

TrailblazHER™
Empowering Female Talent

T DUBLIN
DUBLIN
TECHNOLOGICAL
UNIVERSITY DUBLIN

TY TRAILBLAZHER AWARDS

2026



THE AWARDS

The TY TrailblazHER Awards celebrate the achievements of female TY students across the island of Ireland.

We believe that success comes in countless forms, and our mission is to encourage every student to pursue their unique passions and make their mark on the world. These awards exist to shine a spotlight on the exceptional dedication and accomplishments of those who have transformed their schools and communities throughout Transition Year.

From the classroom to the community, from the stage to the sports field – we're here to celebrate the trailblazers who are already changing the world, one achievement at a time.

Why TY Awards Matter

In our fast-paced world, we're constantly striving to do more, be better, and reach new milestones. But how often do we pause to truly celebrate what we've already accomplished?

The TY TrailblazHER Awards create that essential moment of recognition. A chance to step back and take stock of all that young students are capable of.

So take a moment and celebrate a TrailblazHER in your school or community!

Meet the Finalists

**TY TRAILBLAZHER
AWARDS 2026**

Schedule

- 01** STEM Innovator of the Year
- 02** Entrepreneur of the Year
- 03** Sports person of the Year
- 04** Creative of the Year
- 05** Wellness of the Year
- 06** Community Hero of the Year
- 07** Phoenix of the Year
- 08** Leader of the Year
- 09** TY TrailblazHER of the Year

STEM Innovator of the Year



ADDISON

ONE TO WATCH

ADDISON CAREY

CELBRIDGE COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Addison has been entering STEM competitions since first year - and winning them. This year alone, she took first place in the Intermediate Individual Technology category at the Young Scientist, and earned a place to represent Ireland at the Regeneration International Science and Engineering Fair in Phoenix, Arizona (the largest pre-college science fair in the world). Her project? Developing a compression pipeline for deploying neural networks in wearable sleep apnoea detection.

ELLIE MURPHY

ST. PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Ellie's passion for STEM didn't stop at the classroom door. She built her school's robotics club from the ground up - recruiting students, sourcing teacher support, and creating a welcoming space where coding and problem-solving became something to get excited about. She led the club's first ever competition entry, guiding her team through every challenge with creativity and calm. Ellie didn't just join STEM - she opened the door and invited everyone in.



ELLIE

ROBOTICS CHAMPION



NAOMI

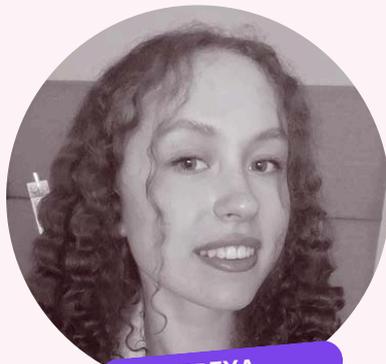
HONEYBEE CHAMPION

NAOMI PICOVICI
ST. LEO'S COLLEGE

Naomi has competed at the Young Scientist Competition three times - and every single time, she's left her mark. This year, she took first place in the Intermediate Biological and Ecological Sciences category with a project that's as ambitious as it is important: a five-month study of the native Irish black honeybee, in which she mastered the highly technical "niche queen rearing" process to prove that docility and climate resilience can be selectively bred. Her work earned special recognition from Met Éireann and the Climate Change Advisory Group, and high praise from the President of UCC.

FREYA MCGALEY
NAAS COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Freya didn't just learn about technology this year, she used it to change lives. After joining the Girls in Analytics programme with Accenture, she went on to develop an app for the visually impaired, inspired by their own mother's experience. With a "Record and Replay" feature that turns a familiar route into a reliable guide, their app is as innovative as it is personal. Congratulations Freya!



