



The 2024 Derry Credit Union Young People's Awards Souvenir Booklet

**25th March 2024
The City Hotel, Derry**

Forward from Delma Boggs, Vice President of Derry Credit Union

Good evening Everyone

I would like to extend a special welcome to our nominees and nominators, my fellow Directors, our Youth Committee members, and our keynote speaker Amanda Johnston. You are all very welcome.

Representing our President Colm McCauley, who was unable to attend, it is my pleasure to address our honoured nominees and their guests at this auspicious event.

Over the past 19 years, the core mission of these awards has remained the same: to recognise the innate goodness in the young people of Derry. In fact, it was started all those years ago by members of our Youth Committee who wanted to counteract the negative reports about young people that were prevalent at the time. We think that their initiative, which has now blossomed into an annual scheme recognised by credit unions across the island, was a worthy one! We hope that by the end of tonight's proceedings, you will agree.

Before I finish, I would like to acknowledge the hard work of our Youth Committee, who are your hosts tonight. They meet monthly to help Derry Credit Union host annual events, such as International Credit Union Day, our Annual General Meeting, the credit union Art Competition and the credit union Schools Quiz. Their focus in the spring, of course, is this awards ceremony and they have been working away for weeks preparing for tonight.





Welcome from Lauren Doherty, Young People's Awards Chair

On behalf of my fellow members of the Derry Credit Union Youth Committee, staff and Board of Directors, welcome to our 2024 Young People's Awards. 2024 marks the 19th anniversary of this awards scheme. It has been running longer than our nominees tonight have been alive! And our 2024 nominees join a noteworthy parade of former nominees, including accomplished arts and sport stars, a well-known YouTube star and television host, and a sprinkling of elected councillors and MLAs. Tonight's nominees hold just as much potential and promise to make a difference as the previous nominees.

Our awards scheme is unique. As you will soon learn, in addition to your accomplishments on the stage, field or classroom, you are here because you share your talents and abilities with others. You take the time to encourage, teach, mentor, look out for, and sometimes just be there for others. It is your kind and giving nature combined with your courage and determination that has caught the attention of your nominator, motivating them to take the time to put your name forward for an award.

Being a nominee makes you a winner in our eyes. To be nominated for these prestigious awards is a genuine honour and whether you are a finalist or not, tonight is all about celebrating you. So prepare to hear some incredible stories about some remarkable young people - some of the best young people our city has to offer.

Presentation of Certifications to the 2024 Nominees (alphabetical order)

included in the photographs are members of our Youth Committee



**DERRY CREDIT
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**Jack Beasley, Niall Derges Bonner, Dearbhaile Brady, Sam Brattin, Bobby Brolly
Ruby Brown, Odhran Campbell, Sarah Carlin, Aurora Cartin, Eoin Cartin**



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**Clara Casey, Amy Cassidy, Becca Connolly, Reuben Connor, Eve Coyle
Freya Coyle, Freya Cummings, Daniel Curran, Conall Deeney, Ethan Diamond**



**Fionn Duffy, Rebecca Ebbs, Eco Club (Thornhill College),
Environmental Group (St Cecilia's College), Ben Farren
Bernadette Ferreira, Grace Flood, Ava Foley, Gracie Gallagher, Denzil George**



**Daniel Grace, Mikey Harkin, Shaye Lily Harkin, Elle Harrison, Sarah Hasson
Health & Wellbeing Team (Lumen Christi College), Lucy Jennings, Ava Jones
Junior Prefect Team (Thornhill College), Just to Say YENI Group**



Cameron Kelly, Christian Kelly, Leon Kelly, Cahir Lambertson, Joshua Leonard, Adam Roberts Lynch, Conor Roberts Lynch, Sophie McAllister, Jake McCafferty, Shane McCafferty



Caiden Murphy McCallion, Grace McCaul, Cianan McCauley, Glenn McCourt, Elise McDermott, Tiernan McElhinney, Ciara McGeough, Luc McGlinchey, Caitlin McGranaghan, Eoghan McLaughlin



**Sean McLaughlin, Kelsie McShane, Maeve McShane,
Mercy Group (Thornhill College) Mercy Leadership Team (St Mary's College)
Ciaran Mullan, Kiernan Nash, Bradan Nicell, Niall O'Doherty, Fintan O'Donnell**



