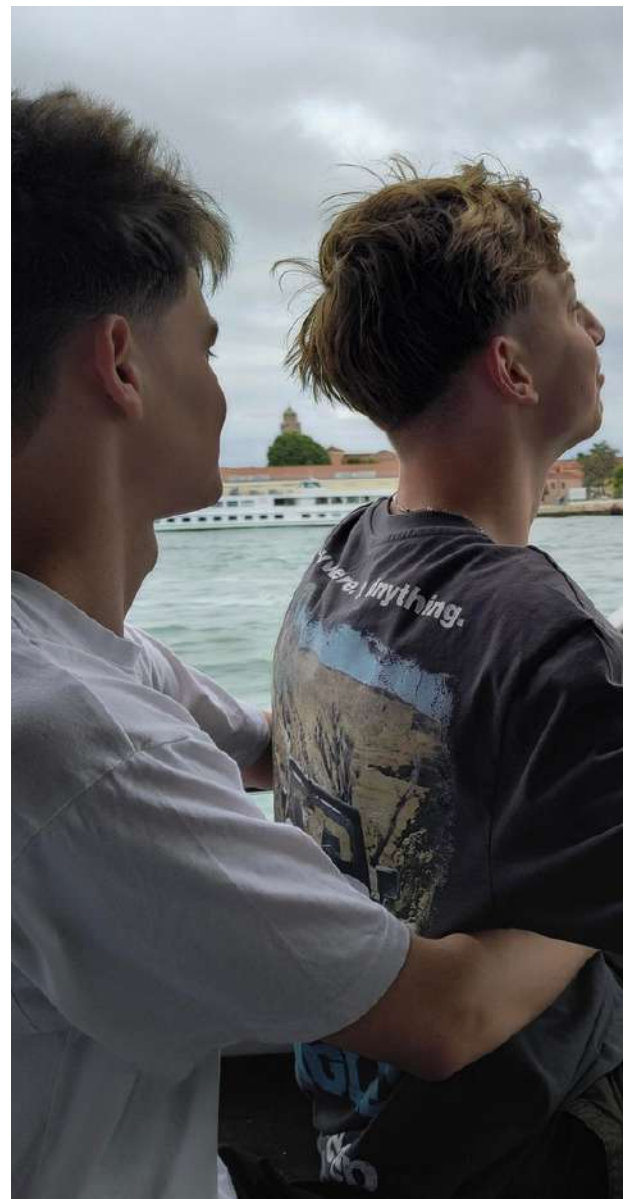
It was also the hottest day yet. As we got on the bus, the sun was already blazing. We were all tired and more than a little sun-kissed.

The heat stayed with us the whole day – no clouds, just solid sunshine.

We eventually headed home.

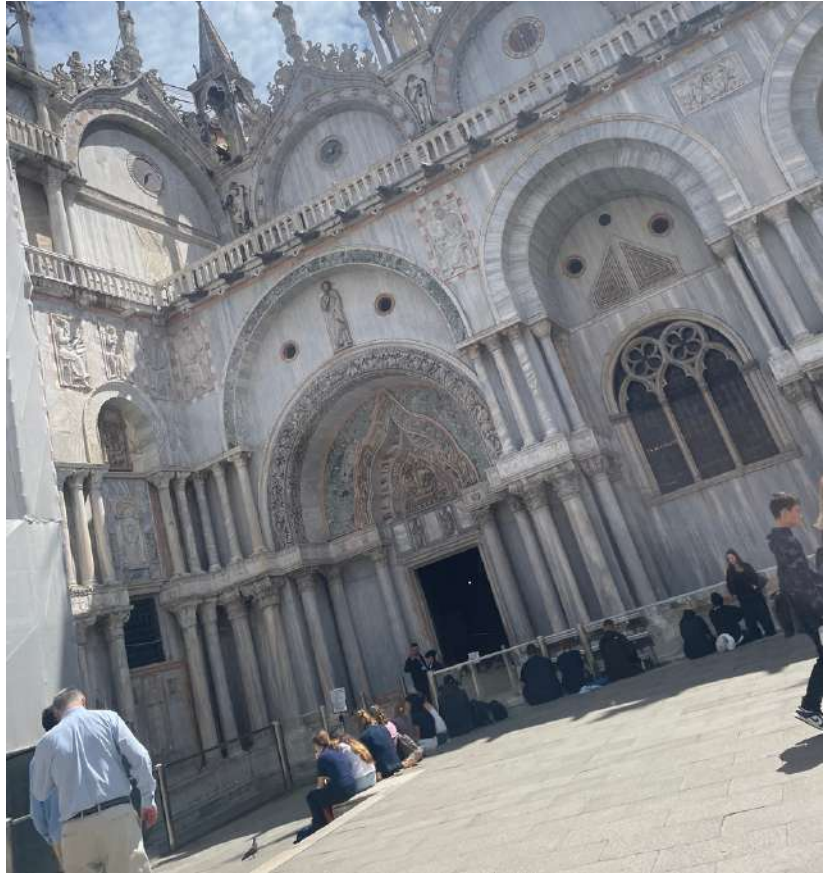
And what greeted us back in Ireland? More sun! Still warm. Still bright. I was ready for bed, shade, and about three gallons of aftersun.