FREYA

IMPACTFUL INNOVATION

Entrepreneur of the Year



ELAINE

PROBLEM-SOLVER

ELAINE MCSWINEY

MOUNT ANVILLE SECONDARY SCHOOL

Elaine spotted a problem that everyone else had learned to ignore: sports students with nowhere safe to store their equipment in lockers. Rather than shrug it off, she designed a solution: a compact magnetic storage hook that fits inside a standard locker and holds sports gear securely. She surveyed students across year groups, built and tested multiple prototypes, gathered feedback, and refined her design until it worked. From identifying the problem to producing a realistic, practical product - Elaine did it all herself. That's true entrepreneurial spirit.

MARY ELLEN MOORHOUSE

ST. MARY'S COLLEGE ARKLOW

Mary Ellen learned to crochet in third year, and from that first stitch, something special began. This year she founded Bee Happy Crafts, designing, making, pricing, and selling her own handmade products, with some great results. But the numbers only tell part of the story. Mary Ellen is a proud member of the Travelling Community, challenging stereotypes and promoting inclusion, confidence, and ambition. Her success has encouraged conversations around creativity, equality, and student enterprise within the school community.



MARY ELLEN

GO GETTER



TRÍONA

CREATIVE ENTREPRENEUR

TRÍONA NIC ROIBHEÁIRD
GAECHOLÁISTE AN PHIARSAIGH

Triona didn't just participate in her TY mini-company, she led it. As Managing Director, Financial Manager, and Marketing Coordinator of Slabhraí Speisialta, she oversaw everything from cost management to Instagram marketing to a successful Christmas Market. And when it came to evaluation, she didn't just celebrate the wins; she identified exactly what she'd do better next time. She's a strategist, a self-starter, an entrepreneur in the making.

RACHEAL CORBALLY
GLENAMADDY COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Racheal started crocheting as a TY project. It became something much more. What began as a mini-company turned into a quiet but powerful act of community-building. Handcrafted, personalised gifts for teachers, peers, and students in the AEN unit, often given freely, always made with care. Alongside her creativity, Racheal has made inclusion part of her daily routine, not as a programme or an initiative, but just as who she is: showing up, engaging, and making sure everyone around her feels they belong. She's an artist, a community-builder, and one of those rare people who leads entirely through kindness.



RACHEAL

BUSINESS WITH HEART

Sportsperson of the Year



ABBY

RISING STAR

ABBY CARROLL

Saint Patrick's Cathedral Grammar School

Abby has only been playing sport for four years - but you'd never know it. In that time, she's earned a place on Shamrock Rovers' Girls' Emerging Talent Programme, signed for a club currently in contention for the league premier title, and - in only her second-ever Gaelic football match - helped her team reach a final and walked away as top scorer across the whole Féile weekend. She plays soccer, Gaelic football, basketball, frisbee, and knows better than anyone that getting girls to stay in sport matters - 1 in 2 girls drop out at secondary level, and Abby is determined to make sure that doesn't happen on her watch. She's an athlete, a role model, and a force of nature.

LEXI HIGGINBOTHAM

Drogheda Educate Together Secondary School

As captain of her school's U16 girls' basketball team, Lexi leads her team fiercely. This year, she guided them to the first trophy in the school's history, not through individual brilliance alone, but through the kind of leadership that brings everyone with her: building trust, encouraging less experienced players, staying composed in the tightest moments, and setting standards in every single training session. The result? A culture of belief that will outlast any single season. She's a captain, a champion, and a trailblazer.



LEXI

BUILDING A LEGACY



LORNA SPORTING LEGEND

LORNA HODMAN
St. Mary's Macroom

Lorna only took up goalkeeping in first year. What happened next is the stuff of sporting legend. She is now the first-choice goalkeeper for both the Cork LGFA and Cork Soccer teams - two separate codes, at the highest level, simultaneously. She has helped her school win Munster championships and an All-Ireland title, and she gives her time to coach younger players at both school and club level. Lorna doesn't just play to win. She plays to lift everyone around her.

SARAH O'GORMAN
Rath Dara Community College

Sarah has been kickboxing for over five years and has the medals to prove it: 13 gold, 7 silver, and 3 bronze at national level, a Black Belt, and a quarter-final finish at the European Kickboxing Championships in Italy, which she fundraised for herself. But what sets Sarah apart is that alongside her training and school commitments, she still finds the time to give back, coaching the Little Kickers group for children aged 4 to 7. She's an athlete, a leader, and an inspiration.



