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Holly and Michael Tanner from Enniskeane, with their cousin Max Tanner (centre), enjoy a day out at Ballincollig Regional Park.

## Billboards celebrate creativity in Bantry

West Cork is known as a hub of cultural activity: Now an outdoor exhibition of life-size portraits organised by a volunteer group, 'Bantry Creates' features local artists, some well-known, others unsung, working in different disciplines and living in the greater Bantry area. Using photography and text, these remarkable billboards show visitors and residents alike how prevalent creativity is in this part of West Cork.

Eleven large portraits on exterior walls of businesses and public buildings throughout the heart of the town will be on show until October. They tell stories of exceptional people who are representative of the many ways creativity contributes to the community. They focus on what makes Bantry special, not just its beautiful environ-



ment or heritage, but its people.

Individuals featured include: Jeffrey Caine, screenwriter; Rory Conner, master cutter; Wendy Dison, visual artist; Claire Dix, filmmaker; Nobby Dunne, inventor; Marlene Enright, songwriter and music educator;

Brendan Jennings, shoemaker; Belinda Lang, actor and director; Annabel Langrish, visual artist; Danny Vincent Smith, painter; and Ashley Wholihan, traditional musician.

The BantryCreates.com website provides more information about each individual.

Bantry Creates is organised by curator Catherine Hammond, photographer Benson Russell, and graphic designer Jenny Dempsey, all also from the Bantry area. The project is generously funded in part by the Cork County Council Arts Office, Creative Ireland, the Cork County Council Municipal District Amenity grants, West Cork Music, and other generous sponsors. A crowdfunding campaign at GoFundMe is underway to cover the rest of the budget.



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# Bantry volunteer says Ireland needs to do more to help with refugee crisis

“Everyone deserves the same chance at life,” says humanitarian aid worker and UCC law graduate Amy Boyden from Bantry “and it should not be determined by where you were born.” Amy is volunteering at a refugee camp on Lesbos in Greece and shares her heartrending experience with **West Cork People** of the struggle and conditions the refugees in the camp face every day for years on end.

There are approximately 6,000 refugees in the Lesbos camp, 2,000 of whom are under the age of 18. Amy, a law graduate from UCC, has been volunteering there for the past four months, helping with distribution and outreach programmes, which includes providing clothing for babies, children, teenagers and adults. She also teaches adult English classes to beginners and basics. Amy has been volunteering

since 2016, when her passion for international human rights and global justice, inspired by her Godmother, who has volunteered with many different NGOs over the years, led her to begin volunteering with Trocaire and then also with the NGO Bridge to Resources, Integration and Justice (BRIJ), an organisation that aids people in Direct Provision.

“The conditions across the Aegean islands for refugees and asylum seekers are horrific and inhumane,” shares Amy “with inadequate shelters and a severe lack of accessibility to various services.”

People can remain in the camp for months to years, in a state of limbo, with no clear answer on their asylum application. There is also a lack of accessibility of structured education for children who account for almost half the population of the camp. When matched with the under-resourced and slow processing of asylum applications, this leads to a sense of hopelessness and dismay.

“The camp has restricted access for entry and exit, and



only one member from each household can leave camp per week,” says Amy. “The tents are small and have hardly any ventilation; in some cases two to three families share these tents. Some get along and others don’t.”

Temperatures in Lesbos have now started to rise over 30 degrees and will continue to rise up to 40 degrees. “There is no shading in camp and, as a result, the tents the refugees are provided with are too hot to stay

inside,” shares Amy.

People spend months to years trapped on the island due to the inadequate resources available for asylum processing. “When and if their asylum is granted, many face a transfer to mainland Greece where they have more difficulties accessing services and are often left alone to navigate the complex finance, medical, and legal systems.

“If they receive a second rejection of their asylum they have to apply for asylum from the very beginning all over again. Some of the residents have spent two years of their life waiting to get their application through and then to be rejected for a second time is soul crushing for them. All they want is to start living their lives again; they want to move forwards with their lives not stay stuck.”

Despite being faced with such hopelessness and harsh conditions every day, Amy says these people are inspiring in their resilience; they dare to dream and aspire like all of us. “When someone has been granted asylum and they have been accepted to go to Germany, this

is when they cannot stop smiling and they are so excited to start their lives.”

The role of a volunteer is mostly rewarding. “Being able to teach the residents English and watching them improve with their writing and vocab skills makes me feel very proud,” says Amy. “It is a win/win situation, they want to learn English and it makes me happy. We have a good time together, they aren’t just refugees they are my friends.”

However, some days in camp are harder than others. “There was a case where a mother of three, pregnant with her fourth child, put her three children outside the tent and went back inside and set herself on fire,” says Amy sadly. “She couldn’t take it for one more day. But she didn’t die, and now she is being prosecuted for arson.

“Each refugee has their story, their own horror story. Life is far from easy; it is a constant struggle for them. We will never understand what they have gone through unless it would happen to us. And if it were to happen

*Continued on next page...*

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## HEALTH

Hannah Dare  
Organico Bantry

Keeping your brain in good condition can be aided by a good diet, and natural supplements can play a role too. In this month's article I'm taking a look at both aspects of brain support.

# Food for thought

There is a growing understanding of the links between diet and brain health, and especially degenerative conditions such as dementia, and other conditions such as depression and anxiety. In particular, a high sugar diet seems to be more and more associated with degenerative brain conditions. With this in mind we all need to keep a close eye on our blood sugar levels, and make sure we don't fall into the pre-diabetic category, which could increase our risk of brain disorders as we age.