History and Highlights: Visiting the Verona Arena

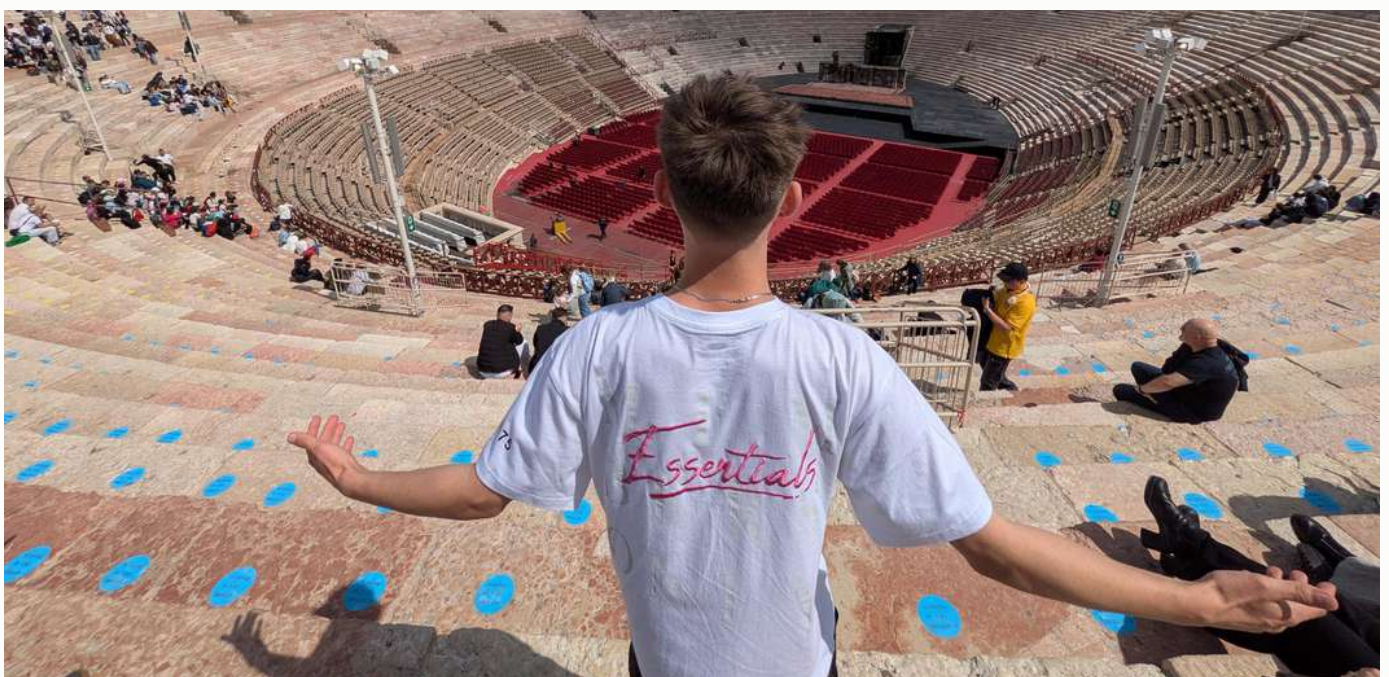
BY RADEK ZLOTEK & RÍAN PRENDERGAST

During our recent trip to Verona, Italy, we had the incredible opportunity to visit the Verona Arena – a monumental Roman amphitheatre that has truly stood the test of time. Built around 30 AD, this ancient structure has evolved from hosting gladiatorial contests to becoming a premier venue for opera and other cultural events.

The exterior, made of pink and white limestone, was truly a sight to behold. The arena could originally hold up to 30,000 people. Over its long history, it has served many purposes – from theatrical performances to being used as a quarry.

Unlike its more famous counterpart, the Colosseum in Rome, you can actually climb to the top of the Verona Arena and enjoy a stunning view of Piazza Bra and the scenic landscape of Verona. It's also a fantastic spot for taking photos.

Visiting the Verona Arena was an unforgettable experience. It was fascinating to see how such an ancient structure has managed to adapt and survive while still preserving its rich history. The blend of Roman architecture and modern cultural events makes the Verona Arena a key part of Italy's heritage.







