



## SUMMER NEWSLETTER 2025



Congrats to the Aspire Ladies Mini Marathon Team!

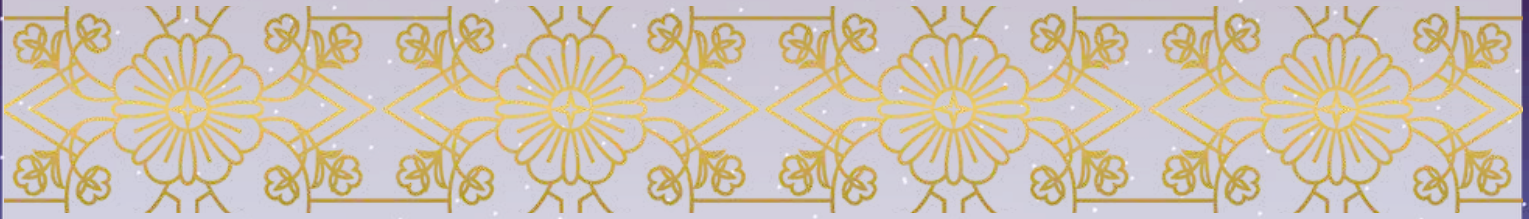
### A NOTE FROM THE CEO

As the days grow longer and brighter, we're reminded of the importance of taking time to reconnect with each other, with our communities, and with the values that guide our work. Summer brings with it a sense of possibility and renewal, and here at Aspire, it's also a time to celebrate the resilience, creativity, and collaboration that define our community. In this issue, we're excited to share updates on recent projects, upcoming events, and the inspiring stories that continue to shape our journey. Whether you're a long-time supporter or new to the Aspire family, thank you for being part of this vital work.

This summer, as we reflect on the impact Aspire continues to make, I want to take a moment to acknowledge the remarkable people who laid its foundations. At the heart of Aspires beginning were two devoted parents, Des and Treasa McKernan, whose determination to support their son and others like him sparked a movement of compassion, advocacy and change. Their legacy reminds us that the strongest roots often grow quietly, around kitchen tables, in the face of uncertainty, but always with love and purpose. What began as a family's effort has grown into a community. And today, Aspire is what it is because of people like them and like you.

To honour that legacy, we're privileged to share a heartfelt message from Barry McKernan, son of Aspire's founders, Des and Treasa, who offers a powerful glimpse into the early days of our organisation and the vision that shaped it.

*"My parents, Des & Treasa McKernan, were tireless advocates for people with autism. It became clear, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, that my brother had a condition that required a lot of intensive support, care and attention, so that he could live his life. My parents set up Aspire in the 1990s to bring people together, to mutually support each other through the ups and downs of diagnoses, respite and daily life."*



*They grew a large network of people over time, centered on caring for people with autism, and helping those who cared for them.*

*I remember the early years were tough: lots of educating, lots of visiting, lots of lobbying, looking for help at a time when Ireland didn't and couldn't care for people with these conditions. My parents believed in learning about and following best practice – and where it didn't exist, to implement it. They were enthusiastic supporters of efforts to improve our understanding of the condition, learning from experts from around the world, and attempting to build something that would last in Ireland.*

*Aspire has come a very long way in the last few decades. From my parents' kitchen table to: a residential facility, an office, respite grants, support for educators, drama classes to help with social skills, and education of the broader community. I am very proud of what they and scores of others built and how it has developed. I think my parents would be very proud too if they could see Aspire today."*

It's hard not to be moved by those words. Aspire's roots are deeply personal, grounded in love and fierce determination. And it's because of people like Des and Treasa and everyone who has contributed over the years that Aspire has become what it is today. I'm incredibly proud to be part of this journey and to work alongside people who care so deeply about making life better for others.

Whether you're staff, a volunteer, a family member, or a supporter, your contribution matters.

*Linda Blake*

**welcome  
little one!**

**A BIG WELCOME TO MENTOR NISHA'S NEW  
ARRIVAL BABY VERIDIAN  
WHO ARRIVED ON 11<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2025**



[Website](#)



[Instagram](#)



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[Show Your Support Here](#)



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland



Arna chomhchistiú ag  
an Aontas Eorpach  
Co-funded by the  
European Union



Aspire Designs is much more than an award-winning social enterprise; it's a vibrant community of talented autistic adults specialising in graphic design and art, the only such social enterprise in Ireland. Each member brings a unique perspective and creative flair, making our products truly one of a kind.

You will know us from our regular presence at St Anne's Park, where we sell sensory items alongside our beautiful, unique greeting cards. But we're not stopping there.

## Online Launch!



[Browse now](#)

After much preparation, **our online shop has launched!** There, you'll find our full range of sensory products and original greeting cards, all created with purpose and care.

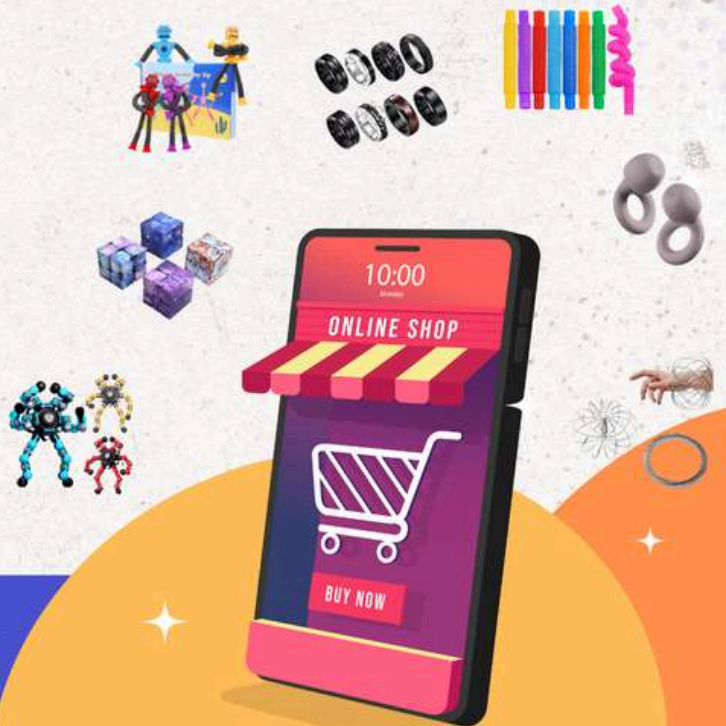
We're also proud to be the only physical stockist of Loop Earplugs in Ireland (available now through our shop).

Aspire Designs

# ONLINE SHOP

is now **live**

START HERE



- ✓ Neurodivergent-Friendly Sensory Items
- ✓ Uniquely Greeting Cards with Social Impact
- ✓ Loop Earbuds

SHOP WITH PURPOSE

## Talks & Workshops

Alongside our artistic ventures, we continue to offer autism talks, something Aspire has proudly done from the beginning.