### Best brain foods

Did you know up to 70 per cent of our brain is made of fat? Fat is very important for proper brain function, but it needs to be the right kind. We need to get enough omega 3-fatty acids because these are the essential building blocks of our brain and

are important for learning and memory.

We should try to eat avocados regularly, as they contain high quantities of monounsaturated fatty acids, as well as seeds and nuts, eggs and coconut oil. Oily Fish is a good source of essential fats, so try and eat mackerel whenever you can this summer! And if you aren't managing several portions a week, then a good strong Omega 3 Supplement is something I would advise.

The full range of vitamins in fruit and vegetables are essential for our health. For example, eating sufficient amounts of vitamin C-rich foods can protect against age-related mental decline. Vitamin C is a powerful antioxidant that helps fight off the free radicals that can damage brain cells. But a diet rich in fruit and veggies is essential for brain health.

Blueberries contain flavonols, a type of flavonoid, that gives them antioxidant and anti-inflammatory effects that reduce and repair cell damage. Anthocyanins found in red, blue and purple berries can protect brain cells from ageing – a recent study showed that the consumption of blueberries and strawberries is associated with delayed cognitive aging by as much as 2.5 years.

Dark chocolate may also improve the function of your

brain. One study of healthy volunteers showed that eating high-flavanol cocoa for five days improved blood flow to the brain. Cocoa may also significantly improve cognitive function in elderly people with mental impairment. Go for organic, high quality chocolate though – dairy milk isn't beneficial at all!

Caffeine, in moderate doses, has been shown to help brain function. Green tea contains less caffeine than coffee, but enough to produce an effect. It also contains the amino acid L-theanine, which can work synergistically with caffeine to improve brain function. I find Pukka Green teas are the best, they taste great and the ingredients are good quality too.

Turmeric is an antioxidant and anti-inflammatory herb that has positive effects on many body systems including the brain. Curcumin, an extract of turmeric, may be effective in delaying or even reversing many brain diseases and age-related decreases in brain function and can improve memory. A good amount of turmeric to add to your diet is ½ an inch of the fresh organic root or half a teaspoon of the organic powder daily, or the equivalent in a capsule if that's easier.

### Best brain supplements

In Organico we always start



by recommending omega 3 for the brain, as so many people find it hard to eat enough oily fish. One that is high in DHA is particularly good. If you are vegan, there are really good high strength Vegan Omega 3 supplements at your local health food shop these days.

Then lecithin, which contains choline, which is a chemical your brain uses to communicate. Clinical research suggests that a diet rich in choline can lead to a sharper memory.

We would also always suggest a good vitamin B complex - vitamins B6, B9 and B12 are often linked with brain health. They can help break down homocysteine, high levels of which have been associated with a greater risk of dementia. B12 is particularly important for brain health in people eating little meat or dairy.

We also recommend magnesium, because it is involved in healthy brain development, memory and learning.

### The role of probiotics

There are several probiotics that are good for the brain, recently all the major brands have launched a probiotic supplement for the brain. This

is another fascinating area of research. Ted Dinan is an Irish Professor of Psychiatry at University College, Cork - he believes firmly in the connection between the gut and the brain (a partnership called the gut-brain axis). If our microbes get out of balance, say because of food poisoning or antibiotics, they may not be able to do their jobs. That can lead to dysbiosis, leaky gut and inflammation. That, in turn, may be an underlying cause of depression and anxiety. So a good diet full of fermented foods will benefit your gut and in turn your brain.

The supplement that Ted Dinan had a hand in developing, called Zenflora, is aimed at improving the specific gut flora that help with mood balance and could possibly help to prevent depression and anxiety, and it's available in your local health food shop.

If you need any more information on any of the above, or would like more specific advice on brain health, call in to us in Bantry. We are open 9am – 6pm, Monday - Friday. [www.organico.ie](http://www.organico.ie) [info@organico.ie](mailto:info@organico.ie) (027) 51391



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# “Studying Nutrition at CNM changed my life”



Aisling Kelly, CNM  
Nutrition Graduate

I was a Montessori teacher for many years but I decided to change careers as the job became stressful and more focussed on paperwork, as opposed to being interactive with the kids. Food and helping people are two passions of mine – studying nutrition allowed me to do both.

The College of Naturopathic Medicine (CNM) always stood out to me at events, I loved their ethos and the Naturopathic Nutrition diploma is unlike other courses. CNM offers flexible courses that can be studied in-class on the weekends, which allowed me to continue working and fit study around my family.

Undertaking clinical experience during my studies was very key helping me to gain confidence as a practitioner. CNM's lecturers are so supportive and knowledgeable; being guided by their clinical experiences was phenomenal.

I now have financial freedom and a flexible work schedule which has been key for me as a single mum - I'm able to support myself financially and work around my family.



My job as therapist is incredibly varied. I work in a holistic health centre doing private one-to-one consultations where I specialise in digestive issues, skin health, inflammation and weight loss. I also run corporate talks and events for SME's which I love doing as education and empowering others to take control of their health is important to me.

I hold the position of Director of Studies for CNM Cork which is such a rewarding job as I get to inspire and support students in achieving their goals.

Working for myself gives me the flexibility to choose my own work schedule - if I want to take the afternoon off to go for a walk, I can. I'm also able to work in the evenings so I can be around for my family during

the day.

My advice to anyone thinking about studying nutrition is - go for it. I held back from studying for years due to finances; I had no money but I found a way to follow my dream! My motto is to feel the fear and do it anyway.

The skills and training you get on the CNM Naturopathic Nutrition diploma are invaluable and completely lifechanging. CNM gives students and graduates a platform to get noticed and an abundance of opportunities to progress their careers.



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