Zara O'Reilly, Katie Parke, Daimhin Parkhill, Peer Mentors (St Columb's College) Primary Links Ambassadors Thornhill College, Emer Rabbett, Zara Reid Rights Ambassadors (Thornhill College), Damian Romanowski, Ryan Sheerin



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Marcus Swerdlick, Sisters IN Female Leadership Programme (Lumen Christi College)

Sisters IN (St Cecilia's College), Thomas Smith, Strike Martial Arts,

Student Leadership Team (Lumen Christi College), Makar Telchko, Mykata Telchko, Mary-Kate Tierney,

James Tourish, Traditional Band (St Columb's College), Raul Devenny Valdez,

Young Enterprise Team (St Mary's College)

Entertainment and Keynote Speech



Entertainment

Rebecca Mulherne (above)

Cora Harkin (left)

Keynote Speaker

**Amanda Johnston,
Head of Business Development,
Social Enterprise NI**

Highly respected in the social enterprise sector, Amanda has been involved in Community Development/ Social Enterprise for over 15 years working in a range of organisations in both Management and Senior Management. Since Social Enterprise NI was formed in 2012, she has worked tirelessly to secure new members. When she addressed the audience at our awards, her passion and enthusiasm for the social enterprise sector was evident.

Amanda runs regular training courses and facilitation on areas of social enterprise as a business model, and corporate governance. She is also an experienced fundraiser and has helped many organisations development business and strategic plans.

We were delighted when Amanda took time out from her busy schedule to attend our awards and speak to our nominees and their guests. Her personal, motivational and sincere speech, delivered with warmth and humour, was well-received by all! No doubt our local groups and charities signed up a few new young volunteers as a result!



Contribution to the Arts Award

The Education Committee was amazed at the range of artistic talent and accomplishments of this year's nominees in the Contribution to the Arts category. When choosing the finalists, the adjudication panel considered both accomplishment and the extent to which the nominee shares their talent and contribute to the creative development of others. After much deliberation, two runners-up and one winner were agreed.

Runner-up Elle Harrison

Runner-up Elle Harrison is an accomplished ballet student who has danced in Swan Lake, Beauty and the Beast, and White Doves. She is currently pursuing her qualification to teach ballet. Her commitment to ballet requires that she travels to Belfast sometimes four days a week after school.

At the Miss Mary Hill School of Ballet, Elle encourages her fellow pupils. She even taught herself Makaton to work with a Downs Syndrome ballet student who has very little verbal ability and leg movement.

For her achievements in ballet but especially for her work in promoting ballet, encouraging and motivating her peers, and sharing her love of ballet, Elle was chosen as runner-up.





Runner-up Grace McCaul

Multi-talented Grace McCaul is a talented public speaker who has won numerous public speaking competitions, including third place at the NI Annual Youth Award Public Speaking Competition. She is also an outstanding singer and actress and a valued member of the St Mary's College School Choir, where she regularly sings solo at concerts and community events. Recently, she won a place in the Northern Irish Youth Choir.

Grace was nominated for her outstanding talent, for sharing her talents at school and community events, and encouraging younger members of the school choir. For these reasons, Grace McCaul was chosen as a runner-up in the Contribution to the Arts Award category.

Winner Ben Farren

The winner of the Contribution to the Arts Award was Ben Farren who was nominated for his talent in and love for Irish Dancing and Ballet. In 2019 Ben was ranked 5th in the world in Irish dancing. Ben has won first place in a host of competitions and titles nationally and internationally. He was selected to dance with Riverdance in Dublin in 2022.

Ben shares his love of Irish dance within the community, performing at care homes and council events, and encouraging youngsters to work on their skills. He was invited to teach Irish dancing to learners in Boston in 2023.

In 2022 he began studying with the Miss Mary Hill School of Ballet, where he also volunteers on Saturdays, assisting young learners, particularly those with additional needs.

For these many reasons, Ben Farren is the 2024 winner of the Contribution to the Arts Award.



Contribution to the Arts Award Presentation

Winner Ben Farren was in Glasgow for the Irish Dancing World Championships on the night of our awards ceremony. His Aunt Mrs S Wakely kindly stepped in and accepted Ben's award on his behalf. Also in the photo are (left to right) Youth Committee member Cara McGeehan, keynote speaker Amanda Johnston, and Youth Committee member Tony Bradley.



