

PRESS RELEASE

15th June 2023

Double award-winning social enterprise, based in Mullingar, launches free online summer camp available to children in Westmeath living with lifelong health conditions.

Mullingar based charity, Helium Arts, announced yesterday for not one but two major funding awards, is bringing their art camps to Westmeath this July 2023.

Yesterday, 14 June 2023, Helium Arts was awarded €58,000 from the RTÉ Toy Show Appeal, along with 147 other lucky Irish charities.

This grant administered by the Community Foundation Ireland was made possible by the generosity of viewers of last November's Late Late Toy Show.

Also yesterday, Helium Arts was announced as an awardee of the Social Entrepreneurs Ireland 2023 Changing Ireland Accelerator programme. This is a nine-month accelerator programme for social entrepreneurs and is worth €60,000 as well as a range of other supports like mentoring and business advice.

Commenting on the announcement of the two awards, founder of Helium Arts and resident of Mullingar, Helene Hugel said:

"Winning two awards like this in just one day is wonderful. Helium Arts is grateful to the viewers of the Late Late Toy Show for helping us make magic for children. Our second award from Social Entrepreneurs Ireland is also really exciting as it supports us with funding as well as other key supports."

Helium Arts camps are specially designed for **children and young people (age 8-15) living with a lifelong physical health condition**. All camps are free, supported by professional artists, volunteers and on-site medical care.

A **new online offering from Helium Arts**, this July, now means that young people living with lifelong health conditions in Westmeath can take part.

The **online camp will take place from 4-6 July** and will be run via Zoom. All that's needed is access to wifi and a device to take part. All the art materials needed will be delivered by post in time for the camp.

Email hello@helium.ie to request a booking form.

Talking about the new online offering, Helene Hugel added:

“Life can be tough for a young person with a lifelong health condition. With the help of this funding, we are thrilled to be able to offer our service to more and more places in Ireland, particularly my home county Westmeath! The funding will allow us to continue to increase our reach and to make space for all children in Ireland living with lifelong health conditions to create, belong and connect with each other.”

About Our Camps

A lifelong physical health condition is one which can be treated and managed but usually not cured. Examples include **diabetes, epilepsy, cystic fibrosis, allergies, heart conditions, chronic asthma, spina bifida, juvenile arthritis, rare or complex conditions** and many more.

Living with a lifelong physical health condition is hard. Children can face loneliness, stress, anxiety, and feel defined by their condition. They experience: stigma associated with their condition, social isolation, loneliness and fewer quality friendships.

Our camps are a great opportunity for these children to not only explore their creativity but also to make new friends, learn new life skills, grow in confidence and self-esteem and have fun during the Summer school holidays!

Further information about the work of Helium Arts is available at: www.helium.ie

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NOTES TO EDITOR:

AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEW:

- Helene Hugel, CEO and founder of Helium Arts

IMAGES ATTACHED

1. Image of Helene Hugel, CEO and Founder of Helium Arts taken at the launch of the SE Ireland Changing Ireland Accelerator Awardees
2. Image of the Four Awardees of the Changing Ireland Accelerator Programme from left to right
Mamobo Ogoro – GORM
Helene Hugel - Helium Arts
Shane McKenna – Dabbledoo
Niamh Tallon & Mohammed Mahomed – Her Sport

3. Ava and Naomi from Limerick visiting an exhibition by Diana Copperwhite in the Limerick City Gallery of Art with Helium Arts artist, Chelsea Canavan. (Credit: Lucy Dawson)

About Helium Arts:

Helium Arts is an award-winning children's arts and health charity that aims to improve the personal, health and social outcomes of children and young people with underlying or complex medical conditions by providing opportunities for creativity that they may not otherwise have access to. Through a series of arts-based workshops, they create safe and inclusive spaces that inspire creativity, spark friendships, and improve mental health and well-being.

In Ireland, there are 136,000 (13%) children and teenagers living every day with the challenges of a lifelong physical health condition. Helium Arts brings positivity to these children's lives through participatory arts programmes, which take place in hospital, health and community settings. Helium Arts empowers these children through creativity and the arts, giving them the opportunity for connection, belonging, imagination and joy. Through the programme at Helium Arts the children gain confidence and independence.

Helium Arts' national Creative Health Hub Programme is funded by the Creative Ireland Programme from sources including the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, the Department of Health (Healthy Ireland/Sláintecare Programme), the Health Service Executive and the Arts Council.

Further information is available at www.helium.ie or by following Helium Arts on social media: @HeliumArts.

About Social Entrepreneurs Ireland

Social Entrepreneurs Ireland (SEI) is a not-for-profit organisation (Charity Reg Number No: 20065379), that is committed to accelerated social change through the power of people. Since its foundation in 2004, SEI has identified and supported more than 550 social entrepreneurs across the island of Ireland who are championing and driving solutions in areas such as mental health, homelessness, the environment, education, and unemployment. For more information, see www.socialentrepreneurs.ie

Please note: the inclusion of SEI in press materials and boilerplate is requested while you are on the Changing Ireland Accelerator (though this might not be appropriate on every occasion). The above template can be adapted to suit your organisation.

About RTE Toy Show Appeal

Inspired by children, the RTE Toy Show Appeal works to bring the magic of the Late Late Toy Show to every child in Ireland. By funding essential support, health, well-being, play and creativity we aim to change children's lives for good.

The donations to the RTÉ Toy Show Appeal, are received and managed by registered charity, Community Foundation Ireland with whom we work in partnership. For more information about Community Foundation Ireland, please see here: [Community Foundation Ireland – For change. For better. For all](#)

The RTÉ Toy Show Appeal has raised over €17.5million for children's charities across the island of Ireland to date.