SARAH
TRUE FIGHTER

Creative of the Year



CIARA

CONNECTING THROUGH ART

CIARA NÍ ROTHLÁIN

GAECHOLÁISTE AN PHIARSAIGH

Ciara's creativity has left a mark on this school that will last long after TY. She has shown generosity in using her creativity to support school events and initiatives. From creating a portrait of their retiring principal, designing the yearbook cover or creating the official ticket for the school musical. She has also completed a work experience placement at the IMMA and entered the Texaco's Children's Art competition. Whether she's working on a canvas, a brief, or a mural concept for the school's wellbeing space, Ciara brings the same care, talent, and quiet dedication to everything she does.

FREYA DUNNE AND EVIE O'ROURKE

ST. LOUIS HIGH SCHOOL

Evie and Freya took recycled materials and turned them into a showstopping sustainable fashion pieces. They did it entirely on their own terms, leading the project from first sketch to final display with the kind of organisation and professionalism that most people take years to develop. Their Junk Kouture work now lines the school corridors, lifting the mood of everyone who passes by. They are a reminder that excellence doesn't only live in exam results. They are designers and creative forces.



FREYA & EVIE

FASHION POWERHOSUES



MAJA, ABIGAIL, ALEXIE, LAYLA

RAP FOR DEMOCRACY

**MAJA MAKUCH, ABIGAIL PURCELL, ALEXIE
JADE DIME, LAYLA LEPPLA KELLY**
ST. MARY'S HOLY FAITH SECONDARY SCHOOL

When these girls' class was challenged to make a one-minute video about protecting European democracy, most students might have made a slideshow. They co-wrote a rap. Working in a student-led group with minimal teacher input, they helped research issues like misinformation and civic responsibility, then turned that research into lyrics that were sharp, relevant, and genuinely engaging. The video was selected as runner-up in the Dublin constituency - earning her class a trip to the European Parliament in Strasbourg. They are proof that creativity is one of the most powerful forms of communication.

OLIVE WRIGHT
SANDYMOUNT PARK ETSS

Olive took on one of the most demanding roles in musical theatre - and she delivered. Her performance in the school's production of Legally Blonde required vocal strength, choreography, and dramatic depth, all carried with professionalism and genuine warmth. But Olive's creativity reaches far beyond the stage. She won a school-wide competition to design a new logo for the House system. She volunteers with students with additional needs, supports her local community centre, and represented her school on a televised quiz as Gaeilge. Well done Olive!



OLIVE

STAGE & BEYOND

Wellness Ambassador of the Year



CASSANDRA

WELLNESS CHAMPION

CASSANDRA PINEDA

SAINT PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Cassandra directed a student wellness video exploring how peers can lift each other up under pressure, contributed to Health and Happiness breakfast mornings, and writes for the school magazine to celebrate student achievements and self-care. She champions choir and music as tools for mental health, and when musician Tolú Makay visited the school during College Awareness Week, Cassandra was right there, connecting the dots between creativity, wellbeing, and a life worth building. She's a creative, a champion, and a quietly powerful presence in her school community.

LIELA AHMED ABDALLAH LOJAIN AHMED

ABDALLAH, AMALA RONEY

ST. LEO'S COLLEGE

This trio turned a school project into a national conversation. Their project, *Don't Let It Get Under Your Skin*, tackled Ireland's tanning culture head on - surveying over 380 people, presenting to dermatologists at the Irish Melanoma Forum in UCD, and lobbying Minister Hildegarde Naughton in Dáil Éireann to make sun safety part of the school curriculum. At 16, they are already shaping public health policy. Watch out world, these TrailblazHERs are here to make waves.