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Business & Entrepreneurship Award

Derry people are known for their shrewd business skills and our generation is no exception. The panel chose three finalists in this category: two successful entrepreneurs and one group of enthusiastic business pupils.



Runner-up Ava Foley

Business & Entrepreneurship Award runner-up Ava Foley was recognised for her baking business 'Ava's Bakes' which grew out of her passion for baking. Although Ava is self-taught, her high standard would make her a worthy competitor on the Bake Off. She designed her label and logo and promotes her business in her Instagram page.

Ava keeps a customer database, tracks her costs, and keeps separate cash totals for costs and another one for profit.

She does all of this while studying full-time - taking GCSE's this year - at Thornhill College. She is a very focused and driven young businesswoman who is committed to her craft and strives to produce the best products for her customers.

St Mary's College YENI Company

The St Mary's College Young Enterprise Company created their company Simply Tote which produced Positive Affirmation Tote Bags. They ordered sustainably sourced tote bags, and heat pressed their logo and bespoke design onto them. The bags were sold at lunchtimes.

At January's Young Enterprise Company Trade Fair, they won 'Best Instagram' and 'Best Social Media'.

Just as impressive as their business skills is how this group of girls, who had not worked together before, bonded and worked as a team to produce a popular product. For these reasons, the St Mary's College Young Enterprise Group was a runner-up for the Business & Entrepreneurship Award.



*Ellie
Project
Manager*



*Lucy
Social Media Director*



*Katie
Social Media*



*Keela
Human
Resources*



*Ella
Designs*



*Marwa
Secretary*



*Eva
Production*



*Alannah
Sales
Manager*



*Jessica
Finance*



*Sophia
Marketing*



*Aoife
Marketing*



Award Winner

Ethan Diamond

Business & Entrepreneurship Award winner Ethan Diamond started his own garden maintenance business in 2022, choosing his neighbouring properties as his target customers. A wise businessman, he reinvested his profits in improved equipment.

In 2023 he launched a Facebook page to promote his business and increase his customer base. He produced flyers and commissioned a custom uniform to enhance its corporate image.

Demand for his services increased to the point where he has now hired two friends to help. And his ambitions do not end here. He is currently completing market research for plans to branch into the golfing sector.

For his commitment to building on success, expanding his business, and refusing to accept anything other than perfection, Ethan is the winner of this year's Business & Entrepreneurship Award.

Business & Entrepreneurship Award Presentations

Front row, keynote speaker Amanda Johnston, winner Ethan Diamond, and YC member Abbie Doherty. Back row, left to right, runners-up St Mary's Young Enterprise Company, YC member John Akionbare, and runner-up Ava Foley.



Carer Award

This category celebrates our young people who give up their time selflessly to care for others. In the next few pages, you will read about three local young people who have gone above and beyond to make space in their lives for others.

Runner-up

Marcus Swerdlick

Without complaint or seeking praise, runner-up Marcus Swerdlick cares for his father who suffers from Motor Neurone Disease. He helps with the daily running of their household and ensures his father is comfortable and supported. He has had to quickly learn to cook, clean and care for himself and his father. Marcus' resilience is even more notable, given that he does all this whilst also coping with the recent unexpected death of his mother.

In school, Marcus's quick wit and humble personality endears him to all. He is always willing to listen to advice and thrives on praise and encouragement.



Runner-up

Mary Kate Tierney

Carer Award runner-up Mary-Kate Tierney cares for her mother who was recently diagnosed with fibromyalgia and her younger brother who, like Mary-Kate, suffers from lymphoedema. Lymphoedema is a condition that creates physical discomfort and daily challenges. Mary-Kate approaches each day with a positive attitude, and advocates for greater understanding and knowledge of her condition.

Mary-Kate is a pillar of strength and support for her family and demonstrates a maturity and resilience beyond her years. Her determination, kindness, and unwavering commitment to her family and peers serve as a shining example to all.



