

Youth Theatre Ireland Ambassadors

Thirteen-year-old twins, George and Isaac Naughton from Roscommon Town are Roscommon's Cruinniú na nÓg ambassadors. The brothers both have Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy (DMD), a progressive neuromuscular disease which destroys muscle tissue, causing the boys to get weaker each day. There is no treatment or cure. Sadly, in 2022, George and Isaac lost their older brother Archie, who was only 16 and also had the disease.

George and Isaac are avid theatre performers at Roscommon Youth Theatre. However, their love for creativity began with Archie, when they all became members of Roscommon Young Carers Ireland years ago.

Following the passing of Archie, George and Isaac have come together with the local community to create memories of Archie through art. Visual art, words and music that represent people's

memories of Archie will be collated, while glass artist Colette Langan will put together a piece of stained glass art at the Roscommon Arts Centre to represent Archie's life and legacy. The project is called *The Light in Archie's Eyes*.

George and Isaac say, "We miss Archie so much. He was our inspiration. Together with mummy, daddy and glass artist Colette, we designed a piece that has a butterfly on it. After Archie died, we kept seeing butterflies everywhere and it made us think of our brother.

"Although Archie was young when he died, he managed to fit so much into his short life. Because of this, he touched the hearts of many people. Mummy asked friends and family to send three words they felt described Archie. The most popular words are going to be written on the butterfly and the border of the piece. This project will be presented to the public in the Roscommon Arts Centre, during Cruinniú na nÓg Festival."

George and Isaac say they are very grateful for the Project Co-ordinator, Faye Hayden, as well as Creative Roscommon, who funded the project.

The boys love creativity and George says they have always been encouraged



From left-right: Isaac, Archie and George

to be creative. "Mummy and daddy always make sure we have lots of different paints, modelling clay and craft equipment. Being creative is fun and is a great way to make friends."

Along with representing Archie's legacy, Isaac and George feel that creativity is a great way to express and process their emotions.

Isaac says, "Having our creative outlets of youth theatre, art, baking, music and gardening have all definitely helped us. The stained glass project has helped our family and friends remember small and big details about Archie and his life. It has been emotional, but the process has helped us speak freely."

George says taking part in creative activities gives young people a safe space to explore and express their emotions, without being judged.

"Personally, as my muscle disease got worse, I found it hard to deal with my grief.

Mummy asked our friend, an artist called Rita Oates, if she might support me. It has really helped my confidence and my art. In September, I will be holding my first art exhibition in Anam Gallery in Roscommon Town."

George and Isaac are both looking forward to Cruinniú na nÓg Day.

"We cannot wait for everyone to see Archie's glass butterfly. Our friends in Roscommon Youth Theatre will be presenting *Romeo and Juliet* in Castlerea too. It is a brilliant production.

"We are honoured to be the Cruinniú na nÓg Ambassadors for Roscommon this year. We hope we do a good job. We have asked Archie to guide us and help us."

■ *George and Isaac's parents, Padraic and Paula, also founded the Join Our Boys Trust in 2014 to raise awareness of DMD. Visit joinourboys.org*

Isaac and George (right)

