

MY CARLOW ROSE EXPERIENCE

BY

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I was watching the TV in February this year when an ad for Aberdeen Angus meat came on.....the farmer was a former Rose of Tralee! I just thought even though I'm not a farmer I wouldn't mind being a Carlow Rose or even a Rose of Tralee! So I said to my mum, Paula that I'd like to apply. Mammy thought "why not?!" So we downloaded the application form and spent nearly 2 hours filling it in! There were so many questions to answer apart from just my name address and date of birth. Some of them really made me think! Thankfully my age was ok – you have to be aged between 17 and 28 to apply – I am 19. Some of the questions included my likes and dislikes, my interests, what I liked about where I live in Carlow and BEAM in Bagenalstown where I study. Of course Special Olympics got the biggest mention in my list of interests, because at the moment I take part in Bowling, Athletics, and Swimming with Carlow Special Olympic club and Horse Riding at Pitfields Equestrian club in Castledermot. Another question that I had a think about was to name a person that inspires me – I chose the actress Julie Andrews because I love her beautiful clear singing and speaking voice.... something I'd love to have myself! So after filling in the form mammy and I emailed it to Rose of Tralee International Festival and crossed our fingers that they would accept my application!

A few weeks later we got a phone call from Evie Cronly, the main Carlow Rose organizer in Carlow, telling me my application was successful! I was so excited!! Mammy and I had a few things to do though - the first thing was to get a sponsor. I was so delighted that Beatrice Byrne from BeaNice Café offered to sponsor me. I call to her café most days when I get back on the train to Carlow from BEAM. I often have great chats with Beatrice and the girls who work there, Cats, Rebecca (who has now left) and Aimee. They were all so encouraging about my adventure and almost as excited as me! The first time when I met some of the girls including last year's Carlow rose Emma was in the Woodford Dolmen hotel we played a few games to get to know the girls a little better. Then after the games were done Evie told us what would be involved in the rose selection it sounded like it was going to be a very exciting ride I would never have thought I would never done anything like this before. We had a few get together we had a red dress day we meet at the Woodford Dolmen hotel were we got a few pictures on the stairs. Then we had to split up into different cars so I went with Emma who was the Carlow Rose last year! The first place we went was S.t Mullins for refreshments a chat after we went outside for a few pictures we were so lucky that it was so sunny then after we went to the Chocolate Gardens were we made a chocolate bunny when all that was done we got a picture off us all standing on the little boat but it was a challenge for a few of the girls because they wore really high heels!!! After we went to a Nursing home to say hello to the residents who live there everyone were so lovely and very welcoming. We then went to the Delta centre which is a beautiful garden in Carlow we got a lot of pictures there and then for the final stop was the Woodford Dolman Hotel were we got a lot of photos taken. When we got back to the hotel we got to meet our Rosebuds who we would meet again for the selection night.

Later on myself and a few of the girls went to Tully for a while and then The DIN RI. Then after my mam collected me it was the end off a great night! I had a great night with a group of lovely girls.

Then we went to the activity center were we did GOKARTING, archery and ziplining .After the people who ran it had champagne and a few goodies for us when we finished uo they were all so lovely to us. After we all went to the Talbot for cocktails and prossco.. All of these experience's was a great way to get to know the girls..

Before we went out on stage we had our individual interviews. I brought in some of my Special Olympics medals to show the interviewers. Evie came in with me just in case I needed a bit of help during the interview. The interviewers were so welcoming, kind and bubbly! They were very impressed with my medals and asked me what sports I did and a whole lot more. By the way the sports I do are Bowling, Athletics, Horse Riding and swimming! Later we had the group interviews, then we had our hair and make-up done and then got into our gowns.. We had a run through with all the roses with Michael Hennessy, the presenter. Then it was time for the show! The room filled up with all our familes and supporters. Mammy made a big poster with my name and showing all my interests including Special Olympics & Girl Guides. Several of my friends from the Delta Centre and Special Olympics were performing at the interval. It was great to have their support too! We all went up on stage with our escorts and rosebuds. Then we were called individually by Michael Hennessy who welcomed us to the stage and asked us about ourselves and who was there supporting us. My family and friends gave me a brilliant cheer!! Then when we were all interviewed it was the moment of truth! – We were about to find out who was going to be the next Carlow Rose! It was so exciting and a bit nerve-wreaking.. When the winner was announced we were all so delighted for CIARA Dooley!! Shes such a lovely girl and a great representative for Carlow. I followed her Rose story on instagram and all the photos from Tralee! Unfortunately she didn't win the Rose of Tralee, but she had an unforgettable experience and has made great friends. Even though I didn't win the Carlow Rose I made great friends too. It gave me great confidence. I was really proud to talk about Special Olympics every chance I had! I would definitely recommend anyone to go for it and enter your county Rose competition sometime! Its not a beauty pagent, Its about showing your personality and your perspective on life!

Thank you for reading
Sadbh