

## F.O.D.D.D. - local people providing support and services to the Greater Shankill area

By Sharon Bailey

**Families of the Displaced, Dispersed & Distressed** emerged from a traumatic situation created as a result of the Northern Ireland conflict. Due to the pressures created through conflict, the community in the Shankill area experienced internal civil strife leading to a loss of property and life in 2000.

In response to this emergency situation a group of local people came together to create a support group called Families of Displaced, Dispersed & Distressed. (F.O.D.D.D.). The group initially responded to the crisis with immediate and practical support to those who had lost houses and belongings and acted as an advocate and support group through accessing accommodation, furniture and counselling.

Over the years the group has evolved and invested time in developing capacity within the community through family support work and advice, access to counselling and therapeutic work. In addition to this, F.O.D.D.D. has helped the local community to access training courses in ceramics, essentials skills, life-coaching, digital photography, men's health, community development and personal development.



F.O.D.D.D. win 2nd prize at the Shankill Festival, June 17. Pictured are Beryl Stewart (left) and Laura Bell. Photo: Sharon Bailey

F.O.D.D.D. addresses issues such as depression, isolation, low self-esteem and addiction to prescribed medication through therapeutic work and group support. This voluntary organisation has therefore evolved from a single issue group to a broad based health and community development group that provides a range of services to marginalised people from the Shankill area.

The strength of F.O.D.D.D. comes from the fact that it is composed of local people and therefore is firmly embedded in the local community. The voluntary management committee, project worker and volunteers are local people working on a daily basis with local people in need.

To provide the best possible service to the Shankill area F.O.D.D.D. has engaged in internal strategic development to

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# Short Strand/Woodstock Road residents participate in **the Fellowship of Messines Project**

By Gary Mc Clean



A memorial to WWI deaths of men from Ireland, north and south, at the Somme.

**On the 5th of June 2006, a number of people from the nationalist Short Strand and the unionist Woodstock Road areas of east Belfast set out on a journey that, in the words of one of them, 'would not have been possible ten years ago.'**

Geographically, these people have lived in neighbouring areas, but socially, have lived a lifetime apart. This initiative was part of the Fellowship of Messines programme in Belgium.

The Fellowship of Messines was created to establish networks among conflicting communities and to promote discussion and debate amongst programme

participants. It involves exposing people, from culturally diverse backgrounds, to the battlefields and cemeteries of France and Flanders. In doing so, it highlights the sacrifice of Irish men, north and south. It has been estimated that 50,000 men from the island of Ireland died in all the theatres of war between 1914 and 1918.

*Interface* spoke with Frankie Brennan from the Short Strand Community Forum and John McQuillan from The Crown Project, which operates from the Woodstock Road, to find out how they had benefited from the programme.

In John McQuillan's view, 'If you were to have asked those men who went to fight, they would probably have said that they went to fight for different things. They did however fight side by side and died side by side in a common cause.'

Messines was chosen as an inspiration for conflict transformation because in June 1917, in the Battle of Messine Ridge, both Irish nationalists and Ulster unionists from the 16th Irish Division and the 36th Ulster Division, fought and died together. A very personal perspective for John was that 'it really does bring home to you in the most moving way, the inequalities and the inhumanities that were involved in the conflict.'

John talked about the two communities in N. Ireland having suffered from 'social distancing... We have been kept apart by sectarianism and I think that social distancing tends to caricature the other side, dehumanise the other side and it reinforces sectarianism. However, social interaction, conversely, humanises people and hopefully develops trust. One of the most positive aspects of the programme was that the social interaction between unionists and nationalists by far exceeded my expectations.'

Frankie Brennan explained why he'd decided to take part, 'People are now starting to look at the other person's point of view, their politics and their ideologies, and are trying to empathise with these differences so we can work towards a more tolerant society and a better way of life. When the opportunity of this trip arose people from our group were a little sceptical about it. Some believed it would be a chauvinistic display of British jingoism. However, having given it some further thought, we decided to find out for ourselves.'

