**3rd Place News**

**Maeve McWalter, Mount St Michael Secondary School, Claremorris**

**Benjy , Mayo’s Gay bull saved from Slaughterhouse**

Benjy the gay bull, from Mayo, was destined for the slaughterhouse because of his sexuality however he has been saved following a donation from Hollywood producer Sam Simons .

The Co. Mayo farmer bought the pedigree Charolaise bull last year, and was disappointed to find that none of his heifers were carrying calves, despite Benjy’s presence. He had the bull tested and found that he was perfectly healthy and also noticed that the bull was displaying sexual urges towards male cattle instead of cows. After research he discovered that it was possible for the animal to be gay. Benjy was being fattened for slaughter after a vet declared his sexual orientation was the reason he would not breed.

After getting much publicity online, animal activists heard the story and University of Leeds student Charlie Smith created a petition called "Save Benjy the Bull”. She planned on sending it to the Irish government after it reached 1000 signatures. Over 250 people donated to the cause so Animal Rights Action Network (ARAN) and TheGayUK.com could buy Benjy including the producer of The Simpsons and Cheers Sam Simons.

The raised over £5000 (€6, 2500) to save and transport the animal to the sanctuary where he could live out the rest of his life in peace.

Sam Simon is one of the co-creators of 'The Simpsons' and is suffering from terminal cancer. He has devoted his last days to philanthropy - focusing on children and animal charities.

Sam - who is a life-long vegan - explains: "PETA told me about Benjy, and I felt compelled to help. All animals have a dire destiny in the meat trade, but to kill this bull because he's gay would've been a double tragedy. It thrills me to help PETA and ARAN makes Benjy's fate a sanctuary rather than a sandwich."

Benjy's transfer is expected to take place just in time for Christmas.

***Judges’ Citation***

*A great news story is one that takes on a life of its own once it hits the newstands or the web.*

*This was the news story that had it all: a terminally ill Hollywood producer saving the life of a gay Irish bull called Benjy who was otherwise facing the slaughterhouse due to his lack of breeding prowess.*

*This entrant structured her story so well that you couldn’t stop reading.*