Winner

Conor Roberts Lynch



The Carer Award Winner was Conor Roberts Lynch. In the summer of 2023, Conor's twin brother Adam experienced a severe accident that resulted in a life-altering back injury. During the six weeks Adam spent at Stoke Mandeville Spinal Cord Injury Unit in London, Conor and his 19-year-old sister cared for their 3-year-old sister at home. Despite his worry and anxiety for his brother, Conor remained strong and resilient for the sake of his family.

It was challenging for Conor to continue with daily activities without Adam, as they had always been together. Before Adam's return home, Conor ensured the house was suitable for his brother's needs. Since Adam couldn't immediately return to school, Conor brought home schoolwork and helped him catch up on missed assignments. Conor also organized gatherings with their friends at their house to play Xbox and socialize. Conor prioritises Adam's emotional wellbeing, providing a listening ear for his twin and relaying information to his parents so that they can get the correct help and support for Adam when needed.

Conor is a resilient, caring, empathetic and kind young man who is an inspiration and role model for other young men and adults alike. For these reasons, Conor is the 2024 Winner of the Carer Award.

Carer Award Presentation

Front row, left to right: Keynote Speaker Amanda Johnston, Winner Conor Roberts Lynch and Runner-up Mary Kate Tierney. Back row, left to right: Runner-up Marcus Swerdlick and Youth Committee Members Cian McLaughlin and Ava Doherty



Courage Award

The following remarkable young people have faced challenges that many of us can only imagine -- and they have done so with a level of grit, resilience and optimism that make them role models for us all.

In a departure from previous years, our panel chose only winners this year.

Courage Award Winner Dearbhaile Brady

The first winner was Dearbhaile Brady. Dearbhaile was born seven weeks premature with dwarfism. The adversity and challenges she has overcome would put others to shame.

Dearbhaile has won 9 gold and one silver medal at the Dwarf Sports Association's UK National Games for track and field and swimming. A talented all-rounder, Dearbhaile's passion is swimming – a sport in which she has achieved numerous personal bests and won medals both nationally and internationally.

Despite all her success and talent, Dearbhaile reports that often people stare, make her feel uncomfortable or taunt her. Dearbhaile faces challenges and difficult situations daily which she faces head-on with her trademark smile. She also encourages other students with disabilities to take part in competitions.

For these many reasons Dearbhaile was chosen as a Courage Award winner.





Courage Award Winner Niall O'Doherty

Niall is a sixth-year pupil at Saint Brigid's College and a keen supporter of Derry City.

Niall suffers from Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy, a condition that can be challenging and lonely, particularly for a teenage boy. Over the midterm break he became a full-time wheelchair user. But despite the discomfort, pain and fatigue he experiences, Niall does not complain, and he refuses to let the condition define him. He remains focused on his studies and dreams of becoming a TV/radio presenter.

His nominator said that Niall's courage and determination are unwavering, and his classmates and peers hold him in high regard for his resilience and positive attitude. Niall is always upbeat and enjoys his jokes and banter. He is a big personality who keeps everyone on their toes!

An inspiration to those who know him, Niall was recognised as a Courage Award winner.

Courage Award Joint Winners

Rebecca Ebbs and Zara Reid (not pictured)

Joint Courage Award Winners Rebecca Ebbs and Zara Reid displayed outstanding courage in May 2023 when they rescued two young girls in Buncrana who were in difficulties in the water. Rebecca and Zara were sunbathing when a woman asked if they could swim as she had spotted two girls in difficulty in the water. Without hesitation or consideration for their own safety, Rebecca and Zara entered the choppy water and, upon reaching the swimmers, turned the distressed girls onto their backs, placed their arms under the swimmers' arms and brought both to safety on the shore. The rescue services, who arrived soon after, commented that without the actions of the girls, it would have been a tragedy. Both swimmers were taken to hospital and made a full recovery.

Rebecca and Zara have been reluctant to accept any credit for their act of courage since and this why their school principals nominated them for a Courage Award. Our adjudication panel agreed that Rebecca and Zara were worthy Courage Award recipients.



Courage Award Presentation

*Winners (left to right): Rebecca Ebbs, Niall O'Doherty and Dearbhaile Brady. Winner Zara Reid could not attend.
Back row: Keynote speaker Amanda Johnston and Youh Committee Members Gary McLaughlin and Roinach Barr.*



The Leadership Award

Our city is renowned for the leaders in local government, business, education and politics that it has produced. Derry people are not afraid to speak their mind and work for what they believe in. This year, two outstanding individuals and two remarkable groups were recognised as finalists.