For Frankie, the trip has been a great personal experience which he is glad to have had. It allowed him to look at conflict from a different perspective. 'I have looked at conflict from the human side of it, and I have seen and discovered things that I had never thought about before. It was just simply black and white for me. Imperialists were carving up the world to satisfy personal greed. Because of our own conflict we sometimes became so passionate that we failed to see how other people were affected and how alienated we were. From an educational point of view I learned a lot about the Conflict in Europe that I had not known before. This was due mainly to the excellent facilitation provided. At no time during our trip was any political agenda pursued, it was based purely on individual stories and individual experiences of young men from both communities who went to fight in a terrible conflict. What was emphasised was the sheer futility of war, the scale of death and destruction and its impact on future generations.'

John reiterated the point that the two main cultural traditions were represented in this initiative, but in no way was there any attempt made to persuade anyone to be anything other than what they are. 'I would say that Frankie Brennan is no less an Irish republican because he went to the battle fields of the Somme. I'm no less of a unionist because I went there with an Irish republican. I think what

we need to do is to have a better understanding of one another's ideologies and cultures. I think this is more likely to happen as a result of participation in this programme.'

Both Frankie and John agreed that this was an excellent programme and one that they would be keen to develop further for others, especially young people. 'We would highly recommend that anyone involved in conflict resolution take advantage of this programme.'

*“One of the most positive aspects of the programme was that the social interaction between unionists and nationalists by far exceeded my expectations.”*

They praised the organisers and facilitators for delivering a really good experience for all those who participated in the programme. 'The facilitators, Craig Barr and Fergal O'Boyle made the programme not only educational, but entertaining as well. The craic was fantastic and from day one the whole group gelled really well. People struck up friendships which hopefully will last for a long time.'

This particular programme was organised by the International School for Peace Studies and funded by the Parades Commission.

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*In 2006 F.O.D.D.D. has evolved into a health and community group that has a long-term vision surrounding the provision of befriending services, access to second chance learning, personal development/ educational courses, therapeutic work and social support.*

progress from an issue-based group that responded to short-term situations of need. In 2006 F.O.D.D.D. has evolved into a health and community group that has a long-term vision surrounding the provision of befriending services, access to second chance learning, personal development/ educational courses, therapeutic work and social support.

F.O.D.D.D. has developed an action plan in which aims and objectives are broken down relating to health, community development, education, counselling provision, welfare advocacy, housing and suicide prevention.

A key element of the strategy for 2006-2007 is for F.O.D.D.D. to engage with statutory agencies such as the North & West Health Trust, Housing Executive and PSNI. Links have already been established and joint project work relating to home safety, health awareness, suicide prevention and addictions work is planned.

The people who use the services of F.O.D.D.D. include individuals who experience poverty, depression, addiction, low self-esteem, social isolation due to disability and low educational achievement. F.O.D.D.D. therefore supports people with health needs along with victims of the conflict in Northern Ireland.

It is important to reflect that the Shankill Ward is a deprived area. Statistics from the Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency note that:

The Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2005 (NIMDM) published in May 2005, notes that Shankill has a rank of 1 out of 582 wards in Northern Ireland. A rank of 1 makes the Shankill the most deprived ward in the whole of Northern Ireland. It is also ranked 1 in the health, disability and education domains. The area has also been affected by the conflict in Northern Ireland with high rates of crime, paramilitary related activity, interface conflict and drug addictions, especially among youth.

This is the community environment in which F.O.D.D.D. provides services to the local community.

We are open from 9.00 am to 5.00 pm. We also open at night for courses and project work. We work with men and women of various ages and needs.

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# £3.3 million Community Re-Imaging Programme launched

*The Re-Imaging Communities Programme will support a wide range of community-led projects, offering grants of up to £5,000 for small projects and up to £50,000 for larger-scale projects. There will be community development workers on hand to help develop capacity in those areas which find it hard to access this type of funding.*



Re-Imaging Communities - Minister for Social Development, David Hanson, MP (right) and Minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure, Maria Eagle, MP (left) launch £3.3m Re-Imaging Communities fund with Rosemary Kelly, Chairman of the Arts Council of Northern Ireland. Photo: Arts Council NI

**By Joan Dempster**

**Communities across Northern Ireland are set to benefit from a £3.3 million investment aimed at tackling the visible signs of sectarianism and racism in our communities. The Re-Imaging Communities Programme plans to deliver 60 – 80 community-based projects to areas identified by community groups for positive intervention. The aim is to replace displays of sectarian/racial aggression with broader expressions of civic and cultural identity through the principles of good community relations.**

The new three-year funding programme was launched in July by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, part of a consortium supporting the new Re-Imaging Communities Programme that includes the Department for Social Development, the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, the Community Relations Council, the Housing Executive, and the International Fund for Ireland.

