

# Press Pass Gazette

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## ‘The True Face of Scouting’

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John Flynn

Coláiste An Chraoibhín

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**As** the dawn breaks on the frozen Icelandic countryside, giving a heavenly glow to the endless sea of white snow, the air is already filled with the light crunch of hiking boots trudging through the snow. Along with this you hear the sound of children laughing as one of them falls face-first into the ice. They are having the time of their lives as they hope to finish scaling one of the country’s mighty peaks.

That right there, that moment in history, my history, that one moment is my favourite. That was the moment that I embarked on the Crean Challenge Expedition along with nineteen other fifteen year olds across Iceland’s landscape, braving it’s harsh elements. For you see I am a scout. I am part of the family that is Scouting Ireland. I have been since I was 5 years old, it’s all I know, and really it’s all I care about.

It is for this reason that when I first found out about the incidents that had happened to members of scouting in the past I was firstly shocked that it could have ever happened, but then I was horrified once I heard the views some people had on the organisation that I love so much, the one that gives me a sense of belonging, the same one which people were calling an ‘abomination’, ‘disgusting’ and that it ‘should have been shut down years ago’. To me scouting isn’t just a meeting every Tuesday from 7:00-9:00 just to get out of the house, to me it’s a way of life.

Scouting Ireland has provided me with amazing opportunities that I could have never before imagined getting, it has allowed me to pursue my dreams of travelling to other countries, and witnessing their cultures. This may not seem like much to you, but as someone who grew up on a dairy farm, and has never gone on a family holiday because we were always ‘too busy’, it means a lot that I can get to travel with my friends. This is a group of people that I’ve been through thick and thin with, who are always there when you need them. They are my family.

And do you think that am angry about what people are saying? You’re damn right I am. Who wouldn’t be angry if someone insulted their family? I’m not saying that these 317 sexual assault cases never happened, and I’m not saying that what happened was right, it’s not. But I believe that since these came to light the public’s perception of scouting has hit rock bottom and I feel that it is my job, my mission to show people the importance of this way of life. After all this country and it’s organisations have come a long way since the 1940’s.

Since all this began I have spoken to local parents, who don’t want to send their kids to beavers or cubs because they are afraid of what might happen to them. Whether you like it or not, our country is in a state of peril right now, we live in a world where children care more about their Xbox than the outdoors. But I refuse to live like this, because I have an answer to this and it is

scouting, even if it’s name has been tarnished. I live in a world of scouts, a world where I have learnt to live anywhere, cook my own meals and save people’s lives. This is a world where I can truly feel alive.