Recently, we've enhanced these talks for parent groups, providing deeper insights, support, and connection to families navigating autism. These sessions create a space for learning, sharing, and growing stronger together and are a great meeting point for Parents.

And we are stepping onto bigger stages participating in conferences across the country to share our work and our stories with a wider audience.

To book a talk for employers, schools, colleges, sports groups, or parent groups, please contact Louise at [louise@greene@aspireireland.ie](mailto:louise@greene@aspireireland.ie)



Aspire Designs isn't just about art and design; it's about empowerment, making things more inclusive for autistic folk and ensuring that their voices are heard and celebrated.



# Aspire's 30 Year Anniversary



The year was 1995. Ireland wasn't talking about "neurodiversity" yet, but the need was there. The shift had begun. And Aspire was part of it from the start. The term "Autism" was clinical, distant, not yet associated with rights, inclusion, or identity.

A father and a mother, at their kitchen table, made a decision. They didn't wait for change. They became it. They created a charity. Not for profit. Not for show. But for their son. And for others like him.

Their son was autistic. Not broken. Not lost. Just different, and deserving of support. The days back then were not favourable for difference. It was a leap of faith. A necessary act of rebellion. In the name of inclusion. In the name of equity. In the name of love.

They faced prejudice. And silence. And bureaucratic walls. They advocated anyway. Slowly, autism began to be recognised not as a deficit, but as a way of being. As a community.

Since then, a lot has changed. In society. And in Aspire. From humble beginnings, Aspire has grown into an organisation rooted in real-world, person-centred supports. We operate a residential home tailored to individual needs, a social enterprise that creates both impact and employment, and a range of community-based services, including Talks and Workshops, peer-led social groups and family support.

Every service Aspire offers is about improving the quality of life for autistic people in Ireland, through practical support, respectful relationships, and real opportunities for autonomy. Not fixing. Not forcing. Just supporting and standing alongside.

We've had wins. And losses. Moments of burnout. And moments of clarity. But we never let go of the reason we began.

We still operate on a family-inclusive model

You're different. So are we.

It's been 30 years of autistic empowerment  
And we're just getting started  
Thank you for standing with us



# Aspire's 30 Year Anniversary



CELEBRATING  
**30 YEARS OF AUTISTIC  
EMPOWERMENT**



# Aspire's 30 Year Anniversary

WHAT DOES  
**AUTISTIC  
EMPOWERMENT**  
MEAN TO YOU?

BE PART OF OUR  
EMPOWERMENT  
WALL!

SHARE YOUR ANSWER BY  
REPLYING TO THIS EMAIL OR  
BY CLICKING HERE

## Examples:

### IF YOU'RE AUTISTIC:

Empowerment means having the **freedom to make decisions** for myself.  
It means **being listened to** and having my voice heard.  
It is about having **people** around me **who support me** when I need it.  
It is about **being proud** of who I am.

### IF YOU'RE A PARENT OR SUPPORTER:

It means **helping my child** make their own choices.  
It means ensuring **my loved one has the support** they need.  
It means creating a world where my child feels **safe, included, and accepted**.  
It is about helping them to **build self-confidence and pride** in who they are.

You can also participate  
by sending a **video, audio  
recording, poem, music,  
article, drawing, or  
another creative method  
of your choice!**



VIDEO



VOICE  
AUDIO  
RECORDING



POEM  
ARTICLE



DRAWING



SYMBOL



MUSIC



# TEEN MEETUPS

Aspire Teen Meetups was never part of some grand plan. It started almost five years ago out of overwhelming frustration.

When our son had to be pulled out of school because the education system was failing him, what followed was huge isolation. As in all things Autism-related in Ireland, there was no roadmap. Just a growing feeling that something had to change. So I did a crazy thing and decided to reach out to see if something could be done.

A call-out for connection turned into something extraordinary. It turned out that we weren't alone, there were other families and other teens feeling exactly the same way. Isolated, misunderstood, disconnected. And out of that shared experience, Teen Meetups began.

The two groups meet every Saturday coming together for a relaxed walk in the park. There's no pressure to talk but space if you want to. Some chat, some don't. Afterwards there's coffee, sometimes lunch. Simple rituals that have become powerful lifelines. For many teens, especially those with anxiety or who've struggled to find a place in school or social settings, Teen Meetups offers something rare: a calm, predictable space where being yourself is enough. There are no icebreakers or forced conversations, just fresh air and a sense of belonging with people who get it.

Teens come and go, and it's always wonderful when someone moves on because it means they've gained something meaningful and built friendships beyond the meetup, which is definitely part of the goal.

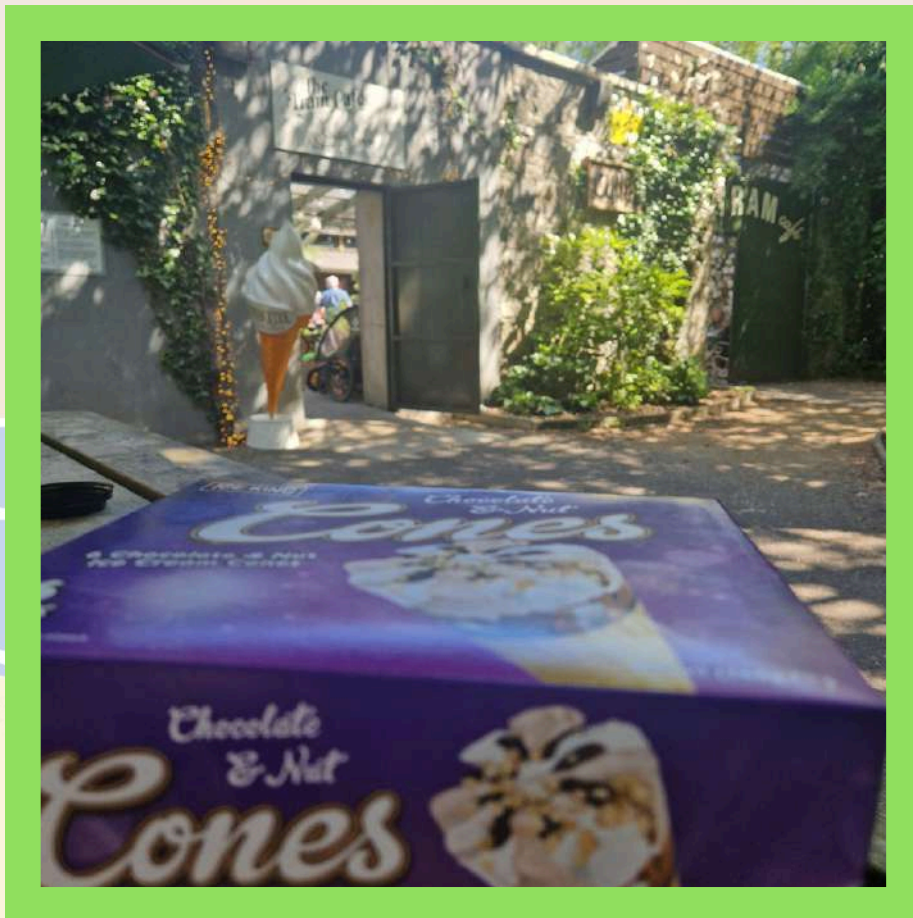
It is simply pure human connection without conditions.