The Re-Imaging Communities Programme is in part a response to the Government's 'Shared Future' policy. This policy places particular emphasis on addressing the problems in disadvantaged Protestant communities. Consequently, £1 million of the Re-Imaging Communities Programme fund will be tracked over the first two years

to ensure that it is benefiting Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist areas of Northern Ireland. However, the majority of funding available is open to all communities.

The Consortium will take into account the geographical spread of opportunity across Northern Ireland as well as a balance between urban and rural, and Catholic and Protestant areas.

At the July launch, Arts Council Chairman, Rosemary Kelly paid tribute to the partners in the initiative and added, "The Arts Council is delighted to be taking the lead role in delivering this important programme which places creative regeneration at the heart of work in local community neighbourhoods. The Re-Imaging Communities Programme will help all communities in both urban and rural areas of Northern Ireland to focus on broader expressions of civic and cultural identity and to create a more inclusive and welcoming environment for everyone."

The Re-Imaging Communities Programme will support a wide range of community-led projects, offering grants of up to £5,000 for small projects and up to £50,000 for larger-scale projects. There will be community development workers on hand to help develop capacity in those areas which find it hard to access this type of funding.

Any local community group with an idea that fits with their local council's Good Relations Strategy can apply for funding. Projects that have the support of another public authority will also be considered.

Anyone interested in finding out more about the Re-Imaging Communities Programme can contact the Arts Council on (028) 9038 5200.

Joan Dempster is the Re-Imaging Communities Programme Project Manager.

## The Community Off-Sales Initiative (C.O.S.I.)

**By Gary Mc Clean**

Many of the problems in our society, and in interface areas in particular, can be attributed to alcohol. To be specific, these problems can include criminal damage/vandalism, suicide, wounding and assaults. Some general statistics which support this show that 88% of cases of criminal damage/vandalism, 60% of attempted suicides and 45% of wounding and assaults are alcohol-related.

*Interface* recently attended the re-launch of C.O.S.I., a very successful initiative aimed at combating some of these problems, with a particular focus on young people.

Following this launch, I spoke to Seán Devine from the Falls Community Council, who is very closely involved in this project. Seán was able to give some background to the origins of the initiative and a brief description of how the initiative operates. 'Alcohol misuse and under age drinking are issues which are common to most areas, but to north and west Belfast in particular. In an attempt to address these problems, community representatives and off-sales owners/workers have agreed to strengthen their resolve to make it more difficult for alcohol to end up in the hands of minors and to work together towards this aim. The Community Off-Sales Initiative (C.O.S.I.) was originally launched in west Belfast in 2001 by the Falls Community Council Community Drug Programme and the off-sales outlets in the area, as a joint response to under age drinking. The reason for the re-launch is that we have expanded the initiative to include north Belfast as well, where we have teamed up with the Forum for Action on Substance Abuse (FASA), based on the Shankill Road.'

The initiative was endorsed by community and elected representatives as a step to address the problems arising through



Darren Whiteside from FASA (left) and Benny Lynch from Falls Community Council at the re-launch of C.O.S.I. in August this year. Photo: Pablo Molina

under age drinking in the area. Seán pointed to the fact that there was 'cross- community/party support for this initiative from Fred Cobain of the Ulster Unionist Party, Nigel Dodds of the Democratic Unionist Party and Gerry Adams of Sinn Fein. Unfortunately, neither of the unionist representatives was available to attend the re-launch due to other commitments on the day.'

Seán pointed out that 'In west Belfast alone there are around 45 off-sales outlets for a population of approximately 100,000 people. We hope that it will be possible to bring all of these off-sales outlets onboard through this initiative, as it will take a united effort to combat the alcohol problems that we are dealing with.'

