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***Press Release 17th May 2021***

**NATIONAL AWARDS FOR COUNTY KILKENNY STUDENTS AT ENTERPRISE FINALS**

IRELAND’S FINEST YOUNG STUDENT ENTREPRENEURS CELEBRATED AT NATIONAL FINALS IN VIRTUAL CEREMONY AT CROKE PARK

Students from County Kilkenny have been successful at the National Final of this year’s Student Enterprise Programme scooping awards across the different categories. The Finals of the Local Enterprise Office initiative were broadcast virtually on Friday 14th May from Croke Park with An Tánaiste Leo Varadkar and Ambassador Derval O’Rourke speaking with host RTE’s Rick O’Shea, as students and teachers watched on from across the country.

Supported by Local Enterprise Office, Kilkenny students won special merit awards in the Most Creative Business Idea’ competition which is open to senior students, Best Adaptability Award in the Covid era in the Junior Category and the Overall Award in the ‘My Entrepreneurial Journey’competition at Intermediate level.

Mark Srouji, from Coláiste Éamann Rís, Callan was again announced a winner at the National Student Enterprise Programme Final. This year, Mark was awarded first prize in the ‘My Entrepreneurial Journey’competition at Intermediate level. Mark set up a business called “Mark’s Productions” making themed table centerpieces and as part of the competition he interviewed Anne Neary of Ryeland House Cookery School as his case study. Last year, Mark and his twin brother Evan were successful in winning a Special Merit Award in the Intermediate Category of the main Student Enterprise Programme.

In the ‘Most Creative Business Idea’ competition which is open to senior students, Rachel Brennan of Loreto Secondary School was awarded a Special Merit Award for her Covid-19 related business idea “Counting after Covid”. Rachel’s idea involved the development of customised framed money box containing imagery to motivate people to save for trips, adventures, etc. post Covid.

In the Junior Category, winning students Noah Cahill, Ian McDonald and Thomas Deegan from Coláiste Éamann Rís, Callan worked under the guidance of their teacher Emer Hickey to win the Best Adaptability Award in the Covid era. Their student enterprise was called Parcel Trust, which manufactures high-quality secure outdoor storage boxes designed particularly with online deliveries in mind.

There were 72 student enterprises competing in this year’s National Final in what is Ireland’s largest entrepreneurship programme for second level students. The initiative, funded by the Government of Ireland through Enterprise Ireland and delivered by the 31 Local Enterprise Offices in local authorities throughout the country, saw 29,000 students from almost 500 secondary schools across the country take part.

An Tánaiste, Leo Varadkar, who took part in the ceremony, congratulated the students today; *“Congratulations to not only the finalists being recognised here today, but to everyone who took part in the competition. To be a finalist in the Student Enterprise Programme is a fantastic achievement in normal times and its incredible given everything that’s happened this past year. Everyone who took part should be very proud of all that they have achieved. Special mention to their teachers, parents and all those who helped them along the way. The ability to create an idea, turn it into a business and to run that business is a skill that will be invaluable later in life.  Ireland has a proud history of entrepreneurship and no doubt those here today will all go on to achieve great things. Government will back you every step of the way.”*

Praising the winning students and all those representing Kilkenny at the National Finals,Fiona Deegan, Head of Enterprise with Local Enterprise Office Kilkenny said: *“This is a proud day for student enterprise in County Kilkenny with the winning of 3 national awards. We would like to congratulate the students, their families and their teachers at both Coláiste Éamann Rís, Callan and Loreto Secondary School, Kilkenny on winning these national awards in Croke Park. We would also like to pay tribute to all the Kilkenny finalists who are impressive ambassadors for student enterprise in the county.”*

Cathaoirleach Cllr Andrew McGuinness also congratulated the Kilkenny winning students and said *“Year-on-year the Student Enterprise Programme continues to produce the very best of ingenuity and entrepreneurship amongst our secondary school students. It’s no surprise to see the challenges thrown up by the pandemic featuring in many of the businesses and the ongoing willingness for students to create businesses that not only sell services or products, but that help address ongoing issues in society. The Student Enterprise Programme National Finals is not an end point for our student entrepreneurs, but a stepping stone on the next stage of their entrepreneurial journey. From our class of 20/21 we will see some business leaders and global entrepreneurs of the future emerge.”*

The National Finalists, who competed across three categories, Junior, Intermediate and Senior, saw judging take place virtually via electronic submissions. Each student enterprise was challenged with creating, setting up and running their own business, which must show sales of their service or product. The judging panel included business owners and representatives from enterprise agencies and associated bodies.

Since the Student Enterprise Programme began in 2003, over 250,000 students have taken part, learning key skills on how to create a business idea, start a business and grow a business. Full details of all this year’s 72 national finalists are available on the Student Enterprise Programme website at [www.StudentEnterprise.ie](http://www.StudentEnterprise.ie)

**ENDS**

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**NOTES STUDENT ENTERPRISE PROGRAMME – NATIONAL FINAL WINNERS 2021**

All of the below Kilkenny teams won prizes at the National Final of the Student Enterprise Programme which was held virtually today.

**Main Student Enterprise Programme - Junior Level - Winner of a Special Merit Award for ‘Best Adaptability in the Covid-19 Era’**

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| **Business Name**  | **Students on Team** | **School**  | **CATEGORY**  |
| **Parcel Trust:** High-quality multi-functional secure outdoor storage boxes for online deliveries.  | Noah Cahill, Ian McDonald, Thomas Deegan | Coláiste Éamann Rís Callan | **Junior Level**  |

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**Creative Business Idea Competition - Special Merit Award (Senior Level)**

For this competition, students had to come up with a Covid themed business idea i.e. you did not need to make the product or sell it. You just needed to create a video which communicated your Covid related business idea.

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| **Business**  | **Student** | **School**  | **CATEGORY** |
| **Counting after Covid:** Customised framed money box containing imagery to motivate you to save for the things you want to do after Covid such as going on trips, adventures and doing other activities.  | Rachel Brennan | Loreto Secondary School Kilkenny | **Senior Level**  |

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**My Entrepreneurial Journey Competition Intermediate Level Winner – 1st Place**

For this competition, students had to (1) Document an interview they carried out with a local entrepreneur (2) write an essay on their imagined entrepreneurial life story and (3) create a poster as a visual display/storyboard of their imagined entrepreneurial journey.

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| **Business Details** | **Student** | **School**  | **CATEGORY**  |
| Mark interviewed local entrepreneur Anne Neary of Ryeland House Cookery School. Mark based his essay and poster on his imagined entrepreneurial journey called ‘Mark’s Productions’, making themed table centrepieces for different occasions.  | Mark Srouji | Coláiste Éamann Rís Callan | **Intermediate Level**  |