A HUGE thank you to all the Parents and to our Volunteer Facilitators for supporting the Meetups.

Louise Greene



# TEEN MEETUPS



# TEEN ART



Art is a powerful tool for many Autistic teens it is not just a hobby, but a language all of its own. For many autistic individuals, traditional verbal communication can be challenging and overwhelming.

Art offers a different way to be heard, whether it's sketching, painting, digital art, sculpture, or mixed media, creating visual art can provide emotional regulation, a sense of control, and a tangible way to express complex inner worlds. For some, colours and lines say more than words ever could. The great thing about art is that it doesn't demand a certain pace or social dynamic. It gives space. Our art teacher, David, gives Autistic teens this space to create in silence or in collaboration. He has a special talent for drawing out (pardon the pun) the quieter kids in the class. The artists we support through Aspire Designs, our award-winning social enterprise (will Louise ever stop reminding us?) continue to grow in confidence, creativity, and independence.

We see this not only in the Teen Art class but in the adults in our social enterprise, too:

neurodivergent artists who see and create things in ways that go beyond traditional art. Art can help teens process emotions, tell their stories, or simply enjoy the act of making. For some, it becomes a career path. For others, it's a healing, joyful escape. But for everyone, it's valid and valuable.

Art classes continue every Thursday throughout the Summer



# TEEN DRAMA

Our Teen drama programme is a space where young people explore imagination, expression, and community. For autistic teens, drama can be more than a hobby, it can be a safe and structured way to practice social communication, build confidence, and connect with peers on shared terms.

Unlike real-world social situations, drama offers scripts, rehearsal, and repetition. These are all things that can help reduce anxiety and create opportunities for authentic expression. Many autistic teens thrive in environments where expectations are clearly laid out.

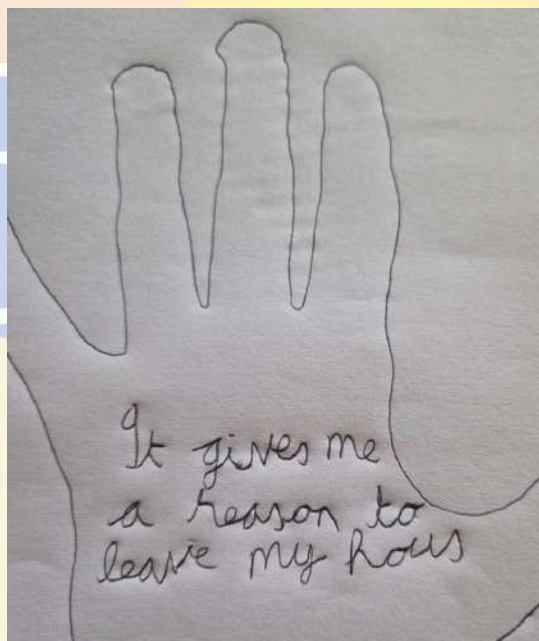
Drama doesn't demand that you "mask" or "perform neurotypical". It invites you to perform characters, which can paradoxically feel more freeing. In playing someone else, many teens find more of themselves.

Aspire's inclusive and sensory-friendly drama classes, led by the wonderful Rosey and the fabulous team of Sarah & Joanna, are thoughtfully designed with a deep understanding of neurodivergence and accommodating the various communication and sensory needs of the kids.

From improv to monologues, these spaces can help autistic teens explore identity and empathy in a way that's both playful and profound

For more information contact: [info@aspireireland.ie](mailto:info@aspireireland.ie).

## What was your favourite part of drama class...



# Gustavo's Update

## Conscious Masking x Unconscious Masking

Have you ever thought about the difference between **masking** and **conscious masking**? Maybe you're already learning it without even realising. It tends to make more sense in hindsight.

**Conscious masking feels like choosing the right clothes for the right occasion.** You dress for the context. And when you're back home, you can take it off, make your tea, play your game, and kick off your heels. Masking does take some energy, of course, but you can learn how to loosen up and manage the internal system better. Even then, **you're still you.**

You're not being fake when you choose to consciously mask, you're choosing not to bring every part of yourself forward for the benefit of all, including YOU. That's **awareness**. You bring what's needed, not to perform, on the contrary, to **move wisely**. You begin to understand the dynamics at play and act with **intention**.

**Just like you don't use all your skills at once, maybe you don't need to bring your entire self into every room? You bring what's needed.**

**Yes, the world should be better at adapting to neurodivergent people, absolutely. But this piece is about something else. It's about maybe seeing conscious masking, dare I to say, as a skill, as opposed to a sentence. Because it can help you build bridges, stop hiding, and slowly shift from fear into intention and strategy.**

**You are choosing to do it, you're not being forced to.**

Masking and conscious masking are completely different things. The first keeps you in your internal prison. **The latter might just help you (slowly) break free.**

**Gustavo Lazarin**



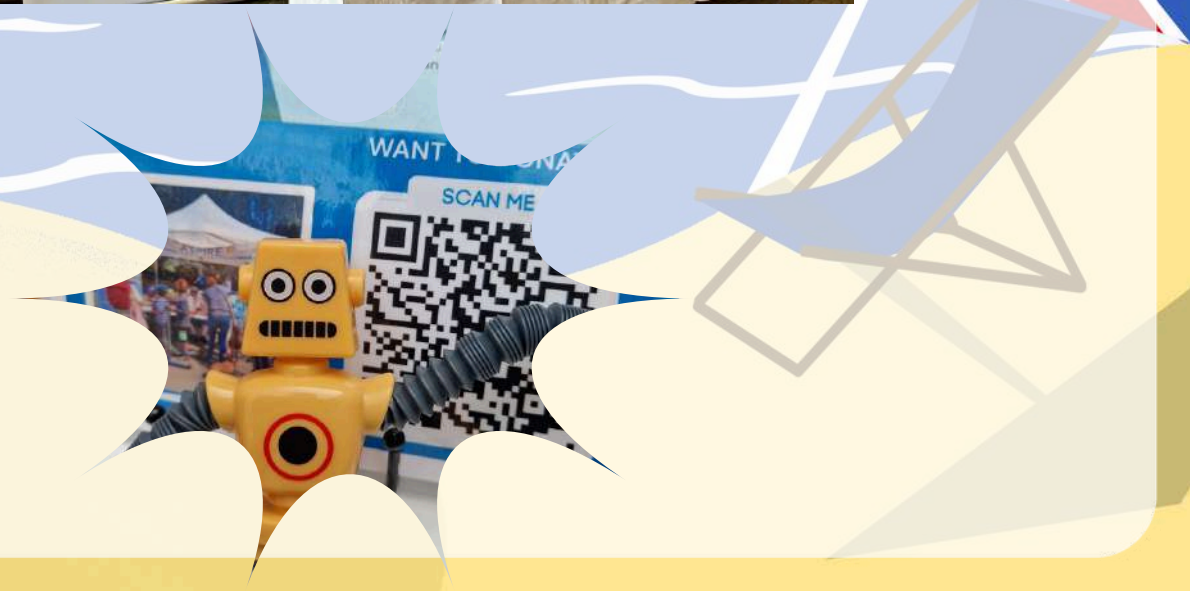
***Talk on Autism and Neurodivergence for Adult Learners. It's an honour to serve humanity in this way. Get in touch to bring our talks to your community or organisation.***