C.O.S.I. recommends that any person under the age of 21 must have a photographic ID that clearly states the person's date of birth, so the following forms of ID were agreed on:

**Provisional or full valid Driving Licence**

**Passport**

**Voting ID Card**

'If we are to be successful in reducing alcohol availability to minors, then C.O.S.I. is just one piece in the jigsaw. Other pieces need to be put in place that range from education initiatives to parental responsibility. We need to provide positive outlets for children and young people to flourish in a safe and healthy environment.'

For further information on the Community Off-Sales Initiative contact Benny Lynch or Seán Devine at Falls Community Council Community Drug Programme on (028) 9020 2030 or Darren Whiteside at the Forum for Action on Substance Abuse on (028) 9080 3040.

# Ligoniel Improvement Association sees progress, changes and challenges

By Gary Mc Clean



Staff of Ligoniel Improvement Association. From left, Tony Morgan, Managing Director, Una Calvert, CEP Co-ordinator, and Maria Morgan, Business Development Manager. Photo: Johnny Collins

Interface recently met with Una Calvert from the Ligoniel Improvement Association in north Belfast. Ligoniel Improvement Association (LIA) has been in existence now for 30 years and has expanded rapidly over the last six to seven years.

Una began with an overview of the organisation and its work. 'LIA takes a holistic approach to the area and its needs. We have a broad range of projects ongoing here.... educational services, regeneration projects, social enterprise, health, youth, environmental and independent advice. In addition, working closely with other groups in Ligoniel, we now have a strong Community Empowerment Partnership Committee (CEP).'

The Ligoniel area is going through a process of regeneration and is growing in size. This growth has the potential to increase the work that is required from both LIA and statutory bodies.

'Through the CEP we are implementing programmes that will support residents in the area to identify and tackle issues which are having a negative impact within the area. This is a long-term process; however, we are confident that the residents with support will take ownership of their area in order to address ongoing issues.'

As Ligoniel shares an interface with Ballysillan, good relations is an important element in the regeneration of Ligoniel. Since 1999 LIA and Ballysillan Community Forum have implemented a number of shared Peace I and Peace II projects. Unfortunately, since the reduction of money in Peace II extension funding, both organisations have failed to secure further funding for these projects.

Nevertheless LIA have endeavoured to maintain contact with Ballysillan Community Forum in order to ensure that cross community contact is ongoing and identify initiatives that will enable both communities to work together.

Summing up, Una stressed the point that Ligoniel Improvement Association is constantly looking at ways to help residents to improve their quality of life by working together at every level encompassing issues as widespread as education to inward investment. 'While Ligoniel has many resources in terms of volunteers and dedicated staff, we like other areas are starting to feel the effects of a pressurised limited funding situation which has resulted, for example, in the loss of key staff working on cross community issues and other essential services.'

'LIA firmly believe that remaining true to our community ethos, through our original aims and objectives and our continued investment in the development and promotion of partnerships across social and cultural divides, is, in the long term, the only sustainable and potentially successful way forward.'

For further information contact Una Calvert at Ligoniel Improvement Association on (028) 9039 1225 or email at [una@wolfhill.org.uk](mailto:una@wolfhill.org.uk)

# Finaghy Crossroads Group

By Harry Smith

In many ways Finaghy Crossroads Group is setting the standard for inter-community relations in Belfast and beyond. Loyalist/unionist and republican/nationalist have come together to form a single group.

The overarching aim of Finaghy Crossroads Group (FCG) is promoting the safety of everyone who lives, works or socialises in the area. All members of FCG are committed to tackling the underlying causes of tension in Finaghy including sectarianism from whatever source.

There is a growing recognition across society that new opportunities exist to build and explore effective inter- and intra-community relationships. Loyalists and republicans have helped to create a political dynamic that simply did not exist previously.

The establishment of Finaghy Crossroads Group is the result of intra-community confidence building work over some time. The group embraces representation from within both loyalist/unionist and republican/nationalist south and west Belfast including the following:

- Finaghy Community Centre Committee
- Protestant Interface Network
- Benmore Community Development Association
- Finaghy Community Development Association
- Falls Community Council
- Safer Neighbourhoods Project

The group meets regularly and has put in place a number of initiatives which have greatly reduced local violence and tensions and stabilised the area for the benefit of both main communities.

Much work remains to be done!!

## Our Vision

A Finaghy where all people feel safe, happy and proud to live, work or socialise together. An area of unlimited potential for all, with the crossroads as a thriving vocal point.

