

Charmaine's Diary

19th April 2010

Monday

Catch up on some Rose of Tralee administration and some beautifying in my Mum's salon, Marian's Salon de Beauté.

Tuesday

Visit South Hill Enterprise Centre in Athboy, Co Meath, an organisation run by the Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary which is dedicated to providing employment and training opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities. Have great fun chatting to the workers and hearing how they make their delicious Belgian chocolates, gourmet jams, whiskey marmalade, apple tarts, fruit scones, carrot cakes and much more. I can vouch to their deliciousness as I am presented with a basket of South Hill produce at the end of my visit. Next stop – Youthreach in Kells where I am warmly welcomed by a colourful banner made by the students. The students ask me about the time I have spent volunteering in Delhi and Calcutta with Suas Educational Development. Amongst many other things, they are learning the trade of wood-carving and put a proposal to me that Suas Educational Development will be the beneficiary of any proceeds made from the sale of their carvings. And I am honoured with a presentation of one of these wood-carvings. Next pay a visit to Kells Garda Station where my godfather worked for many years and enjoy the banter. Have lunch with a Sister of Mercy, Sr. Columba, who is a board member of Eureka Secondary School in Kells and with the school principal. Meet the Transition Year class of Eureka and hear about their endeavour to make Kells a Fair Trade town. Am very impressed by the ambition of their project and the progress they've made thus far. Talk to the students about studying, getting involved in the community, developing their interests and setting up a business. Visit St Colmcille Credit Union in Kells, one of the oldest credit unions in the country, which is soon to be celebrating its fiftieth anniversary. Am charmed by two of the founding members as well as some of the current directors who give me an extraordinary reception. Drop into the house of an old school pal of my late grandfather, Mick Beirne, and hear tales of how Grandad was the most clever in the class, how his nickname was "Pope" because of his devotion to the Catholic Church at such a young age and how he used to trade comics with the other boys. An absolute treat.

Wednesday

Go for a run and trip-up over a cat's eye on the road! Come home with a bruised arm, sore wrist, grazed hands and a horrible gash on my knee which is certainly not good for dress-wearing at Rose engagements! Later drive to Dublin to catch-up with a friend over dinner. Retire to the Carlton Hotel Dublin Airport for a good rest.

Thursday

Share my thoughts and experiences on Education both here and in the developing world at an event for primary and secondary students in the Mansion House in Dublin. The event is part of the Global Campaign for Education, a civil society movement that aims to end inequality in global education. The students work in groups to address questions such as "Should education be a right for all?", "Should we cut funds being sent to the developing world in the current economic climate?" and "What should be done to improve the education system in Ireland?". Am truly inspired by the depth of discussion, knowledge shared and insight drawn by the students as well as their passion about education. Leave the event a happy woman in the knowledge that there is hope for our future with these bright and enthusiastic students coming on stream. Dash back to the Carlton Hotel Dublin Airport to do some video recordings for the Rose of Tralee Regional Final which take place at the in June at the Heritage Hotel in Portlaoise. Manage to get the clip somewhat right on take number 31. Bless the patience of the poor cameraman! Drive home to Athy.

Friday

Travel to Ennis for the Limerick Rose Selection. This is a very special year for the Limerick centre as they are celebrating their 50th year. A fabulously run show is held with the highlight being six-year old junior escort, Matthew Browne, being interviewed on stage and telling the audience that the reason he is here is because he has nothing better to be doing! The honesty of kids is just brilliant! Bríd Richardson is selected as the Golden Jubilee Limerick Rose and I have no doubt that she will be a superb ambassador. Reach home in Athy at 4am.

Saturday

Attend an awards ceremony being held in Dublin City University (DCU) by the Centre for the Talented Youth of Ireland (CTYI). Am delighted at the opportunity to reconnect with this organization that works with young people of exceptional academic ability. CTYI summer camps played a formative part during my teenage years and I remember with great fondness time spent studying Probability and Chaos Theory, Biotechnology, and Game Theory and getting a flavour of university life before my time. Later bolt down to Tralee for the Kerry Rose Selection where Daithí Ó Sé plays a blinder with the home crowd and Veronica Hunt, ironically a Cork native, is chosen as the Kerry ambassador for 2010.

Sunday

An early start after a late night with a photoshoot in Toby World, Kerry's largest indoor family entertainment centre. The shoot is based on an Alice-in-Wonderland-esque tea-party with seven Rosebuds from the 2009 Festival to launch the Rosebud Summer Camps. These camps are a new addition to the Rose of Tralee International Festival and are being held around the country for young girls. The camps will have drama (based the story of the Rose of Tralee), music, song & dance (imitating the party piece element of the Festival), arts & crafts (rose parade costumes), cultural education (learning about the culture of the participating countries UK, Australia, USA, Canada, UAE, Germany, France, Luxembourg, New Zealand) and much more. Journey the long way home and never so happy to be greeted by Mum saying that she has the electric blanket of the bed on...