*\*This is a reflection piece based on writer's personal thoughts. This is not a professional advice. Every autistic individual is different, with particular challenges, strengths and needs.*

# RECENT EVENTS



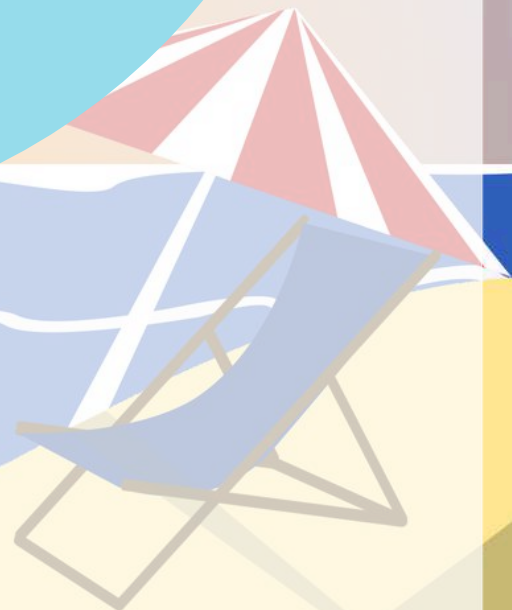
Linda & Steven, pop-up shop at the Ausome Conference in May



# IN THE COMMUNITY

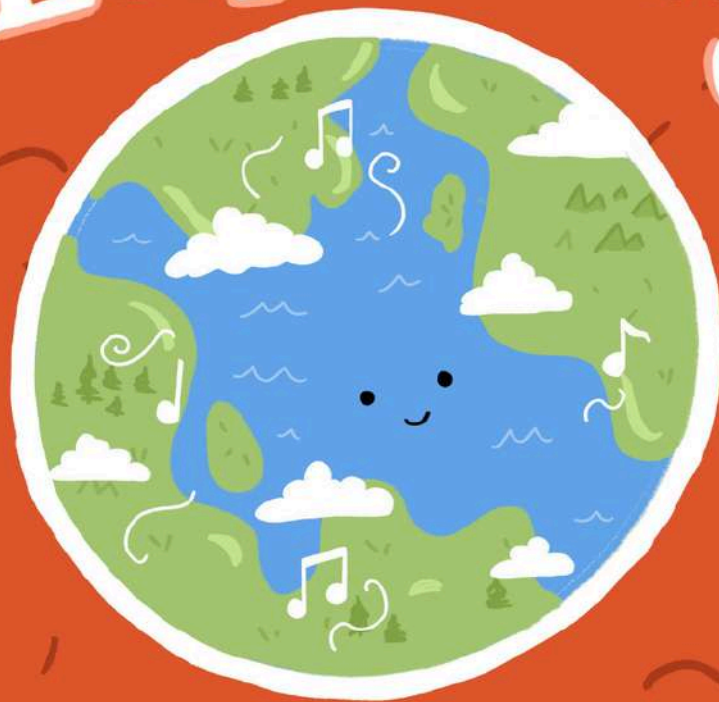
## **MARCH WITH US IN DUBLIN PRIDE**

**Want to march in the Dublin  
Pride Parade but need some  
support? March with us! We'll be  
gathering near the Spire on the  
Henry St side from 12pm, Sat,  
June 28<sup>th</sup>. Contact  
[Steven@aspireireland.ie](mailto:Steven@aspireireland.ie) for  
more details**



IN THE COMMUNITY

Exploring



the  
Orchestra

7 - 11 July

Whyte Recital Hall,  
Royal Irish Academy of Music

Meet the orchestra at our inclusive kids summer camp. Neurodivergent friendly, everybody welcome! For free tickets scan the QR code.



**RIAM**  
Royal Irish  
Academy of Music

Matheson

# IN THE COMMUNITY



*Jnr Barbershop on Reuben Street, Rialto (Dublin 8), recently welcomed an autistic trainee, Ciarán, offering hands-on training in a supportive and understanding environment.*

*His younger brother Alex, who is also autistic, recently got a haircut there and was treated with kindness, patience, and care. As big brother learns the trade, little brother gets to enjoy a space where he feels safe and seen.*

*Thanks to Jamie, Philo, and the Jnr team for your openness and inclusion. This means a lot to them, and so many other autistic individuals and families.*

# FUNDRAISING



Medieval Marathon

## Journey to 30k for Aspire

fundraising



*Recently diagnosed as autistic, Stephen discovered that running helps him regulate and reconnect. He's now taking on a series of races, building up to the big one: a 30K run in Kilkenny this September.*

*He's running in aid of Aspire and hopes to raise at least €500 to support autistic individuals and their families through our services.*

*Show your support now by [clicking here](#)*

*Every donation counts, big or small.*

*You can learn more about his journey [here](#)*

*Thank you, Stephen, for supporting us and for empowering more autistic individuals through your journey.  
We're cheering you on every step of the way!"*

 *get!*  
YOUR  
TICKETS

*We're excited to announce that our 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary rolling raffle is now underway, running online throughout the summer months. You can buy tickets anytime over the season for a chance to win some fantastic prizes. Keep an eye on our Social Channels to purchase tickets.*

*The raffle will wrap up at our Bake Sale event in the Autumn, making it a perfect way to celebrate together.*

*Stay tuned and get involved, it's a great way to support our projects.*

# THANK YOU!

To the following schools for raising funds for Aspire during Autism Acceptance Month, April 2025:

Scoil Naomh Pádraig, Ballyroan, Dublin 16

Our Lady's National School, Clonskeagh  
Goatstown Educate Together  
De La Salle College

And a special thank you to The Harbour Café in Courtown, Wexford,  
for hosting a wonderful coffee morning

And to the lovely Ladies who participated in the VHI Women's Mini Marathon!

SuperValu, Ballinteer Fundraiser,

a big thank you to everyone who supported us there too!!