## Our Mission

To be a catalyst for the promotion, development and support of good relations through the advancement of equality, respect for diversity and opportunity for all. Peace-building is an overarching theme covering all of the work of the group.



Members of the Finaghy Crossroads Group with President Mary McAleese at their official launch this June. Photo: FCG

## Our Aims

- To develop, support and promote community initiatives that contribute towards making Finaghy a safer place for everyone.
- To develop, support and promote reconciliation through initiatives that: Positively address the legacies of the past, Facilitate better understandings of one another, Enhance relationship and partnership building processes,
- To operate in an accountable and transparent manner.

For more information on the Finaghy Crossroads Group, contact Harry Smith or Stiofán Long. c/o Finaghy Community Centre 1-6 Geeragh Place Belfast, BT10 0ER Tel: (028) 9062 0474

## interface profile



### Christina Black – Roden Street Community Development Group

**Post:** Centre Manager with Roden Street Community Development Group for three years. I am responsible for managing the staff, facilities, and unfortunately, probably 90% of my time is spent fundraising.

**Your Community:** Our immediate catchment area is the predominantly catholic Grosvenor/Roden Street estate, situated adjacent to the Roden Street interface and consisting of about 450 dwellings. We have a strong commitment to the ethnic minority communities as well, offering them

the opportunity to be more involved in the wider community. This is a good area which has had its difficulties but it has remained largely unchanged and there is a great feeling of community cohesion. Our board of directors are all local and have all been in the community sector for upwards of twenty years. We support a lot of people from beyond the local community, for example, wider-based sports groups and other smaller community based groups who want to use the facilities here.

**Your Typical Day:** My typical day would begin with tea and buns!!! No, it depends on the time of year. I always go around the different projects that we have running to make sure that there are no problems and make sure the staff are ok. I check the building for any problems which may need attention. The next step would involve funding-related issues - either reports, updating current funders or compiling new funding applications. I have also tried to maintain a hands-on role with Roden Street through volunteering at night in the youth club.

**Low Points:** For me, in my earlier days, I would have taken it personally sometimes when a funding application was turned down.

There was a time when Belfast City Council carried out renovations on their facilities, we had to close down the centre for six months and relocate. We still managed to continue with our projects, operating out of two different centres, but it was just mad!!

We have experienced spats of anti-social activity, which is a shame because as usual, it's a minority who are carrying this out.

The Westlink improvement scheme has brought about a number of issues, for example, re-highlighting the interface issue which has been quiet for years and the regeneration of anti-social activity in general.

**High Points:** There are so many high points that I couldn't possibly mention all of them but one particular high point for us was winning the play-park. For the first time in years I felt a warming in my heart because

of the number of people in west Belfast who voted for us to win this park.

**Examples of good practice:** The Roden Street Community Development Group has remained loyal to its core aim of improving the Falls Ward economically, culturally, environmentally and socially.

We have maintained our childcare services and have recently built a new play park for the kids.

We have been very welcoming to groups and individuals from ethnic minority communities, with a large number of Philippine and Polish groups using our facilities. In addition to this, we currently run a 'Youth Parliament' which works to empower young people and involves them in the issues that affect them and their community.

**Hobbies:** Walking, socialising and working out.



A Lisburn vigil against racist attacks in June this year. Photo: ARN

## Racism – Not the New Sectarianism

By Sara Boyce

*ARN's primary purpose is to tackle racism in all its guises. It was established in late 2003 to provide local communities across the north with a mechanism by which to express their opposition to and to challenge racism at all levels in society.*

One of the more invidious taglines associated with the north of Ireland, and Belfast in particular, is that of it being a 'bitter sectarian place'. In recent times a new moniker for Belfast has found currency, that of the 'Most Racist City in the World', a description first given an airing by the German periodical Der Spiegel in February 2005.

