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New project highlighting dedication of the county's many young carers



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EFFORTS ARE underway in County Roscommon to highlight the dedication and commitment of the county's young carers.

Classifying young carers as any young person who helps care for a family member with a disability, the Young Carers project aims to provide a fun and varied programme of events for members throughout the county, one of the first in the country.

According to the 2011 census there are 374 young carers living in County Roscommon. The young carers project was initiated through the combined efforts of the Roscommon Leader Partnership and the Roscommon Carers Association.

"The project was established last year to provide a programme of fun supports to young people in the county, who, because of an ill family member, may not be able to partake in as many of these activities as their peers. Because of their unique family situation these young people sometimes don't get the opportunities and we are constantly thinking of activities for them so that they don't miss out. We've organised several events since August last year, with plenty more lined up and the young people really seem to get a lot out of it," explained Maureen Connelly, Community Support Worker

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with Roscommon Leadership Partnership.

Ms Connelly and Bernie Dowling of Roscommon Carers Association organised an energetic day out earlier this month during which 16 young carers enjoyed the activities in Ballinacorney, Sligo. The young carers enjoyed kayaking and Canadian canoeing at the North West Activity Centre. The Roscommon Leo Club funded this outing.

"We would like to sincerely thank the Leo Club for its fundraising efforts to make this



Young carers enjoying themselves at the North West Activity Centre in Ballinacorney

Pic. Mary Regan.

an extremely enjoyable and memorable day for the young

carers," said Ms Connelly. Devon Cleary, a 15-year-old

young carer from Boyle, agrees heartily and finds the Young Carers Project to be a fun way to meet other people in a similar position as herself.

"It's great to see the enjoyment that these young people get out of taking part in these events."
- Rose McTiernan

"It's great fun and we've been able to do lots of really fun and exciting things. I've really enjoyed the kayaking and the many sports activities that we've been doing since August and look forward to ones coming up later in the year," she said.

For Devon, who is a student at the Abbey Community College in Boyle, being a young carer is not something she sees as anything outstanding in her life. Instead it is part of normal family life. However, she relishes the opportunity to take part in the

opportunities that being part of the project brings.

Volunteer with the Young Carers, Rose McTiernan explained that it was very rewarding to help out on the activities.

"It's great to see the enjoyment that these young people get out of taking part in these events. Whether it's a trip to the cinema or taking part in the FAI sports day organised last year, it allows the young carers have a break and enjoy themselves," she said.

Later this summer the carers will travel to the Bay Sports Activity Centre at the Hodson Bay along with orienteering planned for the Forest Park, facilitated by the North West Activity Centre.

For young people who are interested in getting involved with the Young Carers, Maureen can be contacted on 085 8020901 and Bernie can be contacted on 086 8099494. Young Carers will be assessed as to their suitability and considerations include the work that young carers carry out in the home in helping to look after their family members with needs.



Aaron Curley, Roscommon Lions Club; Bernie Dowling, Roscommon Carers Association; Maureen Connelly, Roscommon Leader Partnership and Shane O'Brien, Roscommon Lions Club pictured at a young carers day out at the Activity Centre in Ballinacorney. Pic. Mary Regan.