CASE STUDY OF CHANGE-ORIENTED ADULT LEARNING

Learners as Leaders: Developing Democracy through Change-Oriented Community Education in Ireland

Monday 1st March 2021
2017 - RWN Charity Shop Volunteers were having conversations about the amount of textile waste in the shop
Feb 2018 volunteers visited the Rediscovery Centre in Dublin to see how they were upcycling and get inspiration.

RWN Charity shop volunteers purchased a second hand industrial scales to quantify the volume of waste to support their case.
Strategy statement
Roscommon Women’s Network

RWN Four Strategic Priorities

2019 -2024

1. Sustain our Networks and Alliances
2. Protect Our Environment
3. Enable Women to generate an Income
4. Encourage Mutual Support and Self Reliance
4. Community Education & Collaboration

Some of the women on the course never even threaded a needle before but wanted to make a difference.

March 2019.

Community Environment Action Fund (Local Agenda 21) 2019 Application Form plus GRETB Tutor hours
Repurposed Curtains and Denim Jeans

5. Focusing & Responding
6. Personal Transformation – Social and environmental change
7. Rethinking & Reorganising

CYCLE Up textiles

CYCLE Up is an Environmental Social Enterprise led by RWN where we upcycle unsold textiles from the RWN Charity Shop into unique products, lovingly designed and handcrafted by our team of Upcyclers.
8. Reflective – Act of doing led to deeper conversations

The impact of textile waste

- Takes 2,700 Liters of Water to Make One Cotton Shirt
- Enough Water for One Person to Drink for 2.5 Years

- Making a pair of jeans produces as much greenhouse gases as driving a car more than 80 miles.
- Discarded clothing made of non-biodegradable fabrics can sit in landfills for up to 200 years.

This project is supported by

- GRETB
- ROSMON
- Patagonia

The Textile Upcycling Project is supported by the Creative Ireland Programme, an all-of-Government five-year initiative, from 2017 to 2022, which places creativity at the centre of public policy. Further information from creative.ireland.ie and ireland.ie

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9. Empowering through small scale collective actions

Farmers Market Stall in Boyle and Roscommon Town
Further Beginners courses started in September 2019 Advanced courses started in February 2020
Products for sale in two local outlets

Then Covid-19
Courses and Markets stopped in mid march
Women took home sewing machines and started researching, designing and practicing making
Facemasks in April 2020
Using WHATAPP group to stay connected
Selling at Friday Roscommon Town Farmers Market
Members of the Castlerea Upcycling group made and donated Facemasks to organisations working with vulnerable groups during Covid-19 lockdown. 
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ibP9XeHSRYg
CycleUp Online Shop launched for Christmas 2020

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ibP9XeHSRYg
February 2021 - Our RWN CycleUp trainees and volunteers are thrilled to be finalists in the #sustainabledevelopment through education category at the AONTAS #starawards2021! Concern Worldwide is the sponsor of this category.
W.E.C.A.N - Jan 11th 2021
Women’s Environmental Community Activation Network
Women growing a sustainable social enterprise creating awareness, providing training and flexible employment in the Circular Economy supported by and in collaboration with:

Local community & Local Businesses

Community Environment Action Fund (Local Agenda 21)
What the women say

- “it is accessible and inclusive and not elitist”
- “I think we keep coming because we feel respected, we are heard, we trust each other here, compared to others places I have been and we are making progress together”
- “it is a safe space and that is not something to be taken for granted”
- “I really don’t know how I would have coped during Covid without this work and linking in with the girls every week”
- “We challenge each other in different ways and grow together”
- “I feel part of something and I feel valued, we all learn from each other”
- “transforming waste into something beautiful and saleable is a lot more challenging than I thought it would be, I really had to get creative and get out of my comfort zone, its invigorating, its been life changing for me and for my family”
- “I was so proud to give the facemasks to the local nursing homes and when we got the Thank you cards it felt so good to be able to help and be appreciated”
- “I've learned so much about fast fashion and the damage to the environment, I had no idea!! It has really changed my attitude to shopping, I'm a convert now and I am converting my friends slowly...”
- “I made some much needed money for Christmas selling the decorations, I am thrilled”
- “I'm learning more than I expected, like about designing, marketing, selling. I never used a smart phone or a laptop and now I have both, my daughter is delighted and she helps me as she is working from home during Covid, and I'm using WhatsApp and Zoom, I would have never thought sewing would lead me to that, how did that happen?”
Why Community Education Works

- Local and accessible
- Brings people together
- Inclusive, respectful and empathetic space
- Delivered with a flexible approach
- Peer to Peer learning
- Reflective space
- Change-oriented and innovative.
- Empowering and supportive
- Building Capacity as a group and as individuals
- Individual and collective action
- Common goal and purpose
- Progressive and transformative
- Effecting real change
Thank you