

# HEROES PROJECT



Edition no. 3  
Jan—Sep 2021

During summer 2021 our HEROES schedule was very busy and full of new, exciting activities. While having fun and spending great time together, the young people worked on their personal development and formed new friendships.

## HEROES goes virtual in Derry-Londonderry/Donegal



The young HEROES from Derry-Londonderry/Donegal had a fantastic time working online and planning activities they were excited to participate in. They had fun playing team games, trying arts and crafts, fitness, and cooking and baking. These all built their confidence and resilience.

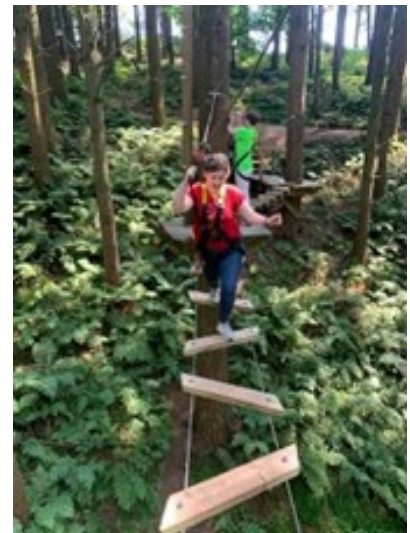


During the programme they also took on the role of environmental investigators, exploring their local green areas. This helped them get ideas about how everyone can take better care of the environment.

## Trip to Jungle NI

Mencap and YMCA HEROES groups went together to Jungle NI in the summer for a day full of adventure and fun. Some of the young people challenged themselves by trying the treetop trek. This was a fantastic team-building experience, where the group cheered everyone to complete the course together.

It was a great day for making new friends and memories.



## Adventures in Todds Leap



YMCA HEROES went to Todds Leap for their final social trip, before ending the programme in September. It was a positive and memorable experience for everyone. They started the day bright and early (which meant they got lots of sleep on the bus) and got stuck right in doing various activities.

Throughout the day they worked on communication skills, especially during blindfolded driving, or they would have ended up in the river! Each one of the young people supported the others and cheered each other on. Some of the activities took them out of their comfort zones, but with peer support and encouragement everyone left feeling a sense of pride and accomplishment.

It was brilliant to see the group making genuine friendships and building each other up.



## Summer survival skills



Two HEROES groups - Sligo/Leitrim and Fermanagh - came together for the first time in August, for an Island Expedition in Lough Allen Adventure. The young people took part in bushcraft activities and developed their survival skills.

On arrival at the centre they were equipped with buoyancy aids, and assigned to teams and a canoe. The first task was to row out to a local island in Drumshanbo. This required physical strength, endurance, good communication and teamwork. It was a tough challenge, but they made it!



Once on the island, the young people collected dry wood and learned how to light their own fire using flint and steel. When the fire was underway, they had a BBQ, hot chocolate and toasted marshmallows.

The teams made shelters from fallen branches, to protect themselves from the elements if they had to stay overnight on the island. Each team scored each other's shelters. Although there was a competitive element to this adventure, the two groups integrated really well as one team and supported each other throughout the day.

It was a fabulous day out for our very own HEROES!

#beyourownhero



## Summer Programme



The Devenish HEROES group summer programme got everyone to challenge themselves in trying new things. Although this was a bit scary at first, in the end it was a memorable and exciting experience for everyone.

The young people enjoyed heights and scenery while sliding down a zip line. They tested themselves as speed car drivers and mastered their driving skills while racing at an indoor karting track. Learning paddle boarding tested their balance and resilience after the first attempts ended up in the water! They also tried off road driving, conquering the muddy trails that required their full attention, communication, and teamwork.

During every activity, the young HEROES encouraged their teammates to complete the task by offering words of support.

Everyone had lots of fun and did not want the activities to end.





## Fun in Fermanagh for 4 HEROES groups



The 2 groups of Belfast HEROES joined up with the Fermanagh and Sligo/Leitrim HEROES groups this summer at Share Discovery Village. On arrival the groups were split into those who wanted to do water activities and those who preferred land based team games.

The water babies got fitted with wetsuits, life jackets and helmets before taking to Lough Erne. They had an incredible time on banana boats and the 'Big Mable' towed by speed boats up, down and around the lough. There were plenty of laughs had by all.

After this, they split again into 2 smaller groups for archery and combat corps (laser tag). We had a few Robin Hoods and warriors in our presence.

It was a successful day introducing all the HEROES groups. It was great to see new friendships blossoming, and the young people supporting and encouraging each other throughout the activities.



## HEROES Belfast goes on a boat trip



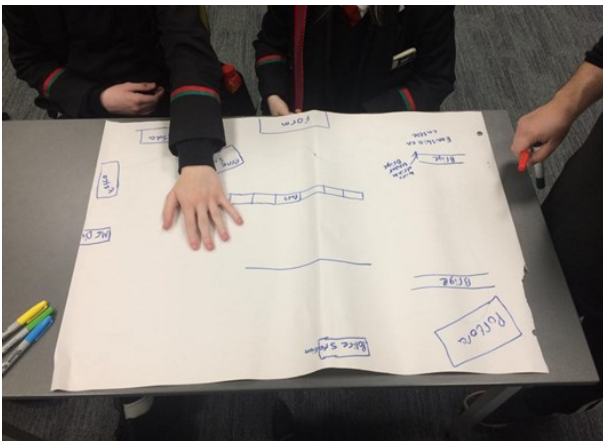
HEROES Belfast headed for a summer road trip to Ballycastle. They stopped off at the Dark Hedges for the Game of Thrones fans, acting like celebrities before heading to Ballyintoy Harbour for lunch.

The rest of the day was spent chilling on the beach, as it was one of the hottest days in the year. Some of the young people braved the sea for some cold-water swimming. Later they headed to meet their skipper for a boat trip around the smuggler's caves and Carrick-a-Rede rope bridge. It was an amazing day with lots of laughs.

The young people and staff created unforgettable memories.

Thanks to United Bus Company and Abhainn Cruises Boat Tours for an amazing day.

## Getting back to our regular activities



Once the young people settled into school, Devenish HEROES got back to regular group sessions. They started their activities by designing a jumper that represented their group. Everyone voted for their favourite design, while respecting and considering each other's opinions. This helped to engage every young person in a conversation on democracy.

They also created a community map of Enniskillen and discussed their ideas on how to improve their local areas with heads full of ideas, they identified small, local actions that they will work on together during the HEROES programme.

## Celebration event

The young people from YMCA HEROES graduated from their programme in September. YMCA hosted a small celebration event for the young people and their parents. This was an opportunity to highlight all the brilliant work the group completed over the past 6 months.

The young people noticed massive personal growth throughout the programme. They improved their leadership skills, as well as their confidence to try new things and their ability to work as a team.

Bekah and Rosie spoke about their experience of the programme. These are some of the things they said:



*'felt anxious at the thought of starting HEROES, however as time went on (they) went home at night feeling excited about the next session'*



*'stomach used to be sore from laughing'*



*'amazing experience'*



*'face to face sessions felt like a return to normality'*