# STORIES FROM THE SPECTRUM

## William Oliver

Hello everyone, things have been going very interesting for me over the past few months. I have finally finished reading the novel *Under the Dome*. As I assumed it to be, the dome was put in place by aliens. The story also became very political towards the latter quarter of the book. This was to be expected since Stephen King is known for having strong opinions on the ways of living in society. The book was also written after 9/11 and the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, so the political ideas seemed rather inevitable. In the end most of the people in the town die in very gory fashions since that seems to be indicative of a typical Stephen King story. It apparently took him more than twenty years to finish writing it because he was nearly always displeased with the finished result and had to start over. I will now start reading *Salem's Lot*.

I have been supporting a creative drama class for teenagers on the spectrum. I greet the teens and their parents at the door. I answer any questions that they may have, and if they need it escort them up to the lounge room where the classes take place. When the class is over, I let the parents into the building to wait for their children to come down to them, and then I see them out the front door. I have designed certificates of participation for the teens to formally declare their membership in the creative drama class. I have very much enjoyed this role and look forward to pursuing similar opportunities in the future.

I have been doing a work placement in the Ballymun Library since the 3rd of April. The work placement was to last for six weeks, but I managed to negotiate to get an extension of three additional weeks. I will be doing my last day this week. My work times are once a week on Thursday from 09:30 a.m. to 13:00 p.m. because that is the time that they set for me. It was good except that some of my tasks were not always adequately finished due to the time constraint, and as such, some of these tasks had to be properly finished the following week. This is why I requested more time to work in the library.

That is how I got the three additional weeks and an extension to my time from 09:30 a.m. to 15:00 p.m. Once again this is the time they can allocate me without taking work away from the staff. Due to the added time, I have been able to properly finish my tasks without having to rush them. My experience has been very rewarding, and I have become very fond of the library staff members that I have been working alongside these past two months.

# STORIES FROM THE SPECTRUM

## William Oliver

My parents and I have recently adopted (temporarily) a heron.

I do not know if it is male or female, but it comes around to our home and stands on top of our shed. We feed it left over meat and fish.

This is because the local stream has recently become badly polluted and so the herons have no fish to hunt and eat. They are also feeding chicks at this time of the year. I get the Luas to the Aspire Designs office in Smithfield, and on my way to the Luas I pass by the local Priory which has very tall trees.

I can hear the herons come screeching as they enter the tree line to feed their chicks.

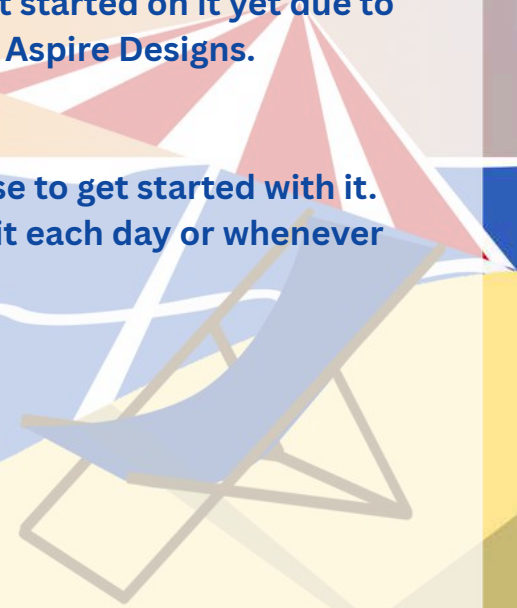
They really do sound and act like dinosaurs. It has been coming to us for about a month now. He/she is particularly fond of pork and presumably so are the chicks.

Speaking of dinosaurs, I recently bought a dinosaur model from the Lego shop on Grafton Street. I normally do not use Legos but on this occasion, I went in to see if I could find something worth treating as a project.

In this case I found a model of a Tyrannosaurus Rex which was convenient given that it is my favourite animal of any kind living or dead. I have not started on it yet due to focusing on my library work placement and office work with Aspire Designs.

At some point soon, I will set up a time and place in the house to get started with it. I will take my time with it and not rush, essentially doing a bit each day or whenever I can.

It should be fun.



# STORIES FROM THE SPECTRUM

## Autistic Women

### Niamh Rochford

For years, Autism was known as a mostly male-based disability, as most individuals diagnosed were male. This is starting to change with people understanding the spectrum of autism and how differently it can present in Autistic people, including women and girls. Women are notoriously misdiagnosed or not diagnosed at all because of how differently autism presents in us. For example, women seem to have fewer social difficulties than autistic men, but this is because they are more likely to 'mask' their autistic traits to avoid bullying or harassment.

The 'regular' autistic experience for many autistic women is feeling different from everyone else, but never knowing why, they are then left by the healthcare system to either be diagnosed with a bipolar disorder, an anxiety disorder, a hormone issue or sadly, not even diagnosed at all. This article will explore the differences between autism showing in men and autism showing in women to bring awareness to the big spectrum of autism, including my personal experience!



One of the differences, and a major one, is that autistic women (especially high-masking) tend to internalise their behavior rather than having visible behavioral problems. Meaning that things that would naturally affect an autistic person, such as sensitivities, are internalised rather than outwardly felt. This can cause a lot of mood issues, such as stress, anxiety and depression. It can be isolating and make them feel like they are on their own and that they are different from their peers.

# STORIES FROM THE SPECTRUM

Niamh Rochford

For me, I struggle with this a lot, and it can burn me out very fast. It can feel like I have a hidden bottle in my stomach and I'm continuously filling the bottle until it's too full and bursts open, leading to meltdowns, shutdowns and autistic burnouts. Internalised behaviours can come from experiences in childhood, such as being put down for being hyper-sensitive, for example, being afraid of loud noises while people say 'it's not too loud', 'it's not too bright'.

From personal experiences, I believe this is one of the many reasons that led me to be internalised and has also forced me to become a master of camouflaging. Which is next on the list!



## Why Autism in Women Often Goes Undiagnosed?

**Autism was historically viewed as a "male condition," leading to stereotypes that still affect diagnosis.**

Most autism research has focused on male traits, making it harder to recognise autism in women.

**Many autistic women are misdiagnosed with conditions like anxiety, depression, or OCD.**

Masking and camouflaging can hide autistic traits, often delaying or preventing diagnosis.

**Autistic women may mimic social behaviours to fit in, but this can lead to burnout and anxiety.**

**ASPIRE**   
The Autism Spectrum Association of Ireland



## Why Autism in Women Often Goes Undiagnosed?

**Overlooked in Schools & Healthcare** – Teachers and doctors may not recognise autistic traits in girls, especially if they excel academically or appear social.

**Gaps in Research & Biological Factors** – Studies suggest possible genetic, hormonal, or environmental influences, but the reasons behind diagnosis differences remain unclear.