TY Takes Italy: A Week to Remember

BY BRIAN MCDONNELL, RACHEL RATTIGAN & KATELYN MCGUINN

From the 6th to the 9th of May 2025, a group of 111 TY students jetted off from Dublin Airport for an unforgettable adventure in Italy. Accompanied by ten dedicated staff members, we stayed at the Hotel Centro Turistico Gardesano, located in the beautiful region near Lake Garda.

On our first day, we explored the historic city of Verona. Highlights included a visit to the iconic Juliet's Balcony – straight out of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet – and the ancient Verona Arena, a Roman amphitheatre still used for performances today.

Day two brought a magical experience as we boarded a boat to the world-famous city of Venice. From gliding down canals to wandering its charming streets, the day was packed with beauty, culture, and plenty of photos!

Thursday was the undisputed highlight for many – a full day at Gardaland, Italy's top theme park. With thrilling rides, great food, and sunny skies, it was a day full of excitement and laughs we'll never forget.

On Friday, our final day, we enjoyed a boat trip to the lovely town of Sirmione on Lake Garda. After soaking up the lakeside views, the group split up – some headed off for a final bit of sightseeing, while others took the chance to shop at a local shopping centre.

It was a trip filled with fun, friendship, and Italian sunshine. A huge thank you to the ten staff members who made the entire experience possible!





Our TY Journey

By Kate McNicholas

We kicked things off in Shannon breeze,
With kayaks slicing through the seas,
Then archery - our aim set high,
Under the open western sky.

From there, the year began to spin,
New doors to step through, worlds within.
Down yellow roads in Oz we ran,
Each voice, each costume, each stage plan.

Applause still rings from every night,
Our moment caught in curtain light.
In Galway's square, we shopped and strolled,
With bags and laughter uncontrolled.

We skated, slipped, and learned to glide,
On frozen floors with friends beside.
Pallas came with roaring starts,
We drove in loops, we played our parts.

First lessons taken, gears and all
From clutch to brake, we felt the call.
Guest speakers shared their truth,
Hard stories meant for shaping youth.

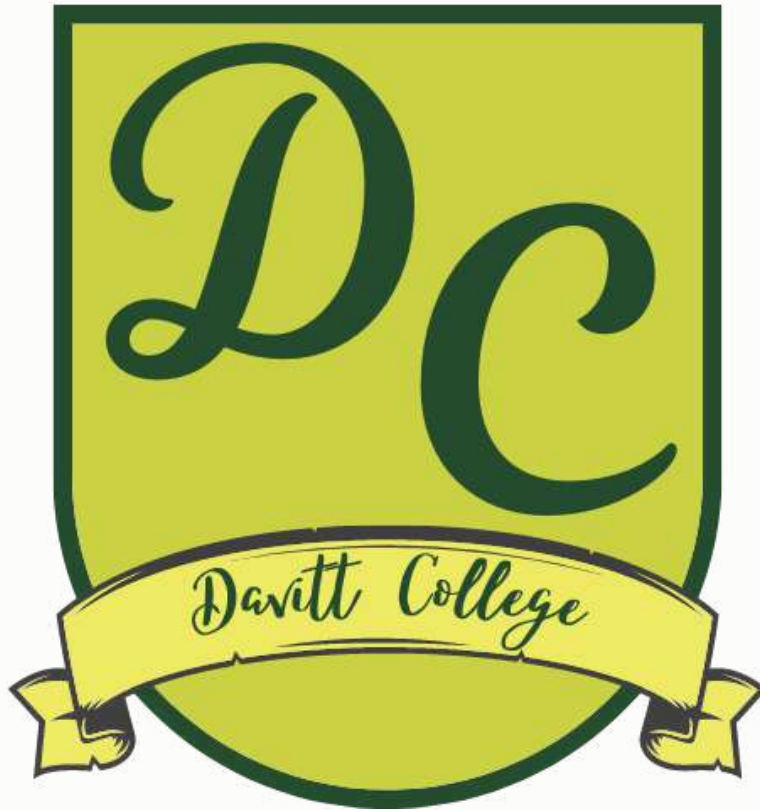
First lessons taken, gears and all
From clutch to brake, we felt the call.
Guest speakers shared their truth,
Hard stories meant for shaping youth.

One warned of gambling's quiet snare,
The other taught us how to care
To heal, to help, to take the lead,
When faced with panic, blood, or need.

Then Garda's sun called out our name,
To Italy, where new sights came:
In Venice, boats and masks afloat,
Verona sang a Shakespeare note.
Sirmione's charm and lakeside breeze,
And Gardaland's pure joy and screams.

From Mayo hills to foreign skies,
This year gave more than we could prize.
A time to grow, to laugh, to try
Forever part of our TY.





TY TIMES

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Not all classrooms have walls