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## **NewsBrands Press Pass improves literacy and encourages young people to engage with society**

***70,000 Transition Year students have participated in NewsBrands Ireland's Press Pass programme, which develops literacy and critical thinking skills and leads students to analyse the society they live in.***

In 2016, 8,000 Transition Year students took part in the NewsBrands Ireland Press Pass initiative. At today's Press Pass Awards, 16 of those students were awarded for their original journalism, created as part of the Newspapers-in-Education programme.

Finian McGrath T.D., Minister for State with special responsibility for Disabilities attended the awards and presented students with their awards. Speaking at the awards in the Convention Centre he said: "Newspapers have a vital role to play in any free society. They are watchdogs, chroniclers and the eyes and ears that go where most can not be. Press Pass is a wonderful initiative that promotes literacy and critical thinking skills by bringing newspapers into classrooms and encouraging students to study them in depth.

"When you engage with newspapers you engage with society. When young people engage with society, that society benefits enormously from their input and their energy. I am delighted that 70,000 Transition Year students have had the opportunity to study newspapers in their classrooms through the Press Pass programme and I am certain that each and every one of them is a more engaged and better informed citizen as a result." Mr McGrath commented.

NewsBrands Ireland Chairman, Vincent Crowley recognised the quality of journalism produced by the winning students and said: "We are consistently impressed by the standard of work that the young people of this country produce. This year is no exception. It bodes well for the future of journalism in this country and for Ireland more generally."

The audience, made up of nominated students, their teachers and families also heard from Michael Clifford of the Irish Examiner, who was the NewsBrands Ireland Journalist of the Year 2016. Mr Clifford highlighted the value of quality, professional journalism and the importance of a trusted media.

Since the Press Pass programme launched five years ago, approximately 70,000 students have benefited from it. The programme has had the full support of the

Department of Education since it began. It seeks to improve literacy and critical thinking skills while helping students to develop a deeper understanding of news media and how it communicates about the world around them.

Participating schools receive newspapers and a specially created workbook free of charge. Students are encouraged to engage with the newspapers in the classroom, to analyse them and then to create their own original journalism, the best of which was entered into a national competition.

The winners were selected by a panel of newspaper editors and journalists, chaired by Professor John Horgan, the former Press Ombudsman.

The overall winner of the 2016 Press Pass awards was Tomás Ó hUallacháin, Pobalscoil Chorca Dhuibhne, An Daingean, while trophies were also awarded in five other categories: Features, Opinion, News, Sport and Photojournalism.

### **NewsBrands Ireland Press Pass 2016 winners**

#### **Overall winner**

Tomás Ó hUallacháin (Pobalscoil Chorca Dhuibhne, An Daingean)

#### **Features**

1st - Caitríona Ní Chonail (Coláiste Ghobnatan, Baile Mhic Ire)

2nd - Mark O'Donnell (St Columbas Comprehensive, Glenties)

3rd - Natasha Holmes (Presentation Secondary School, Clonmel)

#### **Opinion**

1st - Síofra O'Dwyer (Scoil Mhuire, Buncrana)

2nd - Aoife Foley (St Mary's Secondary School, Macroom)

3rd - Ciara Tomlinson (Jesus and Mary College, Goatstown)

#### **News**

1st - Kate Ní Dhubháin (Pobalscoil Chorca Dhuibhne, An Daingean)

2nd - Ciara Ní Bhruic (Pobalscoil Chorca Dhuibhne, An Daingean)

3rd - Niamh O'Dowd (FCJ Secondary School, Bunclody)

#### **Sport**

1st - Emma McGoey (Mean Scoil Mhuire, Longford)

2nd - Sorcha Nic an tSionnaigh (Laurel Hill Coláiste FCJ, Limerick)

3rd - Colm Breslin (Pobalscoil na Tríonóide, Youghal)

### **Photojournalism**

1st - Jack Farrell (Causeway Comprehensive School)

2nd - Carley Mannion (Coláiste Iognáid, Galway)

3rd - Clodagh O'Leary (FCJ Secondary School, Bunclody)

### **Overall Winner –**

#### **Citation**

#### ***By Prof John Horgan, Chairman of the Judging Panel***

In an era of “alternative facts” the responsibilities of journalists are always increasing. But it is also important to recognize that the real skill of the journalist does not reside just in the facts, but the narrative in which he or she embeds them.

It is not a coincidence that most journalists describe what they produce not as an “article” but as a “story”. Journalists present their facts in narrative form because that is the way our brains have been conditioned, over millennia, to make sense of facts and to remember them.

In doing this, journalists take certain liberties with the facts – not by changing them, but by organising them. They are allowed to decide, for instance, which are the most important facts in their narrative, where to put them, and how to best engage the reader’s interest.

Most of all, they recognize that no narrative can be long enough to contain all the facts: so their tools are, among others, juxtaposition, humour and – above all – the identification and description of details which, although they are only a small part of any story, are significant enough to engage the reader’s imagination and can illuminate the whole narrative, like a spotlight on a crowded stage.

Our overall winner, I feel, knows this in his bones. From a deceptively low-key introduction, he engages us and our imaginations in a fascinating story, through short paragraphs which keep the reader racing ahead, to a conclusion which ties up the events of the narrative in a way many professional journalists would salute.

On behalf of the judges, I therefore have great pleasure in revealing – many good articles keep the punch line to the end – that the overall winner of this year’s Press

Pass competition is Tomás Ó hUallacháin of Pobalscoil Chorca Dhuibhne, for his article: Ard Fhear! A neighbour's inspiration.

**For further information about Press Pass:  
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