

# Microchipping proposed to cut down on unwanted dogs

by Catherine Ketch

A CORK town is proposing tough measures in a bid to curb unwanted dogs, countrywide.

Macroom Town Council is seeking the support of colleagues in town and city hall chambers nationwide to demand a mandatory

microchipping of all pups. Latest figures show 14,598 dogs were put to sleep by local authorities in 2006.

Macroom councillors backed Cllr Martin Coughlan's call for local authorities to call on the Government to introduce mandatory microchipping and a neutering/spaying

incentive scheme. He also suggested a €10 licence fee for neutered dogs and €150 for non-neutered.

The motion will go to each town, borough and city council.

Under the proposals, dog breeders would be responsible for microchipping pups before sale and reduced rates

for both microchipping and neutering would apply to low income households.

"We agreed that's the road to go down," Cllr Coughlan said. "We need to have a proper dog control system. Even dog wardens who are doing an excellent job say the legislation is too lax. It is about making people more

responsible and not treating dogs as something to be loved today and dumped tomorrow."

Cllr Breda Cullinane McCarthy outlined a litany of difficulties in the case of one listed breed. "The dog was being released in the town park without a lease or muzzle. It was an accident

waiting to happen," she told the council meeting.

In another case, she said, a woman came to her about howling dogs. "She said howling was one thing, but they were like banshees. It was frightening," said Ms Cullinane McCarthy, who intends to bring a further motion in an attempt

to change the law said.

Currently complaints must be in writing and if the offending owner continues to break the law a judge can implement a court order to have the dog removed.

"What we are talking about is responsible ownership," said county dog warden Kevin O'Connor.

He said there was a vast improvement since dog warden appointments were made in 1986.

"I think there's a big improvement. Livestock owners, residents associations, the gardai and the general public are very pleased with the way things are," Mr O'Connor said.

## Birthday link-up for grieving astronaut

by Eoin English

BIRTHDAY wishes will be beamed into space today to an astronaut mourning the death of his mother while he was on his mission.

Thousands of school children are expected to log on to watch Nasa's live link-up with Dan Tani who has been living on board the International Space Station since he blasted into space on the shuttle Discovery last October.

Just before Christmas his mother died in a road accident. But Nasa hopes to lift his spirits today.

They have teamed up with Cork Institute of Technology's new science centre, the Blackrock Castle Observatory, to send birthday wishes to Mr Tani, who is married to Corkwoman Jane Egan. Her parents, Mary and Larry Egan, will watch the link-up at the observatory and will have the opportunity to talk to their son-in-law.

The observatory and Discover Science and Engineering urged schools to watch the event live on [www.nasa.gov/ntv](http://www.nasa.gov/ntv).

Nasa expects the link-up to take place at 12.45pm and last about 10 minutes.

Mr and Ms Egan attended the official opening of Cosmos at the castle exhibition last November and watched a clip of Mr Tani performing a space walk.

The exhibition was the final element of a



Clockwise from left: Corkwoman Jane Egan and Nasa astronaut Dan Tani on their wedding day; Mr Tani says goodbye to his wife and their children Keiko and Lilly before blasting off on the shuttle Discovery; and an official Nasa photo of Mr Tani.

€7 million project which has transformed the 16th-century castle into one of Ireland's top astronomical research facilities.

Blackrock Castle Observatory, and its interactive visitor centre,

is a joint venture between Cork City Council, CIT and a private benefactor.

The castle houses three telescopes linked via the internet to a global network of larger telescopes. Scientists are searching for extra-solar

planets (planets orbiting distant stars), studying the effects of black holes, and making optical observations of gamma ray bursts.

Visitors can compose electronic messages and fire them at an exoplanet



orbiting a distant star using the radio telescope on the observatory roof.

"The universe is a wonderful place with wonderful things in it but if you want to get them to work for you, you need to understand them," said

CIT's head of research Dr Niall Smith.

The observatory is open Monday to Friday from 10am to 5pm, and on Saturdays and Sundays from 11am to 5pm. Family tickets cost €16. ● [www.bco.ie](http://www.bco.ie)

## Funding appeal for retirement care facility

by Conor Kane

ONE of Waterford's most respected charities is committing itself to caring for future generations of elderly people in the region by developing "unrivalled" facilities on a new site.

The Little Sisters of the Poor are about to relocate from their existing home on Manor Hill, to a purpose-built retirement facility in Ferrybank.

The new building will house 70 to 80 senior members of the community in a modern facility on a site close to the Abbey School in Ferrybank.

The project will cost more than €20 million, a price tag that includes the site purchase and all ancillaries.

It is expected that there will be a shortfall of about €3m which will need to be raised locally through fundraising and public financing.

The Little Sisters are launching an appeal to the people of Waterford to come up with support for upcoming fundraising activity, which will have to net in the region of €1m. One of the most recent fundraising efforts was the Christmas Day swim in Tramore, which was a huge hit.

The Little Sisters of the Poor have served Waterford well for many years, looking after the needs of older people of modest means who may find it hard to live on their own.

They feel there is a need

to move to a more modern facility, as there are huge maintenance and heating costs in their present building, which has been sold. It will be developed with the exteriors preserved for Waterford's heritage.

Planning permission has already been approved for the new premises in Ferrybank and it is expected to go to tender shortly.

The building is modelled on a similar building in Scotland which the nuns have built in the town of Greenock.

Support for key elements of the project is being actively sought from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government but other parts of the venture will continue to require funding. The Sisters are confident they can raise the money, despite the large figure required.

A number of prominent business people and supporters are willing to assist in the fundraising drive.