**Evolving Understanding** – Theories like the 'female autism phenotype' and the 'extreme male brain' hypothesis have been explored, but research on autism in women is still developing.

**ASPIRE**   
The Autism Spectrum Association of Ireland

# STORIES FROM THE SPECTRUM

## Niamh Rochford

Camouflaging or masking is when an autistic person masks how they feel or experience the world. Examples of masking include forcing yourself to make eye contact during conversations, mimicking social behaviours of peers, imitating expressions and gestures, preparing conversations before an event and pretending that certain stimuli is not hurting you. Both autistic males and females can camouflage their symptoms.

However, it is more common in females and is one of the reasons why women are not diagnosed, late diagnosed or misdiagnosed.

When I received my autism diagnosis, it said that I was highly camouflaged, which is one of the reasons why I was only diagnosed at 24. Camouflaging can help an autistic person stay safe from bullying, harassment and ableism. However, it can have a severe impact on their identity.

For me, I struggled a lot with knowing who I actually am.

Because I was masking for most of my life and didn't know what autism was, I am always unsure of who I am and what I actually like and dislike.

It's so important to notice this symptom and to start understanding who you are instead of the masked you.

### Autism in Women & The Workplace



**Many autistic women mask at work, leading to burnout and mental exhaustion.**

Executive function challenges can make task prioritisation, organisation, and communication difficult.

**Sensory sensitivities (e.g., noise, lighting, strong scents) can impact focus and productivity.**

Autistic professionals may thrive in structured roles but struggle in unstructured work environments.

**Companies benefit from neurodiverse talent by fostering flexible and sensory-friendly workplaces.**

**ASPIRE**   
The Autism Spectrum Association of Ireland

# STORIES FROM THE SPECTRUM

## Niamh Rochford

The last difference that I will discuss is the stereotype that autistic people don't feel empathy. While it is a well known stereotypical symptom of autism that autistic people don't feel empathy at all, which can be true to individual cases, women on the autistic spectrum are more inclined to be hyper-empathetic. This means that we can feel others emotions very intensely to the point of distress.

This can be extremely difficult to control especially alongside another autistic symptom: emotional dysregulation. I personally struggle with both of these. I can get very upset over someone upsetting a friend or a family member. However, sometimes I can feel upset for inanimate objects too, which can be hard to explain to a neurotypical.

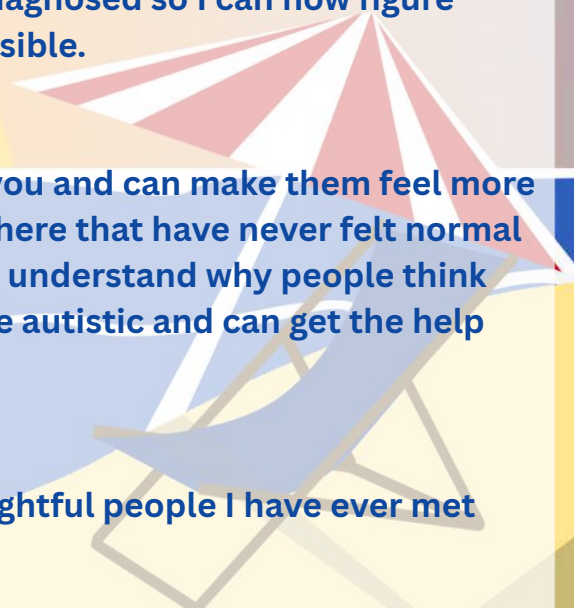
It's important for others to understand that this is a real thing to feel for autistic people and that it is not as easy to just 'forget about it'. For example, when I throw out an empty bottle of water I feel that I'm hurting the bottle or taking it away from its family. As silly as it sounds it is a real feeling and real emotions arise from it.

To finish my article with positivity! Yes there are differences between autistic women and autistic men, and not all women feel everything I have mentioned and some men might feel exactly like this! That's the beauty of the spectrum, there are differences between ALL autistic individuals and no one autistic person is the same.

Women are becoming more diagnosed as more research and understanding is occurring, which is an amazing step forward for women with disabilities. As much as I have personally struggled a lot during my life, I am grateful to have been diagnosed so I can now figure myself out and live a life that is fulfilling and happy as possible.

Understanding autism fully helps autistic people around you and can make them feel more included and heard. It can help undiagnosed women out there that have never felt normal before but never knew why. It can help children who don't understand why people think differently to them. It can help people realise that they are autistic and can get the help and support that they deserve.

Autistic people are the most interesting, kindest and thoughtful people I have ever met and it makes me proud to be a part of this community.



# STORIES FROM THE SPECTRUM

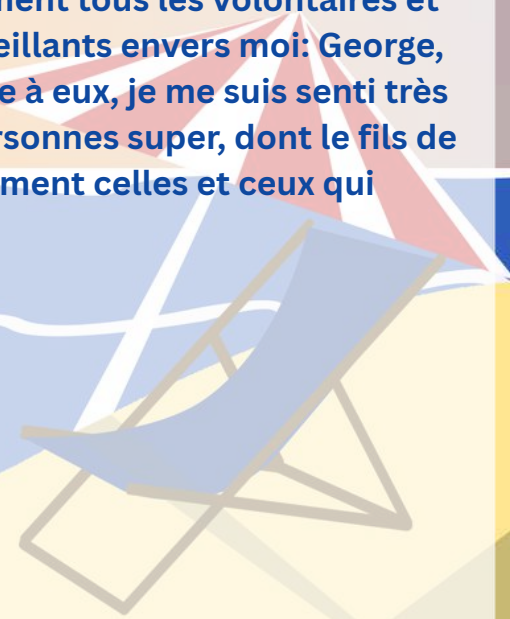
## Felix Lemoin

Hi, my name is Felix Lemoin.

I am from Geneva, Switzerland, and I am a student at the University of Strasbourg and an autistic person. I study English and Japanese. For the last semester of my Bachelor's, I had to do an internship for two months. I was very, very lucky to get accepted for it at Aspire. During that internship, I have been able to participate in the different associations' activities and functioning. I could go to meet-ups, drama and art classes, and do translation... which I loved to do. It was a fantastic internship; the team was very welcoming, caring, and understanding. I felt very much integrated into the team, and that felt good. When it was time to leave you all, I felt very sad.

Thank you to the entire team, the new friends I met and whoever I met in those groups, whether it be teachers, learners... And a special thanks to Louise, who was so enthusiastic about this brand-new experience for me and Aspire.

Je remercie Mme Louise GREENE, ma tutrice de stage qui a accepté de me prendre dans son association Aspire, à Dublin, en Irlande. Je remercie également tous les volontaires et autres salariés de l'association qui ont été très gentils et bienveillants envers moi: George, Gustavo, Nisha, Sarah, Saoirse, Steven, Thomas, William... Grâce à eux, je me suis senti très à l'aise et je me suis bien amusé. J'ai pu rencontrer plein de personnes super, dont le fils de Louise avec qui je me suis très bien entendu. Je remercie également celles et ceux qui m'ont soutenu dans cette expérience.



