

## **"I Always Want to Keep Learning"**

*We first introduced Paul Geoghegan in 2016, as part of a story on the blind judo classes you make possible at ChildVision – and that were making a massive difference to Paul's life. But in truth, supporters like you have been part of Paul's journey since sixth class. Recently that journey took an amazing turn...*

**H**e debuted in this Member Newsletter in 2016 – a sixteen-year-old ChildVision residential student and budding blind judo star who was winning All-Ireland competitions against fully sighted competitors. But Paul Geoghegan's aspirations included much more than sport. Back then he said, "I use the donated braille note I've been given for almost everything. I

want to go on to study either music, history, astronomy, or metallic studies." It was a future you were helping him to build even then, but it wasn't easy getting there.

### **Creating the best way forward**

Helping to fund the tirelessly dedicated and expert staff at ChildVision is one of the many

remarkable gifts your donations bring to students like Paul. And for the next several years Paul attended the local secondary school while living at ChildVision for the subjects he enjoyed. But as the time approached to sit the state exam, it became clear that a Leaving Cert was not in Paul's cards. He is as forthright explaining the situation as he is

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***"I knew I wanted to be in my third level, and I always want to keep learning – to follow through and do my PhD."***

***— Paul Geoghegan, ChildVision graduate***





"Twenty-three years later and we haven't missed a single year"—

## A Song for Buddy

*Somewhere, surely, there is a place where Buddy McDonnell sees the years of Christmas spirit and life-changing deeds that have unfolded in his loving memory...*

As told by Michael Butler

**“**In 1994, my wife Ann's brother Buddy McDonnell died in a fire on Christmas Eve. Shocked and devastated, we buried him on St. Stephen's Day. But Buddy was Ann's only brother, and at the same time we knew that we wanted to do something to remember him at Christmas every year. We decided to do a family carol singing night and that we'd split whatever contributions we got between Church



Decades after Buddy McDonnell's sudden passing, his family honours his memory by helping to make better tomorrows for blind children.

Street and Brother Kevin (where Buddy went to mass), and ChildVision. Twenty-three years later, we haven't missed a single year.

Recently we had the chance to visit ChildVision, and it made up my mind that there is no way we are stopping now. We just couldn't. I know ChildVision is a place of hope, but the line of little walking aides and wheelchairs in the

preschool was such a stark sight to us. Long before Buddy passed away or we did our carol singing, we used to drive past ChildVision and say how we would like to do something for the children. We were so moved by the affection they showed us. It made me thankful that we can do something to help."



*Thank you, Michael and Ann, for keeping a song in your hearts all these years for your beloved Buddy, and for the children of ChildVision.*

## The New Horticulture Project That's Blossoming for Lifelong Learners



It began with a generous gift from Essential Supplies and a Foundation who wanted to remain anonymous, to grow a new student venture at ChildVision. When completed, the horticulture project will make it possible for young people in our Lifelong Learners programme to grow and sell their own produce. We've spent the last few months laying the groundwork and drainage, and now the fun can begin. Thank you so very much to our wonderful benefactors who set down the roots for budding ChildVision entrepreneurs! ♥

### A Springtime Wish List That Would Love Your Help...

We still need a few items – essential gardening tools and funding for the custom tables, now being built, where our students in wheelchairs can pot at.



**All gifts appreciated, thank you!**



# Forever in Our Hearts: Rest In Peace, Little Cian

*How a tribute donation to honour the too-brief life of one very special little boy is bringing peace, calm, and relief to hundreds of visually impaired children and young people...*

**H**e was born with a rare disorder called *Dyskeratosis congenita* that would lead to progressive bone marrow failure. By just twelve months of age, Cian McDonnell Lynch would be completely blind. Then, following a bone marrow transplant, more trouble was discovered. Without a double-lung transplant, Cian had just months to live. His mum Lisa, dad Donal, sister Chloe, and friends and family at home and across the world rallied to raise money for the lung transplant through the internet campaign they called 'Hope for Cian.'

Heartbreakingly, Cian became too ill for the life-saving surgery. On 5th October 2015 at the age of five, this bright spark of a boy passed away. But his little spirt never dimmed. In Cian's memory, in late 2018, his family made a generous donation to ChildVision for the few years we were fortunate enough to have him in Early Years with us.