Gary Falconer of CJ Falconer & Associates, Chartered Architects & Planning Consultants, says the new, high-quality/low maintenance facility will lead to lower running costs and energy saving over the existing facility. He commended the two local authorities involved in the project on their helpfulness to date.

"The end result ... will be tremendous as it will raise the quality of care for the elderly to a new level," he said.

## Science students aim for international olympiads

by Eoin English

LEADING science students in a number of Cork secondary schools are setting their sights on international successes after a haul of gold, silver and bronze medals at a science fair.

Mark Moriarty, from Christian Brothers College, Cork was awarded the overall trophy and gold medal in physics while Brian Walsh, from St Colman's College, Fermoy was presented with the overall trophy and gold medal in computer programming.

They competed at the 15th IBM/DCU Irish



Mark Moriarty from Rochestown, Cork, was awarded the overall trophy and gold medal in physics. Picture: Dan Linehan

Science Olympiad at Dublin City University where more than 250 secondary school students competed.

The competitions aim to further their interest in science and technology.

In total, 10 Cork students

received medals. They included: Emer O'Connell from St Angela College (silver in biology); David McCarthy from Middleton CBS and Jared Auty from St Coleman's College, Fermoy, who both earned silver in computer programming; Katie O'Mahony from St Aloysius' School who received bronze in computer programming and Stephen Murphy, Presentation Brothers College with a bronze in chemistry. Also Andrea Bickerdike from Ashton School with a bronze in biology; Paul McGarry (under 17) from St Peters Community School,

Passage West with a gold in computer programming and Ruairi Kenny from Scoil Mhuire Gan Smal in Blarney (under 17 silver in Computer programming).

The winners have a chance to represent Ireland at the International Science Olympiads later this year.

The top four students from each subject will be invited to compete. Success could result in Irish Gold Medal winners receiving a €2,500 IBM university scholarship; silver medal winners receiving a €1,250 scholarship and bronze medal winners, a €750 scholarship.



Brian Walsh from Fermoy, Co Cork, was awarded the overall trophy and gold medal in computer programming. Picture: Dan Linehan

## BUSYTODAY:

# 'I get to see my family, get hot meals, get spoiled — it's lovely'

by Jo Kerrigan.

CORK-BORN violinist and chamber musician Ioana Petcu-Colan lives most of the year in Barcelona but is currently back in Ireland, undertaking a countrywide tour with Ensemble Avalon which also includes cellist Gerald Peregrine and pianist Michael McHale.

The tour, which started yesterday in Carlingford, takes in Ennis, Waterville, Cork (at Ioana's alma mater, The School of Music), and Bray, and finishes, again in Cork, at Fota House on February 19.

She's bubbling with pleasure at being home again. "I get to see my family, get hot meals, get spoiled — it's lovely," she says.

Growing up in Cork, and

with father Adrian Petcu senior lecturer in strings at CSM, her future career was never really in doubt.

Ioana's studies took her from Ireland through France, obtaining the Premier Prix à l'Unanimité at the age of sixteen, to Britain where she was awarded a first class honours BMus degree from the London Royal Academy of Music before returning to Ireland to receive a first class MA in performance from the Cork School of Music.

"They make it really easy for postgraduates who may be working or living elsewhere, concentrating the tutorials at weekends so you can fly back."

Her most treasured possession is an Italian violin, built by Goffredo Cappa in



Cork-born violinist Ioana Petcu-Colan is back on her home soil for a nationwide tour.

1695. Doing a tour like this, where you are in a different town, and playing in a different hall every night,

is exhausting but, she says, the most marvellous fun. "Touring in Ireland is quite different to other

countries — everybody is so welcoming and they always want to look after you, feed you up, which is

nice. In Spain, people can seem a little aloof at first, unlike here, where the welcome mat is out right away; but once you get to know them, they're very warm and friendly too."

If the previous concert has been scheduled for early enough in the day, Ensemble Avalon will travel on to the next venue that evening.

"Otherwise, we unwind, have a night's sleep and then get on the road as early as possible next day."

The first priority at the next stop is to check out the venue and rehearse, to get a feel for the acoustics of the hall.

The most important factor of all, she reveals, is the lighting.

"Sometimes it isn't very good in a local hall, and if

you have to spend two hours trying to read music by dim light, that isn't the best situation in the world.

"Although we can and do survive — we've played by candlelight more than once, when the power failed."

Ioana's diary is pretty packed. Even before this tour finishes, she's playing in a prestigious pair of concerts at Drogheda and Dundalk on February 13 and 14 in which a new work by Estonian composer Arvo Pärt, based on the text of St Patrick's Breastplate entitled The Deer's Cry will receive their world première. She then has a concert at the Hugh Lane gallery in Dublin on February 24, at which she will be giving another world première — Ronan Guilfoyle's Second Violin and Piano Sonata,

for which she will be joined by pianist Izumi Kimura, and the Dublin premiere of her solo violin sonata, written especially for Ioana last year.

And in between, Ensemble Avalon will be spending some time in the recording studio. "We're delighted to be recording our debut CD which will be released on the Lyric label in the autumn — can't wait for that!"

Constantly on the go, constantly playing beautiful music to enthral her listeners.

● Ensemble Avalon on tour: Feb 5, Glór Irish Music Centre, Ennis; Feb 6, Tech Amergin, Waterville; Feb 7, Cork School of Music; Feb 9, Mermaid Arts Centre, Bray; Feb 19, Fota House, Co Cork. [www.ensembleavalon.net](http://www.ensembleavalon.net)