# STORIES FROM THE SPECTRUM

## Ross Kilbride

My name is Ross Kilbride and for the past year and a half, I have been working alongside a PhD level student from University of Limerick in the realms of D.C.U on a project that is meant to be of a ChatGPT function that is meant to incentivize students, in D.C.U or elsewhere, who are on the Autistic Spectrum, to become more physically active.

Dr Rogers interviewed me in person at the start of last year, and after me being the first person to be interviewed in person, Dr Rogers and I developed an extensive relationship, working together as a cohesive unit, to make the project a success, me being somebody who has helped him build contacts with other organizations that I work with. I have pointed out some flaws in the system, as well as what might actually work.

In the end, Dr Rogers received an award for developing this project, that will hopefully be utilised by universities, and perhaps even schools. Physical activity can be of a deprivation for a lot of people on the Spectrum, but Dr Rogers is quite familiar with sports himself.

I don't personally know where his fascination with people on the Spectrum came from, but he chose to do it inside the realms of D.C.U based on their knowledge and expertise with dealing with and speaking to students on the Spectrum. I wish Dr Rogers all the best with it, but this is by no means goodbye from me to him.

I'm simply saying good luck to him in general.

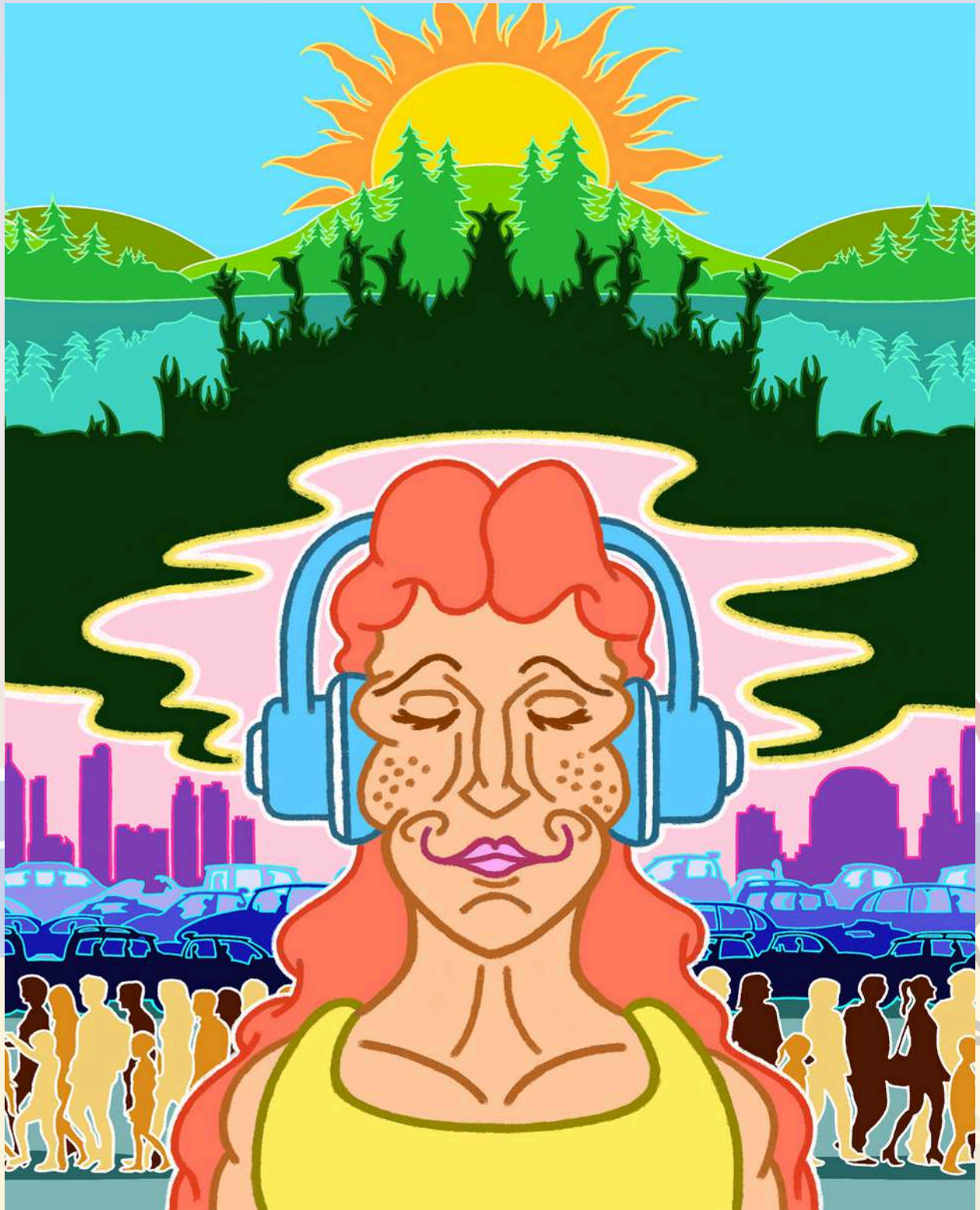


## STORIES FROM THE SPECTRUM

This piece was specifically designed to emphasise the importance of staying connected with nature while navigating daily life by listening to natural/oceanic ambience using your noise-cancelling headphones or through other methods.

Jack Harrison

Jack  
Harrison



# STORIES FROM THE SPECTRUM

## Mousse the Autistic Cat

My name is Amanda Melling, I'm a Mum and Author.

I'm 48 years old and I live in Ballina, County Mayo. I have three kids, two of whom have been diagnosed with autism. During these years in which I have had to face small and big daily challenges, I have also discovered that I fall within the autistic spectrum myself.

I would like to share with you a Book I have written for children

I really like kawaii art and the idea of creating an autistic cat that can metaphorically approach the same type of problems of those who fall within the autistic spectrum.

Mousse is a very special cat, because he is able to understand the daily dynamics of his human friends who, like him, fall within the autistic spectrum. By discovering Mousse's habits, hobbies and characteristics, it's possible to find similarities with our life, and somehow the right vibe to deal with our insecurities.

And if there is some fear in situations that disrupt routines, Mousse can stay with us whenever we need, and always be a trusted friend.

Check out my Instagram page to view the book and download a pdf: [@verbenasteel](#)



# UPCOMING EVENTS



**ASPIRE**

The Autism Spectrum Association of Ireland



## Healthy Food Made Easy

This is a weekly course which will run for 6-8 weeks for autistic adults 18+  
The course commences at 18:00 p.m. Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> September, Spade Enterprise Centre Dublin, Smithfield, North King St., D07 CX22.

