

DIRECT PROVISION

“Dun Gibbons website reaches out to the world”

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By Louise Browne

“YOU CANNOT control what happens to you, but you can control your attitude towards what happens to you, and in that, you will be mastering change rather than allowing it to master you.”

These words by the self-help guru Brian Tracy serve as an introduction to a fascinating project by residents of the Dun Gibbons Inn direct provision centre in Clifden, Co Galway.

The Clifden Asylum Seekers’ Community Online Newsletter (*clifdenasc.blogspot.com*) uses stories, photographs and humour to provide an insight into the real lives of asylum seekers.

Set up in July this year, the ‘blog’ website, according to Samuel Kirugumi, chair of the Dun Gibbons Residents’ Committee, was intended “to represent the residents by improving their well-being through empowerment, now and in the future.”

The idea for the site came courtesy of Brendan Smith, community education officer with NUI Galway, who approached Kirugumi about his proposal.

“Brendan works a lot with asylum seekers in relation to computers, and he came up with the idea to get a group of asylum centres together to create a website that would be able to communicate their message out there.”

Using the popular free Blogger service, the website was up and running in no time at all and, although still in its infancy, has been warmly welcomed by everyone involved, according to Kirugumi.

“The majority of the residents are very happy with it. Plus they have been very helpful in contributing material as well. They also give good feedback on what they’d like to see on the website.” An example of this, says Kirugumi, is the banner that shows the local time in Ireland, Algeria, Nigeria, Burundi and Kenya.

On a more personal level, the Kenyan native says: “I think it’s a great idea because it is not only seen within Ireland itself. We have a gadget which shows us where each and every person who views it [is located], what country they’re in or what continent, and I have been surprised to see we have got many visits from the United States and from as far away as Asia.

“So it’s not only helping here within the country of Ireland or in other centres, it’s internationally. We’ve got a lot of hits from all over the world, and it’s good to know we’re passing on our message.”

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