

THE RIGHT STUFF

People, ideas and solutions making an impact in Ireland and the world...

Toy libraries can let us play it forward...

IT'S a couple of weeks now since Christmas and many homes across Ireland will still have plenty of shiny new toys strewn across every surface.

However, it's important to remember in these climate-conscious times that toys are one of the biggest generators of plastic waste on the planet.

In fact, it is estimated that as many as 80% of toys end up in landfill, incinerators, or the ocean once they are discarded.

Step forward Toy Libraries Ireland, a national association launched last year to help raise the profile of existing toy libraries in Ireland and assist individuals, groups and local authorities wishing to set up toy lending services in their own communities.

Toy libraries are a relatively new concept in Ireland and there are only a handful across the island – including Carrickmacross, Banbridge, Derry, Rosses Point, Clonmel, Cashel and Ballincollig.

The Toy Box (formerly D15 Toy Library) in Dublin also operates play sessions after which parents can opt to borrow a toy of their choosing.

The benefits that toy libraries yield are far-reaching: from reduced consumption of toys to saving families money and facilitating access to play, which contributes greatly to improved outcomes for children.

An interactive map, detailing community toy library facilities that are already up and running, can be found at toylibrariesireland.org.

Individuals and community groups considering starting their own toy library can also register on the website to receive a free 'Start Your Own Toy Library' playbook.

Speaking at the launch last year, Alan Dillon TD, Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications with

Volunteer-led facility cuts plastic waste & costs



SHARING IS CARING Volunteer Laura McCormack at Carrickmacross Toy Library

responsibility for the Circular Economy, said: "Given the damage being caused to our environment through unsustainable production and consumption patterns, we need to adhere to the circular economy principle of keeping all products and materials in use for as long as possible.

PIVOTAL

"For the countless toys that already exist, reuse and sharing models such as toy libraries are pivotal to prevent them from becoming waste and are important steps towards a circular economy."

Carrickmacross Toy Library in Co Monaghan – which celebrated its fifth birthday in September – is to serve as a model toy

library facility for others to learn from.

Jill Kennon, CEO of Carrickmacross Toy Library and spokesperson for Toy Libraries Ireland, said: "The toy industry generates an unparalleled amount of plastic waste, which is what motivated us to set up Carrickmacross Toy Library in the first place.

Our membership has increased steadily over the past five years, and it is not uncommon for members to travel from towns 40 or 50 minutes away. The need and demand for toy libraries is clear, and we believe every family in Ireland should have access to a facility like ours."

For a small membership fee, members in Carrickmacross have access to a collection of quality toys, equipment such as travel strollers and black-out blinds, and party rentals including soft play sets and reusable tableware. Services in addition include 'stay and play', themed play sessions, a cloth nappy bank and an active freecycle community.

For more information, visit www.cmxtoylibrary.ie or follow @cmxtoylibrary on Facebook and Instagram.



GRABBING a sandwich on the go is part of daily life for many of us – but new research shows it's also a growing source of guilt and frustration.

Eight in 10 Irish adults say they're worried about the amount of food waste produced by shops, cafes and convenience stores, while nearly one in three admit

they throw away on-the-go food every week.

But there may finally be a practical solution that fits everyday routines.

Circle K has partnered with food-saving app Too Good To Go, which is now live in over 120 stores nationwide, with plans to roll out across all outlets.

The idea is simple – surplus food that would otherwise be

wasted is bundled into 'Deal for Two' Surprise Bags, typically including sandwiches and pastries worth around €15, and sold for just €4.99.

Research shows people care, they just want easy ways to act on it.

With the cost-of-living crisis still biting, saving money while doing the right thing is a powerful motivator.

PLANS Lord Mayor of Dublin Ray McAdam with Fiach Mac Conghail and Darina Kneafsey of the Digital Hub Development Agency at St Patrick's Tower



REVAMP SET TO BE A TOWERING SUCCESS

FOR more than 160 years, the ground floor of St Patrick's Tower has stood silent – a locked-up reminder of Dublin's industrial past. Now, that is finally about to change.

Construction is officially under way to transform the base of the iconic 150-foot tower in the Liberties into a new event, exhibition and community space, opening it to the public for the first time since the 1860s.

The €1m project, backed by Dublin City Council, is due to be completed by summer 2026 – another sign that one of the capital's oldest neighbourhoods is on the up.

Lord Mayor Ray McAdam turned the sod recently alongside The Digital Hub's leadership, marking what many see as a small but symbolically powerful step in the regeneration of Dublin 8.

At a time when debates

rage about housing, heritage and who the city is really being built for, this project straddles all three.

St Patrick's Tower is no ordinary building. Built in 1757 as one of Europe's largest smock windmills, it once powered the George Roe whiskey distillery before steam technology rendered it obsolete.

It has loomed over the Liberties for generations – admired, but unused.

Until now.

APPROACH

The upgrade will see the carefully conserved ground floor become a wheelchair-accessible venue for up to 50 people.

And it won't just serve The Digital Hub's tech and creative companies, but local groups, artists and residents too.

Dublin City Council's backing signals a new approach of putting old buildings back to work.

As The Digital Hub Development Agency Chief Executive Fiach Mac Conghail put it, this is conservation with purpose.

In a city crying out for affordable venues, cultural space and meaningful reuse of historic buildings, St Patrick's Tower may be small – but its impact could be anything but.