

## **Members Story**

### **The Path of Education**



#### **THE PATH OF EDUCATION**

An interview with an 18 year old and living in Co. Wicklow

#### **What was your first school?**

I started in Montessori school in Marino in Bray. Marino in part of Enable Ireland.

#### **How long did you stay in Marino?**

I went from Montessori to primary there until I was eight years old.

#### **How did the school facilitate you moving on?**

The Marino school has a system where some students attend main stream school – this was called “The Bray School Project” which is the same idea as Educate Together. I attended one day a week.

#### **What was your next step?**

When I was about eight I started in the local boys school in Kilcool, St. Anthony’s. I started off by going two days a week and eventually left Marino altogether.

#### **How did you feel making the break with Marino?**

I was very sad leaving as I made lots of friends and knew the teachers and staff very well. I have always kept contact with the people I went to school with there.

#### **What were the advantages to going to St. Anthony’s School?**

It really helped towards my independence. For the first time ever I was able to go to school on my own. I got to meet people of my own age who lived locally. I felt more like a part of the community.

#### **What about sports in school?**

Being in a wheelchair is a great advantage when you are a goalie!!! The school always facilitated me as much as possible in any sport or outing taking place in the school.

#### **How long did you stay in St. Anthony’s?**

I went right up to 6th class.

#### **Where to next?**

I went on to East Glendalough secondary school.

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#### **What were the factors that made you decide on this particular school?**

I actually found that there were a number of options open to me. East Glendalough was on top of the list mainly because it covered all criteria. It was accessible; it had a wide variety of subjects; the whole ethos of the school was that of integration and support, and most of all had small numbers of students per class.

#### **Were there any drawbacks?**

There was no transport so my mam had to drive me there and back five days a week for four years. In 3rd year I sat my inter Cert.

#### **How did this go for you?**

It was great. I did very well. I was allocated a scribe for all exams. I was very lucky that way.

#### **Did you do transition year?**

Yes. And as part of this I did work experience in my local Tesco Store.

#### **How did this work for you?**

I got great experience. Loved working with a great bunch of people and meeting the customers. One thing I found difficult was stacking shelves. There were some other small restrictions but all in all it was a positive experience

#### **Did you go on to do your Leaving Cert?**

Yes. In transition year I was made aware that East Glendalough did not do Leaving Cert Applied. This was because they did not have the numbers to facilitate doing it. So we had to look into transferring to another school.

#### **Where to then?**

I went to 5th year in St. Thomas's in Bray. I worked hard and sat my leaving cert and graduated this year.

#### **What stands out most in your time in St. Thomas's?**

I did some work placement during my first year there and ended up as a classroom assistant in Marino School.

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#### **The full circle! How did you feel about going back?**

It was strange to be back in the school as an adult. I worked beside many of the teachers who has previously taught me. When I went back it was to the new school. It was much bigger and had great facilities. I enjoyed the experience immensely.

#### **You are a great sportsman – when did you develop you interest in sport?**

I started swimming when I first attended Marino and loved it. In 1st year I got interested in athletics and started to attend the sports events organised by the Irish Wheelchair Association.

#### **What are your best sports?**

Shot-putt and discus.

#### **I know you have won many awards. Can you tell us the most important to you?**

I suppose the most important to me was the Silver medal in the European Championships in 2003. I won this for the shot-putt. I got two Gold's in Junior World Championships – one in shot-putt and one in discus. I also got a Gold in the All Ireland Schools Athletics.

#### **Do you think you will continue with sports?**

Yes I intend to. I find that it has helped me to grow in confidence and independence. I have been away and seen many different countries and have travelled to most parts of Ireland. It has been great for me. I am currently am member of the Paralympics team.

#### **Where to next?**

I am attending college, Bray institute for Further Education, and am studying Computer Portfolio. I am enjoying this I would hope to go on and become an engineer. I could do this through FAS and would love to get the opportunity to try.