"He was so independent," says mum Lisa. "I've no doubt that if Cian had lived, his sight loss would have had little impact on his ambition. In fact as he lost his sight, we never told Cian he was blind." She smiles. "He used to say, 'Mammy, your makeup looks lovely today,' or



*Cian was so gentle and beautiful, with an amazing little smile and a very inquisitive mind. But I'll never forget that smile."*

— Trish, ChildVision early years teacher

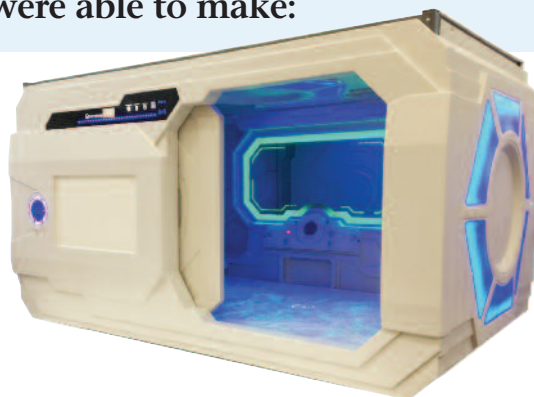
'That's a lovely purple jumper.' I miss Cian so much, and I miss bringing him to ChildVision – it's an amazing place. We are so happy that our donation can help other children like Cian in any way." And help other children, they will. ❤️

**In memory of Cian, with heartfelt thanks to the McDonnell-Lynch family, these are two of the wonderful purchases we were able to make:**

**A Sensory Pod:** to bring a safe, calming, soundproof space to children with sensory processing issues – and bring peace to their day



**An Eye Care Tonometer:** to painlessly measure eye pressure in glaucoma screenings, a huge relief to little ones who endure years of medical tests



*Smile on, Cian. Thank you for living. We'll never forget you.* ❤️

# 400

Every year more than 400 babies, children, and young people with sight loss come to ChildVision with their families for learning, vision, and mobility assessments that couldn't happen without your kind donations. **Thank you for giving them a way forward!**



## “I Always Want to Keep Learning”

*continued from cover*  
about every obstacle he’s faced. “I knew I wanted to be in third level, and I always want to keep learning – to follow through and to do my PhD. But the Leaving Certificate was just not for me.”

### Extraordinary outcome

Together with Paul, who is now 19, staff at ChildVision set to work. They looked at all the possible options while having him begin interviews for third level. As a result he was able to successfully receive places without the need to sit the cert. To Paul’s delight, one of those places was in the access programme in Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) — the exact pathway he’d hoped for to work towards a

full-time honours degree in computer science!

Currently studying applied physics and mathematics at DIT Mountjoy Square, Paul will start the honours degree next September. “Paul did such a good interview that they wanted him as part of their college,” said Caroline McGarrihy, team leader in ChildVision. “He has



Paul, pictured here in 2016, is now at DIT while working towards his black belt, thanks to a foundation of learning and mobility made possible by supporters like you. He has been nearly blind since birth.

so much to offer in terms of his intelligence and sporting ability – but he’s also just a lovely young man.”

### Paul’s journey continues

You’ll be pleased to learn that Paul, who has been nearly blind since birth due to *Leber congenital amaurosis*, has lots of supports in college. And with the help of a scholarship, he’s still doing judo! “It’s the place for me,” Paul says contentedly. “I really enjoy the challenge. It’s good to be able to balance study and sport, and it’s the path I see myself going down.” A path to tomorrow that your kindness and generosity help begin every day at ChildVision, for visually impaired children and young people. **Here’s to the future, Paul – and here’s to you, for giving Ireland’s blind children a chance. Thank you! ♥**

How a simple bequest in your will can bloom forever in the life of a child with sight loss —

## Roses for Your Love, Everlasting

**W**hen you leave a gift in your will to ChildVision, we’ll plant a rose with your name in our gardens – a living symbol of gratitude for the help your legacy will bring to Ireland’s blind children and young people, long after your lifetime.

For a confidential chat around a gift in your will or if you need the proper language to bring to your solicitor, ring Ruth anytime on **01 837 3735**. You can also tick the box on the enclosed reply to request free details. Thank you, today and always, for being a cherished part of the ChildVision family. ♥



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