

## **Don't Talk Down to Me! 60ft Mural Featuring Amanda Butler with Down syndrome is unveiled in Dublin City Centre**

- *Mural by Joe Caslin marks 50 years of Down Syndrome Ireland*
- *"In this drawing Amanda invites you into her world - she asks you to consider her, her Down syndrome and the positive presence she can bring to a space, a place of work, a neighbourhood or indeed a city." Joe Caslin*

**27.07.21:** A 60ft piece of artwork by renowned street artist and activist Joe Caslin has been erected on a building on the corner of Harcourt Street and Clonmel Street in Dublin's City Centre. The image entitled, *Don't Talk Down to Me*, features a smiling 21-year-old Amanda Butler with Down syndrome marking Down Syndrome Ireland's 50<sup>th</sup> birthday.

50 years on, a special report, ***The Upside – Life with Down syndrome*** (see attached) has also been released today highlighting the gaps between the public's aspirations and the reality for people with down syndrome and their families in day to day life. The artwork and report are part of the charities **NEW The Upside** campaign which focuses on four key aspects of life for a person with Down syndrome: *health, education, employment and life in the community.*

Speaking at the launch, Joe Caslin, who knows Amanda personally says, *"This particular drawing, like all projects I have undertaken, has been personally poignant. I'm very proud to work with my friend Amanda and her family. In this drawing, Amanda invites you into her world - she asks you to consider her, her Down syndrome and the positive presence she can bring to a space, a place of work, a neighbourhood or indeed a city."*

Barry Sheridan, CEO, Down Syndrome Ireland says *"On our 50<sup>th</sup> birthday, we re-dedicate ourselves to a world in which all people with Down syndrome have the opportunity to enhance their quality of life, realise their life's aspirations and become valued members of a welcoming society. We hope this mural will grab people's attention and that our report reveals the need for more action."*

21-year-old Amanda Butler, who lives with her family on a farm in Mullingar, enjoys cooking, is an excellent swimmer and loves music – particularly Westlife and Bruce Springsteen. She's currently working on developing job skills through her college and hopes to find work in a hospitality, retail or helping to take care of others in childcare or adult day care service.

Excited to be part of the campaign Amanda says, *"I am so excited to be part of Down Syndrome Ireland's anniversary. I am grateful I have been given the chance to shine"*

The artwork will stay on the wall for four weeks and people are encouraged to share the image using **#TheUpsideDSI** or can donate to Down Syndrome Ireland by visiting [www.theupside.ie](http://www.theupside.ie)

-ENDS-

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## **Notes to Editor:**

### **Artist Joe Caslin**

Joe Caslin is an Irish street artist, art teacher and activist. Best known for his beautifully rendered pencil drawings, which manifest as towering pieces of street art. His highly accessible work engages directly with the social issues of modern Ireland, on an unavoidable scale. Caslin confronts the subjects of suicide, drug addiction, economic marginalisation, marriage equality, stigma in mental health, direct provision, institutional power, consent and most recently, the effects of the Covid19 pandemic on young people. The monochrome drawings Caslin creates live with us and against many of us for some time before washing away. They hold a mirror up to the kind of society that we are, whilst asking us individually what kind of society we want to be a part of.

### **Amanda Butler, Mullingar**

Amanda is 21 and a daughter, sister, friend and sometimes ninja warrior. On any given day you might find her doing a cookery class, helping her dad with the sheep on the farm, training her dog Lucy, or out on her swing set. Amanda loves to sing and is never one to be shy about performing. Her current set list features Westlife, Lady Gaga and Bruce Springsteen. She can often tell what you're feeling without having to say anything. Three years ago, Amanda graduated from St. Christopher's School in Longford, where she used the occasion to demonstrate her gifted ability as toastmaster. She's currently working on developing job skills through her college and hopes to find work in a cafe, shop or helping to take care of others in childcare or adult day care service. Amanda is an excellent swimmer, so much so that it's been said she could have been a fish in her past life. She does a great impression of Edna Mode from The Incredibles. Amanda is so full of smiles and laughter that it bubbles over onto anyone in her company. Amanda will make your world a little brighter by just being in it. She also looks amazing in a bucket hat.

### **Sammy Katschmar, Tallaght**

Sammy is 28 years old and the heartbeat of our family. He is friendly, funny, sociable, helpful and there is never a dull hour with Sammy. With three older sisters, he has been a "tour de force" since he arrived into our lives in December 1992. He is first up every day (and tries to be the last to bed too) and greets us with a smile and cheery "Morning....good sleep?" He attends Stewarts Care in Palmerstown and loves his days there, which are fun and activity filled. He is a dinger on the iPad and loves watching waterslides/diving on the iPad, while watching "Friends" on the TV and doing Joey impressions.!!

Over the years he has attended swimming clubs, dance groups, bowling clubs, played football and basketball and has a huge collection of medals for various competitions over the years. He has a Special Olympics Gold medal for basketball (where he has some eye for the target) from the Ireland games in Limerick 2014

However, snooker is his passion. He is a brilliant snooker player and plays every day with his Dad, Siegi. At exhibition tournaments he has joined in (even though he wasn't asked !!) with some of the professional snooker players and loves the limelight and posing for photos.

He loves spending week ends with his sisters and their families and regularly phones them to arrange his getaway. He loves life and all it has to offer him and never misses an opportunity to entertain, enjoy and improve himself. Sammy is living his best life surrounded by those who love him.