There was an assumption in certain quarters of society that with the signing of the Good Friday (Belfast) Agreement and the progression of the peace process, sectarianism would evaporate into the low slung clouds over Cave Hill. Indeed the view that racism had in fact neatly replaced sectarianism as the new ideology of hatred was being increasingly advanced by some sections of the media. Yet the reality of both the contemporary and historical situation in Belfast does not bear this out. Racism as well as – not instead of – sectarianism has always been an unwelcome feature of life in Belfast and beyond.<sup>1</sup>

You need look no further than the 14 August 2006 edition of the Irish News for an up-to-date stark reminder, if one were needed, of this fact. The paper contained two articles, set side by side, concerning attacks on individuals in their homes – one a sectarian attack, the other racist in motivation. The first article entitled 'Racist "yahoos" target foreign workers homes,' a story about a racist attack on South African

and Polish workers in Bushmills, as well reporting on a separate racist attack on a Polish family in East Belfast; the second article, 'Loyalists blamed for petrol bomb attack,' dealt with a sectarian attack on a Catholic family in Ballymena, whose house was petrol bombed while they slept.

*ARN has made serious efforts to promote the development of practical responses to racism that are embedded in the local community,*

The figures on racist and sectarian crimes collated by the PSNI, whilst generally acknowledged as seriously incomplete, also undermine this simplistic 'replacement' theory. In 2005/06 there were 1,701 sectarian incidents reported to the PSNI and 936 racial incidents. Such figures in no way attest to the dying kick of sectarianism. What they do indicate however, particularly when one compares the year on year increases in reported racial incidents, is an alarming rise in racist harassment and violence, alongside sectarian attacks. In itself this should come as no surprise – both ideologies are closely linked and both are equally devastating to their victims in their consequences.

From its inception the Anti Racism Network (ARN), while established to tackle the growing racism, has recognised the overlapping dimensions of both ideologies. However ARN's primary purpose is to tackle racism in all its guises. It was established in late 2003 to provide local communities across the north with a mechanism by which to express their opposition to and to challenge racism at all levels in society. It emerged out of discussions among minority ethnic organisations, human rights activists, trade unionists, students, civil rights lawyers, progressive academics and others. The catalyst was a concern that despite the sterling work being done by a wide range of minority ethnic organisations, there was no mechanism for people in the majority ethnic community, in solidarity with people from minority ethnic communities, to collectively and publicly challenge the growing racism across the north.

The ARN, which is non-funded, addresses both institutionalised and individualised racism, whether the perpetrators be state institutions and agencies, political representatives, churches, businesses, the media, community organisations or simply individuals. Among the activities the ARN has been involved to date in the greater Belfast area are the following:

*Stop the Attacks Rally* at City Hall in January 2004, timed to coincide with International Holocaust Day. Following on from a particularly intense period of racist attacks, this rally drew people in their thousands.

*No Excuses* march and rally in Belfast City Centre in October 2004 – again people turned out in huge numbers to underline the message that racist attacks cannot be excused or explained away.

Protests and pickets against a range of state institutions for promotion of racist policies and practices, including the Housing Executive and the Immigration Service.

Participation in *Make Poverty History* mass rally in Edinburgh in July 2005.

Vigils in response to racist attacks on

individuals and families including on the Falls Road, North Belfast, the Donegall Road and Lisburn. The *STAR Stand Together Against Racism* in Shaftsbury Square in October 2004 brought together a diverse range of organisations and individuals from South Belfast to protest against racist attacks in the Donegall Road/Village area.

Numerous music gigs in association with the *Love Music Hate Racism* initiative.

Challenging racist commentary by both political representatives and media outlets.

One of the organising principles of the ARN has been that responses to racism need to be contextualised. Given the demographic and political canvass of Belfast the ARN has made serious efforts to promote the development of practical responses to racism that are embedded in the local community, be that community nationalist/republican or unionist/loyalist. ARN believes that responses must be grassroots-based and organic in their development. As such we have promoted the development of branches of the ARN in different parts of the city. While we recognise that progress will be slow in some areas we have been greatly encouraged by the involvement of local community activists and leaders in the campaign to date. We look forward to increasing numbers of people from all communities, – majority ethnic and minority ethnic, unionist/loyalist and nationalist/republican – getting involved in getting the message out loud and clear: 'Racism – Not in Our Name'.

Sara Boyce is a spokesperson for the Anti Racism Network.

To get in contact with the ARN, email [antiracism\\_ni@hotmail.com](mailto:antiracism_ni@hotmail.com) or [www.anti-racism.uk](http://www.anti-racism.uk)

<sup>1</sup>For a fascinating, well researched historical account of racism in Ireland see Rolston B and Shannon M Encounters: How Racism Came to Ireland, 2002, Beyond the Pale Publications.