Runner-up: James Tourish

St Columb's College pupil James Tourish was a runner-up in the Leadership Award category for a host of reasons. His impressive accomplishments include Winner of LifeWorks 2023 essay, member of The Net's Young Writer's Team, Head Prefect of St Columb's College, featured in the Irish Times in a piece about Education on the Troubles, and delivering a speech at the John and Pat Hume Foundation 'Making Hope and History Rhyme' event at which US President Bill Clinton was in attendance.

James has a strong belief in doing and saying what is right, even in the face of adversity. He leads by example in all aspects of school life, particularly in terms of spiritual leadership both inside and outside of school.



Runners-up: St Cecilia's College Environmental Group



Runners-up Environmental Group from St Cecilia's College aimed to establish robust recycling habits and reduce textile waste. The group organised their 'Swap with Style' initiative for the All-Ireland Eco-UNESCO Young Environmentalist Awards as a response to the environmental and ethical impact of fast fashion.

'Swap with Style' is a series of swap shops where staff and pupils can exchange items

of high-quality clothing. Their first swap show was so successful that two more swap shops were planned this academic year and it is the group's hope that other schools will follow suit. Swap with Style is through to the Young Environmentalist Awards semifinals in Armagh, and the group hope to reach the finals in Dublin in May.

Leadership Award Winners: Thornhill College Rights Respecting Ambassadors

Formed in September 2023, the Rights Respecting Ambassadors of Thornhill College received a Leadership Award for their passion and commitment to placing the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child at the core of their school's ethos and ensuring that rights are respected, learned, taught, practiced, and promoted by and for all. They received the UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools Bronze Award in December and are now working towards the Silver Award.

Highlights of their work this year include hosting the Northern Ireland Children's Rights Commissioner for a town hall style meeting, leading monthly 'rights focused' assemblies, delivering a month-long celebration of International Women's Rights in March, working on a "21st Century Suffragettes" campaign to get everyone over the age of 16 registered to vote, and working with the Northern Ireland Anti-Bullying Alliance to become Anti-Bullying Ambassadors.



Winner Reuben Connor

Leadership Award Winner Reuben Connor is a year 10 pupil in the Autism Specific Classroom of St Joseph's Boys School. Since Year 8, he has blossomed from a shy and quiet boy to become a confident pupil who is top in his class in most of his mainstream classes. Now a friendly, sociable boy, he is liked by all in the school.

Reuben is a shining example of leadership. He exemplifies hard work, commitment, and good manners. A Prefect of the Autism Specific Class, he is a past winner of the St Joseph's Award for his work ethic. He helps both the younger boys in the Autism Specific Classroom and in his mainstream classes with their work when they are struggling. He is also the first to notice if any boy in the school is upset and tries to help them or let an adult know that they are upset.

On the side, Reuben has a passion for trains and buses, and launched his own YouTube channel 'Bus and Train Spotter NI' which has attracted a few hundred subscribers. His passion for his hobby led to him achieving an NI Road Safety award for his work with Translink.

For these many reasons, Reuben was recognised with a Leadership Award.

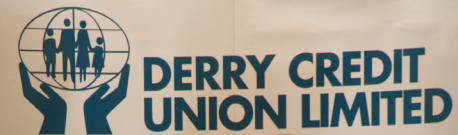




Leadership Award Presentations

(Left) Winners Thornill College's Rights Respecting Ambassadors and Reuben Connor with Youth Committee members Maisy Delaney and Tony Bradley, and keynote speaker Amanda Johnston.

(Right): Runners-up Environmental Group from St Cecilia's College and James Tourish with Derry Credit Union's CEO Joan Gallagher, Youth Committee members Maisy Delaney and Tony Bradley, and keynote speaker Amanda Johnston.



The Contribution to Sport Award

This year's finalists represent a variety of sports: Martial Arts, athletics, football and Gaelic. While their sports differed, they shared the same sense of discipline and dedication that drives them to success. Importantly, they also shared their talents and tips for success with others.

