

Kilcloon schoolchildren to get new playground

by Kate Donoghue

THE recent 'Strictly Come Dancing' contest held in aid of Scoil Oílibhéir Naofa in Kilcloon, made a profit of €65,176.

Announcing the amount, school principal Ken Keogan said this week: "We hope to announce news very soon about the start of work on the natural play space and all-weather surface on our court area."

Staff, parents and past-pupils came together to organise an unforgettable night at the Glenroyal in Maynooth that will benefit students of Kilcloon for a long time to come.

The school's current yard is run-down and has no play-structures for the children. The aim of this Strictly was to raise money for a new natural playground.

This kind of playground provides a creative play space for children, allowing them to be exposed to natural materials in a safe environment.

It was estimated that a sum of around €30,000 would be needed to complete the project, but the school managed to raise double that figure on Saturday night, 11th March.

The committee who organised the hugely successful event consisted of Ciara Melville, Grace Buckley, Niamh Foley, Paula Ruddy, Joanne Kelly, Orla Gormley, Siobhán Freeman, Fiona Comerford, Pádraig Whelan and Leo Dolan.

Niamh Foley said the commit-

...as adults' dancing exceeds expectations



Ger Burke and Clare McNamee disco dancing in the Kilcloon National School Strictly Come Dancing in the Glenroyal Hotel. Pic: Leo Dolan Photography INSET: Tony Sutton and Patricia Graham also dancing Strictly, in aid of Kilcloon National School.

tee were extremely happy with how the night went, adding that it had "totally blown expectations".

"It's been phenomenal. We had

a figure in mind and we've actually managed to double it."

In a speech before the winners were announced, Mr Keogan was able to reveal that "over €65,000

had been raised so far", and money was still being counted.

He said that regardless of who won the dance contest, "the real winners will be the children in Kilcloon."

Even so, winners had to be chosen, and they were decided from a combination of judges' votes and 'bought votes' from the audience of over 500.

The judging panel was made up of Setanta Sports TV presenter Conor Morris, owner of Edge Dance Studios, Siobhán Mulligan and Barry Buckley, owner of Dental Options.

A little pizzazz was added from the start with the competition being hosted by RTÉ's Kathryn Thomas.

Thirteen couples performed routines and received feedback from the judges before an interval, during which voting took place.

All the couples then performed a group dance which was themed after the musical Grease and featured a medley of its famous songs.

RESULTS

Once the group dance was complete, the top five couples were announced. The top five, in no particular order were: Willie Rhattigan and Marian Guckian;

Ger Burke and Clare McNamee; Eddie Naughton and Lisa Colleary; Brian Clerkin and Michelle Guckian; Seamus Savage and Lucy Donegan.

These five couples then had to perform their dance routine again before the winners were announced.

Eddie Naughton and Lisa Colleary came third. Brian Clerkin and Michelle Guckian came second.

WINNER

The winning couple, who were commended by the judges for their "perfect eye-contact" and "most polished performance", were former Leixlip and Armagh footballer, Seamus Savage and his partner Lucy Donegan.

Kathleen Fitzsimons and her dance partner, Leixlip GP Dr Fergal Hanlon claimed the award for the "most glamorous couple" on the night.

Principal Ken Keogan and Fiona Collins won an award for being the "most improved" dancers overall.

The complete list of the 13 partners who competed is as follows: Kilcloon NS Principal Ken Keogan and Fiona Collins, Jim O'Hara and Deputy-Principal Delia O'Connor Daly, Dr Fergal Hanlon and Kathleen Fitzsi-

mons, Kieran Devany and Niamh Killeen, Willie Rhattigan and Marian Guckian, Tony Sutton and Patricia Graham, Angela Lavin and Guilherme Ramos, Ger Burke and Clare McNamee, Mark Cassells and Fiona Murphy, Eddie Naughton and Lisa Colleary, Seamus Savage and Lucy Donegan, Brian Clerkin and Michelle Guckian, Ivan Ellerker and Catriona Duffy.

AUCTION

An auction took place on the night which alone raised over €6,300. Auctioneer and local artist John Fitzgerald ran the bidding and got people to dig deep for the items available.

The first was one of his own paintings, an original oil on canvas titled Scene from Carton Estate which sold for €550.

The highest selling items were a signed Irish rugby jersey from the team that defeated the All-Blacks (€1,500) and a private dining experience for eight people at the Avenue in Maynooth (€1,400).

There were also 19 raffle prizes up for grabs, including hotel stays, designer dresses, hampers and tech-gadgets, all donated from local businesses.

Earlier this week, the school principal, Mr Keogan paid tribute to the committee behind the Strictly Come Dancing event.

He said that because of their dedication, time and attention to detail the event will stand the test of time as "a truly historic event" in Kilcloon.

"There is no doubt that the heroes of the night were the brave dancers who gave everything in terms of commitment and even on occasions blood, sweat and tears but always quality," said Mr Keogan.

"Special teams produce special performances on big occasions and both the committee and dancers delivered when it mattered most.

"I would also like to acknowledge the absolute generosity of the whole school community and thank you so much for supporting the school in such an emphatic fashion," he added.

"From my view what stood out like a beacon was the wonderful atmosphere and spirit that surrounds the community of Kilcloon and it's a privilege to be part of this."

Some of the dancers visited the school last Thursday week (16th March) and formally presented the cheque for €65,176 (see photo below).

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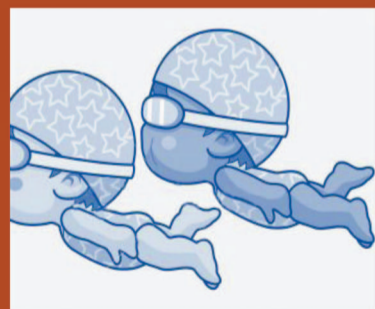
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