Tensions rise in a scene from the award-winning 'The Wedding Community Play' which stole the show at the 1999 Belfast Festival at Queen's. The play was staged in actual houses on either side of the peace line, with audience members bussed between the venues. Photo: CAF

Community arts can play a major role in interface areas - helping communities to see beyond stereotypes and providing a means for individuals to meet and explore their experiences in a safe, constructive and creative way.

## Draw on your communities' creativity with the Community Arts Forum

By Chris Ball

Do you want to help your community express itself?

Do you want the chance to produce an original work of art while learning more about the communities you and other people live in? If so, you need to get in contact with the Community Arts Forum (CAF).

Community Arts Forum (CAF) is the umbrella body for community arts in Northern Ireland. We provide support, advice and information to help individuals make the most of their artistic potential and help communities find creative ways to tackle some of the major issues they face.

Community arts have helped communities explore and celebrate their identity, challenge misconceptions and tackle social issues such as drug abuse, suicide, joy riding, homelessness, environmental awareness and racism to name but a few. Community arts can play a major role in interface areas - helping communities to see beyond stereotypes and providing a means for individuals to meet and explore their experiences in a safe, constructive and creative way. Community arts projects also give participants the chance to learn

new skills, meet new people and (most importantly) have fun!

CAF has just launched three new programmes which will give communities throughout Northern Ireland the chance to get involved in community arts.

CAF's new **Start with Art** programme offers groups in the Belfast City Council area the opportunity to participate in a ten week series of workshops. Over the course of the project the group will produce its own individual piece of art exploring what their community means to them, as well as some of the issues affecting their lives.

Nine community groups throughout Northern Ireland are preparing to take part in the first phase of CAF's **ARTiculate** programme, which uses the arts to explore issues surrounding peace and reconciliation. The projects will consist of practical community arts workshops, supported by a series of seminars looking at how the arts and culture can have a positive role in dealing with the legacy of the Northern Ireland conflict.

Running alongside **ARTiculate** will be **A Woman's Part**. This seven day course in

creative writing and drama will examine the active role women played during the Northern Ireland conflict and explore how their experiences can be applied in a post-conflict society. Art work will be produced from this course which will reflect participants' lives, leaving a positive legacy of the programme within the community.

November 2006 will see CAF team up with Banlieues d'Europe and Les Rencontres (two European Union Networks), the Beat Initiative, and Belfast City Council, to stage its **Cultures in Conflict** conference. Bringing together renowned community arts practitioners from across Europe (many of whom, we are proud to say, hail from Northern Ireland) the conference will explore how arts and culture can have a positive impact for communities experiencing political turmoil and conflict.

If you want to find out more about any of these programmes, CAF or community arts in general, get in touch. Also feel free to contact us if you want to find out more about how you or your community can get involved in the arts or if you need advice on delivering a project of your own. CAF can provide you with information on securing funding, finding a venue, hiring an artist, setting up an arts organisation or making a career out of the arts.

*It's amazing what communities can achieve when they look at things creatively.*

For more information on the Community Arts Forum contact CAF at 15 Church Street (opposite St Anne's Cathedral) Belfast, BT1 1PG Tel: (028) 9024 2910 Email: mharkins@caf.ie www.caf.ie

## BIP 3rd Annual Conference to examine 'A Shared Future'

Wednesday November 8th 2006

Last year's conference included speakers from statutory agencies and from political parties. Each addressed the role of their agency/party in promoting the social and economic regeneration of Belfast's interface communities. Attendance was excellent and participants took part in small group and plenary discussions. Feedback on the conference has been very positive. The full conference report is available on our website.

The 2006 conference will be on the theme of the effectiveness of the government's 'A Shared Future' Implementation Plan in promoting the regeneration of Belfast's

interface communities. Organised in collaboration with the Community Relations Council, the conference will provide a stimulating and useful opportunity for peer support and networking as well as discussion of issues of key importance to our membership and key stakeholders.