Runner-up Clara Casey

Runner-up Clara Casey started her journey as a sportswoman at age seven. A superb cross-country runner and netballer, she is also a county Gaelic footballer playing for Doire U-14 and U-16 and an Ulster and All-Ireland 800m champion and Ulster cross-country champion. Clara represented Ireland at the Celtic Home Nations Cross Country Championships in 2023 and 2024, where she picked up a team silver medal for Ireland. Her achievements are far too many to list here tonight!

Clara is a sporting icon in Lumen Christi College. Her peers, especially the younger ones, aspire to be like her. She is very modest with all the achievements and is an asset to our city and local community, flying the flag of success in all she achieves.



Runners-Up Strike Martial Arts



The Team at Strike Martial Arts were chosen as runners-up for the Contribution to Sport Award for setting a high standard for kickboxing in Ireland and encouraging other teams. Twelve members joined Team Ireland at the World Championships in Germany in 2023. To raise the money to travel to Germany, they organised bag-packing events, raffles and kickathons. They support other clubs and share their talent and experience across the Northwest. They also support each other and have completed anti-bullying and mental health courses. While they haven't always got the results they wanted in competition, they have never been deflated by a loss. Instead, they take each loss as an opportunity to learn, improve and move on.



Winner Mikey Harkin

Contribution to Sport Award Winner Mikey Harkin was nominated for his football in talent and how he supports his team. Mikey signed for Derry City in January of 2022 and finished as their top goal scorer. In September of 2022 when he was just 15 years old, he was selected to play for Northern Ireland in Poland. He was also selected for the County Derry Super Cup team and was playing in the Northern Ireland Schoolboy Cup when he was targeted by chants from the stands to 'break his leg.' Indeed, this was exactly what happened.

Despite his great disappointment at not being able to participate in the Super Cup that summer, he celebrated the success of his teammates when they went on to beat Man United and Tigers in the final and become champions. This experience made Mikey more determined to compete again and he has since returned and been selected to play for Northern Ireland in the Northern Ireland Under-18 team where he has scored in three out of four matches.

Mikey is also admired for the respect, care and support he gives to others. He goes out of his way to support those less confident in his year. When selecting teams, he often chooses a child who least expects to be picked first. On a daily basis, he helps a child with cerebral palsy to get ready for PE sessions and after school matches. He has also supported a child in the local community who had been bullied and helped them change their mindset and believe in themselves again.



Winner

Shaye Lily Harkin

Shaye Lily Harkin received a Contribution to Sport Award for many reasons. Shaye Lily excels in netball, football, park runs and hockey. Her passion for triathlon, which consists of swimming, cycling and running, highlights her commitment to sport, health and wellbeing.

But although Shaye Lily loves sports and gets a great deal of fulfilment out of it, the greatest winners are the people she shares a team with. Shaye Lily possesses a unique blend of qualities that contribute to her excellence on and off the field. She is self-confident and believes in her ability. Her inner assurance propels her to push boundaries, overcome challenges and strive for victory.

Despite her many achievements, she always remains humble, respects her opponents, appreciates teamwork, and fully understands that no one succeeds alone. She creates a positive environment for others and encourages their personal growth. As such, she is an inspiration to others.

Contribution to Sport Award Presentations

Front row left to right: Youth Committee member Zara Shiels, Mikey Harkin's mum accepting Mikey's award on his behalf, winner Shaye Lily Harkin and Youth Committee Member Lauren McBrearty. Back row: Runners-up Strike Martial Arts and Clara Casey with keynote speaker Amanda Johnston.



The Volunteering Award

The four finalists for the Volunteering Award will make you wonder how they can fit in their voluntary work with their school work! They are shining examples of how generous young people can be with their time and energy and how much our local community is richer because of their work.

Runner-Up

Caitlin McGranaghan

From a young age, runner-up Caitlin McGranahan has shown an interest in helping people. She began volunteering for the On the Streets Community Youth Group three years ago and is now employed by them as an assistant Youth Support worker on a part time basis.

She provides positive experiences and learning opportunities and delivers programmes to youths in areas like mental health and wellbeing coping strategies.

Caitlin is also a volunteer with Crossing Borders EA, a programme that educates and empowers young people to become active global citizens.



Runners-Up

Daimhin Parkhill and Tiernan McElhinney

Daimhin Parkhill (left) and Tieranan McElhinney were joint runners-up who were nominated for their work with the St Joseph's Boys School Rights Respecting School Silver Award steering group.