LIELA, LOJAIN, AMALA

CONVERSATION STARTERS



SARAH

SHOWING UP

SARAH BROHAN
ST. ALOYSIUS SCHOOL

Sarah has been showing up for her school community since first year - and she hasn't stopped since. She's a founding member of both the Smile Club and the Pride and Allies Club, a Wellbeing Ambassador, an active member of Student Council, and a volunteer at Homework Club helping first years after school. She organised Easter egg hunts, sent individual messages of support to students during exams, and was central to the school's Belong To Quality Mark. A lot of what Sarah does is invisible, but its impact absolutely isn't.

STACEY OYEBOLANLE OYELAKIN
TALLAGHT COMMUNITY SCHOOL

After major spinal surgery, most people would focus on recovery. Stacey focused on what she could do for others. Drawing on her lived experience with scoliosis, she developed an AI-powered project exploring how the condition affects young people's school lives - and how technology could help track and monitor it. She surveyed students, ran focus groups, and gathered real stories. Stacey turned a challenging chapter into something that could change the lives of others.



STACEY

RISING STRONGER

Community Hero of the Year



ANGELINA
CONNECTING FOR GOOD

ANGELINA SHIELS
BALLINTEER COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Angelina looked at the problem of loneliness among older people and decided to do something about it. She independently contacted a local nursing home, organised a Music Bingo night where residents could reminisce through songs from their generation, and ran a school-wide campaign to collect unwanted Christmas gifts to use as prizes - all off her own initiative. The event brought joy, connection, and a few well-earned sing-alongs. And it didn't stop there; Angelina shows up for every charity drive, every bake sale, every homelessness awareness campaign the school runs. She's an organiser, and a community hero in the making.

EMMI BRENNAN
ARDSCOIL NA MARA

At the start of TY, Emmi could be described as quietly determined. Halfway through it, she has already delivered 56 environmental workshops to students across the school, mentored a first-year tutor group, and led the Plant a Planet Campaign that resulted in 474 native Irish trees being planted in family gardens across the community. Emmi didn't just talk about making a difference: she went out and made one, one classroom at a time.



EMMI
BUILDING A BETTER PLANET



ISABELLE

COMMUNITY POWERHOUSE

ISABELLE O'CONNOR
CHRIST KING SECONDARY SCHOOL

Isabelle doesn't just talk about the kind of world she wants to see - she builds it, one initiative at a time. She plays for Cobh Ramblers U23s, coaches the Cork Interleague U13s and her school's U14 soccer team, secured Credit Union sponsorship for team kits, coaches children in the deaf unit of her former primary school, and marks International Day of Sign Language by teaching it to her whole year group. She's done work experience with a TD and an MEP, won Best Delegate at Model United Nations, and has raised over €5,000 for Marymount - with a 100km Camino walk for Cliona's Foundation still to come. She's an athlete, an advocate, and a community builder in the truest sense.

NÓRA JANE BHREATHNNACH
COLÁISTE CHILLIAIN

Nóra Jane knows how to keep busy! She coaches children aged 3-7 at Round Towers GAA on Saturday mornings, volunteers at the Maidin Caife helping senior citizens practise their Irish, referees club matches, sits on the Coiste Gaelige, helps run Cúl Camps, and gives up her Friday evenings to the Dermot Earley Youth Leadership Initiative. She also played a key role in her school earning its Gaelbhreach, and was part of the welcome committee when President Michael D. Higgins visited Áras Chrónáin. And she was selected for the Dublin Camogie team. She's a coach, a volunteer, and a bridge between generations.



NÓRA JANE

TIRELESS VOLUNTEER

Phoenix of the Year



ANA

EMBRACING CHANGE

ANA VINCENTE ANDRES

MOUNT ANVILLE SECONDARY SCHOOL

In August, Ana arrived in Ireland from Spain: new country, new language, new school, new everything. She had never visited Ireland before. Rather than wait until she felt ready, Ana leaned straight in. She joined the basketball team, earned her Bronze Gaisce, volunteered with elderly members of the community, and threw herself into every workshop and activity. She also bakes for her classmates every week, turning a hobby into a quiet act of connection.