Further details including venue will be sent out shortly. Meanwhile, if you wish to attend the conference please email us at [info@belfastinterfaceproject.org](mailto:info@belfastinterfaceproject.org) or phone (028) 9024 2828 to register.

## Ulster Peoples College Training and Education Programmes 2006/07

By Paul Donnelly

The Ulster Peoples College was established in 1982 and has worked with politically and economically marginalised communities throughout Northern Ireland, providing training and education to assist groups to develop their skills and capacity.

The College has a full curriculum of programmes ready for 2006/07 and is actively seeking to continue and develop its work with groups working in interface communities across Belfast.

Funding is available to deliver programmes that include:

- Year long, part-time certificates in Community Relations and Community Development
- Facilitation Skills
- Women in Leadership
- Community Leadership and a range of others.

The College encourages interface groups to take advantage of the opportunity to participate in accredited learning and training. This training can

assist communities to strengthen their internal structures and activities whilst supporting better relationships between communities who may have experienced conflict before.

In 2004, BIP's survey of membership needs led to the creation of BIP's Conflict Transformation Support Project (CTSP). Since then, Paul Donnelly of UPC and BIP's CTSP Development Worker Erik Cownie have been working together to open further training and learning opportunities to the BIP membership.

Commenting on this collaboration between BIP and UPC, Erik Cownie encouraged BIP members to take up the high quality community training packages on offer. BIP plans to make available full curricular details of upcoming courses from UPC and others in the near future.

For further information and a copy of the UPC prospectus please contact Tracey Loughens on (028) 9033 0131 or email [tloughens@upclearn.org](mailto:tloughens@upclearn.org) [www.ulsterpeoplescollege.org.uk](http://www.ulsterpeoplescollege.org.uk)

## Promoting social and economic regeneration in Belfast's interface areas

### IS THERE A PARTICULAR ISSUE THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE HIGHLIGHTED IN *INTERFACE*?

Send us an article about an issue that you feel needs to be highlighted, or about the work you're doing. Alternatively, BIP can write an article in consultation with you. Or maybe you have some photos of a project you're working on that you'd like published. While *Interface* particularly welcomes input from within our membership, we are happy to consider articles and submissions from others involved in good practice in addressing interface community issues – community workers, women's groups, youth, elderly, ethnic groups, statutory bodies, local businesses and everyone else!

Contact Gary McClean at [gary@belfastinterfaceproject.org](mailto:gary@belfastinterfaceproject.org) or 9024 3579/9024 2828.

### INTERESTED IN JOINING?

Belfast Interface Project has three categories of membership:

- Community group
- Associate
- Individual

If you support our mission statement, meet our criteria (see our website for details) and wish to join BIP, please get in touch. We will send you an information pack or our Development Worker, Gary McClean, can come out to meet with you.

### COMMENTS SECTION ON *INTERFACE*

As part of our ongoing evaluation of *Interface*, we invite readers to submit comments on each issue. Comments can be about the previous issue in full or about the particular merits or weaknesses of specific articles. We may publish comments, with author's permission, and internally record them for our monitoring and evaluation purposes. Comments must be attributable to a named individual or organisation with accompanying contact details. We reserve the right to edit comments received.

### NEW! TEXT FEEDBACK!

Tell us what you think about *Interface* or any aspect of BIP's work covered in this issue. Text 'BIP' followed by your comments to 07742 039 127.

### WEBSITE UPDATE!

Membership contact details have been added to the website, with members' permission. While we do make every effort to ensure these are correct, please let us know if your contact details change or if the ones we've entered are incorrect.

We are currently working to produce an online map of NIO-identified interfaces, with accompanying photography by Frankie Quinn and locations/descriptions supplied by the Institute for Conflict Research.

We expect this to go live shortly, and welcome any feedback. This has been a huge piece of work, and one that we have had much demand for.



### STAFF CHANGES AT BIP

In May we welcomed Samantha Askin to the team. Sam's role is part-time Support Worker.



Sam Askin

*Interface* is the news-sheet of Belfast Interface Project and reflects the views and diversity of our membership groups. *Interface* seeks to promote good practice around interface community issues and increased communication between groups across the city. The editor reserves the right to amend articles where appropriate with the consent of the author. The views expressed in *Interface* do not necessarily represent those of the management committee.



# Belfast Interface Project

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Community Relations Council

