ANOTHER BRICK IN THE WALL... Cllr Derek Hussey and Professor Mark F Cooper pictured with a replica of the Berlin Wall in Castlederg. See page 6 for full story.
Pictured at the replica of the Berlin Wall which local students have been painting in Castlederg are Margaret Humphrey from Castlederg Youth Forum, Jack-English Cooper, Clr Patsy Kelly, Clr Rhonda Hamilton, Jason Donaghy, facilitator Co Donegal and Co Tyrone schools and Clr Thomas Kerrigan and his grandson Isaac.
STUDENTS from a number of local schools have been participating in a unique arts project utilising a replica sculpture of the Berlin Wall.

Under supervision of professional street artists, the young people have created bold and colourful imagery reflecting their ideas on the project. The themes explored by the pupils included barriers to living in a border area, promote working together across the political and physical divides and examining issues of diversity.

The work was gifted to Strabane District Council by Boston College. Originally this piece was created by Mark Cooper adjunct associate professor of fine art from Boston College to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the breaking down of the Berlin Wall and was used as a means of exploring diversity and what the sculpture represents.

On Monday, the artist visited Strabane to witness the project first hand. Mr Cooper was warmly welcomed by councillors from across the political parties and community activists from the Castlederg area. They learnt about the good relations issues explored and arts elements that were created over the past number of months which used the replica wall as a focus point which engaged with over 200 young people from Castlederg and Donegal.

Mr Cooper was accompanied by his son, Jack during his visit and they also took the opportunity to visit beauty spots in Northern Ireland and Donegal where he also viewed art exhibitions by Irish artists including the murals by the Bogside artists.

It is hoped that the wall will return to Boston as an installation to their Arts Museum where the children's work will be displayed.
Visiting American artist views unique ‘Berlin Wall’ art project during Strabane district visit

PUPILS from local schools have been participating in a unique arts project utilising a replica sculpture of the Berlin Wall, which was gifted to Strabane district to witness the local project first hand. Mr Cooper was warmly welcomed by councillors from across the political parties and community activists from the Castlederg area. They learnt about the good relations issues explored and arts elements that were created over the past number of months which used the replica wall as a focus point which engaged with over 200 young people from Castlederg and Donegal.

Mr Cooper was accompanied by his son, Jack, during his visit enjoying local hospitality while taking the opportunity to visit beauty spots in Northern Ireland and Donegal where he also viewed art exhibitions by Irish artists, including the murals by the Bogside artists.

This project was funded by the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister’s Good Relations programme and Strabane District Council’s arts development Outreach Programme. It is hoped that the wall will return to Boston as an installation to their Arts Museum where the children’s work will be displayed.

Jean Smyth, right, Strabane District Council arts officer, standing at a section of the replica sculpture of the Berlin Wall with, from left, Margaret Humphrey, Castlederg Youth Forum, Elaine Semple, Strabane District Council good relations officer, Jason Donaghey, Good Relations facilitator, Jack England-Cooper and his father, Mark Cooper, Associate Professor of Fine Art at Boston College, USA. AN1679

Looking through a section of the replica sculpture of the Berlin Wall, which was constructed by pupils from local schools, are Mark England-Cooper and Rhonda Hamilton, Strabane district councillor. AN1680
Mark Cooper, right, Associate Professor of Fine Art at Boston College, USA, and his son, Jack England-Cooper, pictured at the replica sculpture of the Berlin Wall, which was constructed and painted by pupils from local schools, with councillors and officials from Strabane District Council. They include councillor Thomas Kerrigan, and his grandson, Isaac, councillors Patsy Kelly, Rhonda Hamilton, Eugene McMenamin and Derek Hussey, Margaret Humphrey, Castlederg Youth Forum, and Jason Donaghey, Good Relations facilitator. AN1678

Admiring the artwork on the replica sculpture of the Berlin Wall, which was constructed and painted by pupils from local schools, are from left, Strabane councillor, Thomas Kerrigan and his grandson Isaac, Mark Cooper, Associate Professor of Fine Art at Boston College, USA, and his son, Jack England-Cooper, and Strabane councillor, Rhonda Hamilton. AN1681
Young people from Castlederg and Raphoe/Castletown areas recently participated in developing a project based on exploring 'borders', and their meanings around the issues that affect young people today.

With support of a professional script writer John Kelly and their drama teachers the children produced scripts to create their own vignettes choreographed with music and movement to their stage performance.

At the end of the project the young performers staged a drama piece called 'All about Me' at the Alley Theatre in an audience of friends and family. This showcase was the finale to workshops in their schools and theatre groups covering good relations elements exploring barriers to living in a border area, promote working together across the political and physical divides and examining issues of diversity.

The stimulus for this production was the gift of the replica sculpture of the Berlin Wall was gifted to Strabane District Council by Boston College. The wall has been used in visual arts projects in Castlederg and Donegal schools and sections of the wall provided a backdrop to the "All about Me" production.

Throughout the project, students participated in theatre games, acting exercises, improvisation, and rehearsal. Under the directorship of Una Nic Eoin from Prime Cut Theatre Production, Belfast and their choreographer Cheryl their performances where polished to create a unique piece of dramatic contemporary theatre on the Friday evening.

A spokesperson for Strabane District Council said "35 young people came together for the first time to participate in this drama project. They created their own material for their sketches and focused on delivering their lines, there was real ownership of their parts. We hope their experience this time will encourage them to try the stage again."

After the performance, John Kelly scriptwriter and director commented "It is rare find a group of that size with so much focus, commitment and enthusiasm towards a project. The end result exceeded all my expectations and I was proud of their achievement.

"They truly were a credit to their schools and did themselves justly proud. There was the engagement between the group and the various schools and organisations they came from. Relationships and genuine friendships were formed from the onset an incentive to encourage further participation.

"There is clearly a vibrant and healthy developing arts scene in the Strabane District and Donegal area which is heartening to see despite these apparent austere times."

The young people from Strabane, Castlederg and Raphoe who participated in the three day drama project All About Me in the Alley Theatre.