ELLEN HENNESSY

TALLAGHT COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Ellen was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes. Every day, with a smile, she manages her health while also advocating for others, researching the impact of deprivation on students in Tallaght, and presenting her findings to staff. She is the kind of person who leaves everyone she meets feeling better than before. There's no task too big or too small, no challenge too personal to stop her from thinking about those around her. She's brave, generous, and the kind of quiet force that makes a whole community stronger.



ELLEN

UNSTOPPABLE



FIONNUALA

RESILIENT RETURNER

FIONNUALA KELLY

SAINT PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL GRAMMAR SCHOOL

In third year, a back injury told Fionnuala she wouldn't be playing sport for a year. She could have stepped back from it all. Instead, she showed up to every match, kept score, managed kits, refereed volleyball, and supported her teammates from the sideline while channelling her energy into her studies. When she finally returned to sport in TY, she did so as someone who'd already proven what she was made of - after landing a lead role in the school musical and stepping into leadership across TY activities along the way. She's resilient, resourceful, and a true phoenix.

PETERINA GREALIS

ST JOSEPH'S SECONDARY SCHOOL

When Peterina's family needed her most, she didn't hesitate for a second. She stepped up at home, while simultaneously stepping up in every other area of her life - taking over her mum's wedding business as a harpist and singer, completing her TY programme, entering Junk Koture, and being named one of just 30 Climate Ambassadors selected from TY students across all of Ireland.



PETERINA

STEPPING UP

Leader of the year



ERIN HUGHES

GRANGE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Give Erin an idea and she'll hand it back to you as something bigger than you imagined. This year, Erin was the driving force behind her school's very first Diversity Week - coming up with events, working across staff and students, organising a fundraiser to make it all possible, and making sure no one stood alone at the sidelines. She also sits on the Student Council and volunteers with the school musical. She uses her leadership to make sure everything works and everyone belongs. She's a connector, a builder, and a leader in the truest sense.

IONA WYNTON

COLAISTE NA SCEILGE

Iona leads everywhere. She's captain of the Junior football team, a coach for first years, a weekly volunteer with Skellig Stars, a peer mentor, a Green Schools committee member, and the creator of this school's very first TY Newsletter. This year she also designed and delivered her own initiative, Bridge the Gap, to help young girls transition into full-pitch football. Beyond her school, Iona has completed the LGFA "Accelerate Your Journey as a Minor Player" course and the Athletics Ireland Leadership Course - and has been selected for the Kerry Minor football panel (2025/2026). Iona doesn't wait to be asked. She just sees what's needed, and she gets it done.



IONA

LEADING ON THE FIELD & BEYOND



REBECCA

THOUGHTFUL LEADERSHIP

REBECCA TRIMBLE

ROSCOMMON COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Rebecca leads with care. This year she guided her team through a Young Scientist project exploring the experiences of Roma teenagers in Ireland, keeping the work ethically grounded, academically rigorous, and deeply human. The project earned national recognition and sparked important conversations about belonging and inclusion. In everything from school events to student council, Rebecca brings the same steady presence: organised, empathetic, and quietly inspiring to everyone around her.

SARAH CAREY

BLACKWATER COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Not long ago, some might have described Sarah as quiet. Today, she stands in front of crowds and delivers speeches on sustainable fashion, human trafficking, and human rights that leave audiences thinking long after she's finished. She's competed in Soroptimist public speaking, Model United Nations, and her school's own TED Talk event - and she's done it all while helping her peers find their voices too, offering feedback, running practice sessions, and cheering others on from the wings. Her transformation is remarkable, but what's even more remarkable is what she's done with it. She's a speaker, a mentor, and a role model.



SARAH

FINDING HER VOICE

Future TrailblazHERs

At TrailblazHER™, we believe that inspiring the next generation starts long before university.

Through our **Future Trailblazers Programme**, we bring interactive workshops directly into secondary school classrooms - sparking curiosity, building confidence, and opening students' eyes to the possibilities ahead of them.

But our work doesn't stop at the school gate. From the classroom to the community, we inspire, recognise, and support the next generation of trailblazers - through role model campaigns, awards, and bursaries that make ambition possible for every young woman.

Register your interest for 2026

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