

My earliest memories of growing up in Tuam were what seemed to be the never-ending walk up and down Dublin Road every day and every year to the Mercy Convent school. Passing the tall stone wall guarding the old racecourse and being aware of the remains of the last standing wall of the Famine Workhouse were always part of the consciousness of where I came from.

Growing up in Tuam was very unique in that Tuam was and is a town packed with creativity and talent. There were and still are many, many 'Bards of Tuam'. Wonderfully talented poets, writers, actors, artists and music makers are around every corner.

Meeting a singer-songwriter or a poet on the street always brightens up my day, conversing about current and future projects and the same old question 'Are you writing anything at the moment?' makes me feel very grateful that these wonderful scholars would have an interest in me. They are inspirational... no fame, no fortune, but the joy of being creative. They have taught me personally, that if one child laughs in the audience at one of my children's shows, that is the goal accomplished. My parents are members of The Old Tuam Society for many decades and both are artists, poets and craft-makers. There is always a copy of The Tuam Herald and The Old Tuam Society's JOTS on the kitchen table! They instilled a love and respect for the arts in me.

I remember attending the annual magical Christmas pantomimes by The Tuam Theatre Guild in The Town Hall and the impressive shows by the Marion Choral Society. A feeling of wanting developed inside, a wanting for me to be involved somehow and take part.

Thankfully, opportunities arose for me because of Tuam, I write scripts for local theatrical groups such as Stage Left & Take a Bow and local schools. Tuam gave me the opportunity to produce my plays in The Mall Theatre and The Miller's House.

As a member of Tuam Tidy Towns and founder of Tuamóg Children's Events, the door is always open. I am blessed to carry out workshops in the local schools and Tuam Library. The town is vibrant with diversity and this is embraced by including everyone in our events, anything from creative writing to learning about nature.

Creative Places Tuam has given me the opportunity to connect with other artists and arts groups and acts as an invaluable facilitator for creativity in Tuam. Creative Places made it possible for Tidy Towns and I to organise and carry out the annual Christmas Craft Fair in King Rory O'Connor Park under what we thought were impossible restrictions in the current pandemic. The local artists and craftspeople were very thankful to Creative Places as this gave them a great opportunity to showcase their handcrafted wares. Creative Places has also given us in Tuam Tidy Towns a wonderful opportunity to create a mural carried out by an aspiring young artist from Tuam.

The legacy Creative Places Tuam has created is one of the realisation that all artists; no matter what genre, are all connected and by working together the incredible may be achieved.

*"Creative Places has built a bridge of communication  
from one artist to another,  
Through supporting and encouraging creativity and wonder!"*

**Patricia Callaghan-King**