

The Dr David Thomas Award

I would like to nominate my colleague, Eilish Corley the Student Health Nurse in ATU Sligo for this award. We both joined the college at the same time, and she has grown the role and the student health services in those years. When Eilish started the “medical centre” was in just two rooms in a dilapidated building, with one nurse and a doctor who came in a lunch times a couple a days a week.

But since that time, she has instrumental in the design of a new state-of-the-art medical centre in our student services building. The medical centre boasts bespoke treatment rooms, reception area etc for the nursing team which now boast two and half nurse positions, that also works with a local GP service providing on campus GP access daily to our students. Over the years Eilish has prepared so many documents and proposals seeking improvements in student health services from the management of the college. She was not afraid to fight for resources to ensure a level of care that she saw as necessary for the students. She does this with passion and heart and always with the greater good of student health and wellbeing in mind. She has also forged exceptional links with local service providers, including Sligo University Hospital, in particular the staff in the local GUM clinic. In the pre covid world she had organised for STI Clinics in the college.

As a nurse she is exceptional in every way a nurse can be plus more. Over the years, hundreds of students have been minded, mended, and taken off by her. She shows enormous compassion for them, helping many of them through the most difficult times and is a constant source of reassurance. The students love her, over the years they always say such kind things about her, she always goes the extra mile and it not unusual that she will still be seeing patients after closing time. I know personally of students who have chronic conditions who have come to me in my role in health and safety, to say they would not have made it through college without her one-to-one support she gave to them.

During the pandemic the service didn't stop she just went online. She would often record “how to” videos for students to follow, all in her own time, nothing is ever to much. She was also instrumental in getting the college up and running again after lockdown and provided invaluable advice as a member of the covid response team.

In recent years we have worked closely together in the area of “Health Promotion” among our student population. Eilish has been very influential in our Sexual Health Promotion Campaigns, she has great contacts with Sexual Health West HSE etc and this year alone we have run several sexual health days promoting STI awareness, HIV testing etc. The “cucumber” display that both her and her fellow nurse Caroline devised is inspirational in its simple message. She has helped organise so many “Self Care” days each semester, where she and her colleagues organise and run health promotions on skin care, eating disorders, heart health and much more.

Eilish is the heart and soul of the Student Health Services at ATU Sligo not just for what she does for students, but she has mentored many of the new nurses and other staff over the years and helped them

grow in themselves and their careers. She is so well respected by the doctors from the local GP service and other organisations, all of which has such a positive benefit for our student population.

On a personal note Eilish is the friend that we all need, the one that makes you laugh, but also keeps you on the straight and narrow! She is the one you want to meet for a coffee, even on a bad day because your problems become hers until we both find a solution together. We in ATU Sligo are lucky to have her, our students are lucky to have her, and I know that she is also highly thought of among her colleagues in other Higher Education Institutions. She is so very modest, so she will never be banging her own drum, I am certain that I am only scratching the surface of the kind, compassionate medical professional that she is. I really do hope that with her 17-year work anniversary with ATU Sligo coming up in April that you will consider her for the Dr David Thomas Award.

Thank You

Yvonne Roache

Health and Wellbeing Officer ATU Sligo