To sign up email: [info@aspireireland.ie](mailto:info@aspireireland.ie)

The Programme will be interactive and enjoyable and will help you to improve your cooking skills, eating behaviours and nutrition knowledge.



**ASPIRE**  
Designs



## CAKE IS ALWAYS A GOOD IDEA

Save the Date!

Aspire Teen Meetups are planning another Bake Sale event around mid-September, and we'd love for you to be part of it!

More details and a confirmed date to follow soon so stay tuned!



# STUDENTS ON PLACEMENT

## Sarah Priestley

We were thrilled to have student Sarah join us at Aspire Designs for her OT placement. Her enthusiasm and professionalism brought a fresh perspective to our team.

Throughout her time with us, Sarah demonstrated a strong understanding of occupational therapy principles and how they intersect with accessible environments.

She actively contributed to several ongoing projects showing initiative and a thoughtful approach in every task she undertook. It was a pleasure to support her learning journey, and we're confident she has a bright future ahead in the field of occupational therapy.

We wish Sarah the very best in her clinical placement and exams and sincerely hope she returns to us in the future!

## Felix Lemoine

We were also delighted to welcome Swiss languages student Felix from the University of Strasbourg. Felix quickly adapted to our fast-paced environment, contributing to translation work, mentoring and facilitating our teen groups.

His unique autistic perspective, keen attention to detail and strong willingness to learn were evident in every job he took on. Having Felix with us not only enriched our projects but also underscored the importance of clear, inclusive communication and reaffirmed our commitment to neurodiversity in the workplace.

We truly appreciated his contribution and wish him all the best in his future endeavours, especially as he works towards his dream of becoming a French teacher in Japan. Felix, please come back to visit us!

# FRIENDS OF ASPIRE

Thank you to all the incredible individuals and organisations who generously supported Aspire this year. Your kindness and dedication have made a tangible difference in the lives of many. We're also immensely grateful to those who have supported those we have referred to them, for their unwavering commitment and passion for making a positive impact in our community.

<b>Pobal</b>	<b>RBK Accountants</b>	<b>Dublin City Council</b>
<b>HSE</b>	<b>CourCon/CCL</b>	<b>DWM Cards</b>
<b>Specialisterne</b>	<b>Get a Gardener</b>	<b>Phoenix Radio</b>
<b>Screen Ireland</b>	<b>In Good Co/McKenna</b>	<b>Cartoon Saloon</b>
<b>Tusla</b>	<b>Michael Bowe</b>	<b>Lighthouse Studios</b>
<b>Hiqa</b>	<b>Kilkenny Animated</b>	<b>DWF Foundation</b>
<b>First Aid Supplies</b>	<b>Token Smithfield</b>	<b>W.A.L.K</b>
<b>TTM Training</b>	<b>Sharp Group</b>	<b>IKEA Business Network</b>
<b>AsIAM</b>	<b>Ausome Training</b>	<b>Alex Koster</b>
<b>ADHD Ireland</b>	<b>Employability</b>	<b>The Rediscovery Centre</b>
<b>Dyspraxia Ireland</b>	<b>Irish Cancer Society</b>	<b>Third Space Cafe</b>
<b>Dyslexia Ireland</b>	<b>Botanic Pottery</b>	<b>The Wheel</b>
<b>Inner City Enterprise</b>	<b>Google</b>	<b>AIB</b>
<b>South City Partnership</b>	<b>Yellow Harbour</b>	<b>DBS</b>
<b>Ultra Fusion Group</b>	<b>Carmichael</b>	<b>TU Dublin</b>
<b>Fiona O'Donnell Mindfulness</b>	<b>Snowflakes</b>	<b>Tesco Community Fund</b>
<b>Kennedy Health &amp; Safety Group</b>	<b>Neuropride</b>	<b>Accenture</b>
<b>Middletown Centre for Autism</b>	<b>Ahead</b>	<b>Accenture Song</b>
<b>Innovate Communities Ballymun</b>	<b>Tennis Ireland</b>	<b>EY</b>
<b>Disability Federation of Ireland</b>	<b>Skerries Mills</b>	<b>Wolfe Group</b>
<b>O'Sullivan's Accountants</b>	<b>Chambers Pharmacy</b>	<b>Axis Capital</b>
<b>Killester Basketball Club</b>	<b>Little Fitness</b>	<b>PC Moore &amp; Co Solicitors</b>
<b>Photo Museum Ireland</b>	<b>Spillane World Markets</b>	<b>David Rooney Artist</b>
<b>Market Pharmacy Smithfield</b>	<b>Your Local Pharmacy Ballinteer</b>	<b>Anne Weber</b>
<b>Dublin Northwest Partnership</b>	<b>Excel Recruitment</b>	<b>Irish Barista Academy</b>
<b>Ballymun Job Centre</b>	<b>Wicklow Gift Shop</b>	<b>Outside the Box</b>
<b>Kate Naessens</b>	<b>Northwest Partnership</b>	<b>Irish Social Enterprise Network</b>
<b>Dani Burns</b>	<b>Debbie Whelan</b>	<b>Spade Enterprise Centre</b>
<b>NOW Group</b>	<b>Inside EU</b>	<b>The Wayfinding Centre</b>
<b>Jasmina Troshanska</b>	<b>Houses4Autism</b>	<b>Christian Sweeney</b>
	<b>Adam Sweeney</b>	<b>National Talent Academy for VFX</b>
	<b>Blue Firefly</b>	<b>National Talent Academy for Animation</b>
		<b>Voices for Autism Advocacy and Action</b>

# Call Out!



## New Social Group Autistic Adults 40+

We're excited to announce the formation of a new Social Group at our Smithfield offices, created specifically for autistic adults aged 40 and over.

This group aims to foster connection, community and support in a relaxed and welcoming environment

Interested in joining or volunteering to help run the group?

Please email: [info@aspireireland](mailto:info@aspireireland) to sign up or learn more!

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



[Website](#)

### FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA



[Instagram](#)



[Facebook](#)



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland



Arna chomhchistiú ag  
an Aontas Eorpach  
Co-funded by the  
European Union



pobal  
government supporting communities

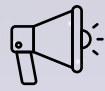


# ASPIRE

The Autism Spectrum Association of Ireland



# And lastly, something very



## IMPORTANT!

To the Autistic Adult that sent us an anonymous letter

Thank you for sharing your voice with us

We'd love to continue this conversation with you

*'I just want a place where I can meet in person and share how I'm feeling. I need a place where I can share my fears and anxieties openly and receive acceptance.*

*I don't have a best friend to confide in. I long to hear how other autistic feel about their autism and how they came to terms with their diagnosis.'*

Please email us at [info@aspireireland.ie](mailto:info@aspireireland.ie) so we can connect further!



# ASPIRE

The Autism Spectrum Association of Ireland





Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland



Arna chomhchistiú ag  
an Aontas Eorpach

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# ASPIRE

The Autism Spectrum Association of Ireland

