

Video Transcript

Catherine's Story

Hi, I am Catherine Conway and I'm 66 years old and I'm with the AFU since 2020, 2018.

I had a change in my life around that time and I needed to meet people again and get out there and do something different with my life. So I found this ad in the local newspaper about, um, the taste of DCU. So I was curious about this and DCU isn't too far from where I live and I decided to give it a go and go along for the day. And when I went along for the day, I was really surprised how much I enjoyed it.

Initially, I didn't know what to expect, but they had organized lectures in lecture halls that I had never had any experience of that in my youth because when I was younger you just, I was geared into going for a job and helping out at home. So I never, my education suffered a little bit. So I was delighted to see the chance of what I had missed out on.

First course I ended up doing was creative writing. I always wanted to be able to write about my life as a youngster. My mother was from Tipperary and my father was from Dublin. And my mother, my mother's mother and father were still alive in Tipperary. So she used to send, there was five of us, and she used to send me and my next sister, the two of us were near, we're actually Irish twins. We were born 12 months apart in January, and we were very close, still are. And uh, she used to send us down for the whole of the summer holidays and the whole eight weeks of the summer holidays and then every year, and my grandparents loved to see us coming down and that became a part of life for me.

When you have one child, one daughter and I wanted her to know what I experienced because she hadn't got that as, as she was young. She used to, she was in Dublin and you know, had her Dublin friends. And I just wanted her to know what it was like to live in the country during that time.

There was some wonderful stories. We used to go out on tracks and, um, we'd have days out with the group trying to capture whatever we might be. The Hill of Howth or the Botanic gardens and places like that. But I'm still friendly with those as those people as well. And we end up having great, uh, coffee mornings and chats and still go on trips, but we don't necessarily bring the camera now. The social aspect is huge and it's so important. And that's what I got a lot of that out, out of every class I did.

It gives you focus and it gives you something to get up in the morning for. And also that, uh, at the end of it, you have something, usually you have something that would be tangible from whatever, any course that you might do. For example, from the photography group, when we did it, you had a photograph. From the writing you had a story. And from botanical art, you had a piece of work.

Life changed for me and I was, I was sort of put down a bit, you know, so I've got so much confidence back now from what I'm doing. So I, I do enjoy it. But they were always very, very friendly and I just, I just find the kids gr great. Like, and it got me back in touch with young, young kids again, because I haven't had that. My daughter was delighted, absolutely delighted. 'cause she knew I needed something. She knows I'm not an idler and I couldn't be, I couldn't stay at home all day, just, you know, twiddling the thumbs or looking for work to do in the house. There's only so much ironing and cleaning you want to do anyway.