They coordinated and attended bi-monthly meetings to discuss issues faced by the different year groups, and reported their findings to the steering group.

At present they are taking training on children's rights and will deliver a child friendly assembly on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.



Winner Christian Kelly

Christian Kelly received the Volunteering Award for his work locally and internationally. Locally, he volunteers as a Youth Worker in Leafair, helping to run projects for young people on issues like health, bullying, crime, drugs, and sports. As a Head Prefect at St Columb's College, Christian uses his position to introduce new ideas and promote volunteering.

Christian really shines on the international stage. He volunteered as a marine conservationist in Croatia, where he had to scuba dive in littered sites to extract foreign materials and objects. From this experience, he obtained a certificate of international volunteering.

Christian is enrolled in NASA's Internship Programme, and his goal is to become the first Irish astronaut, inspiring the next generation, especially those in Ireland and other small nations.

His love of service has granted him early admission with a full scholarship to California's acclaimed Stanford University.



Volunteering Award Presentation

Left to right: Youth Committee member John Akionbare, keynote speaker Amanda Johnston, runner-up Tiernan McElhinney and Youth Committee member Ellen Bradley. Not pictured: Winner Christian Kelly and Runners-up Caitlin McGranaghan and Daimhin Parkhill. Christian and Caitlin were in Berlin with Crossing Borders EA.



The DCU Youth Committee Award

Our Youth Committee Award is different from all of our other awards. Rather than being presented to a young person or group of young people, it is presented to an adult or group that has significantly enhanced the lives and wellbeing of our city's young people. The winner of this category is the only one nominated by and chosen by the members of our Youth Committee.

Foyle Parents & Friends Association

This year's winner of the Derry Credit Union Youth Committee Award was the Foyle Parent and Friends Association who support children, young people and adults with learning disabilities alongside their parents and carers. Since 2007, the group has been delivering a successful three-week summer programme at Ardnashee School and College.

Each year, hundreds of children aged 5 to 19 with a wide range and severity of medical conditions and physical and learning disabilities take part.

This scheme relies on 21 volunteers to support the programme. Many of these volunteers are young people who receive training in key areas that enable them to give the proper assistance to the children and teens.

For the tremendous work they do for and with young people, the Derry Credit Union Youth Committee chose the Foyle Parent and Friends Association for its 2024 Derry Credit Union Youth Committee Award.

Below, Amanda Johnston with FPFA's Seanna Lynch and Jacqueline Garnon, and Youth Committee member Sarah Doherty.



Thanks and acknowledgements

We thank the Derry Credit Union Board of Directors who support and endorse our Youth Committee and this awards programme. Without their financial support and approval, we could not acknowledge Derry's outstanding young people. We thank the Derry Credit Union Education Committee whose have the unenviable task of choosing the finalists from scores of nominations - all of which could be winners! We thank Derry Credit Union's Chief Executive Officer Joan Gallagher and the Senior Management Team and staff who assisted in the lead-up to the awards and on the night. In particular, we note the help of Karen Doran, Clare McLaughlin, Sharon Doherty and John Sheerin. We also thank Sinead Bell, Youth Development Officer, Owen McGeehan, Assistant Youth Development Officer, and Mary Crumley, Education and Training Officer, for their help with these awards and for their guidance and assistance throughout the year.

We sincerely thank all of our nominators - the family members, friends, teachers, youth leaders and members of the wider community - who took the time to nominate a worthy young person. And finally, we thank our nominees. Your contribution to your families, schools and community are the reason we deliver this annual celebration of all that is good with our young people! We thank you for the difference you make in the lives of those around you and for giving us a memorable, uplifting night each year!



The 2023-2024 Derry Credit Union Youth Committee

Front row (left to right) Abbie Doherty, Rionach Barr, Ava Doherty, Ellen Bradley, Maisy Delaney

Middle row (left to right) Zara Shiels, Sarah Doherty, Lauren McBrearty;

Back row (left to right) Lauren Doherty, Cian McLaughlin, Gary McLaughlin,
John Akionbare, Ryan Doherty, Tony Bradley, Cara McGeehan;

Not pictured: Sara Lindsay

Did we snap a photo of
you on the night?



