

Evening Echo

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Promise of great days ahead

THIS is a good week for Cork as work starts on the €50 million project which is set to rejuvenate the city centre.

Many will have been intrigued to see the inside of the Capitol Cinema which was a mecca for film fans since the 1940s, but has been boarded up for the past 10 years.

Now, just before demolition work began, it was an opportunity to have a peak inside the building which, on the outside, had been one of the worst eyesores in Cork over that time.

When the hoardings were taken down, memories were stirred of great occasions watching films such as *The Sound of Music* — the most popular movie ever shown at the Capitol.

Happily, there is the promise of more great times on this landmark site as it becomes part of a major project by John Cleary Developments (JCD), including retail and office properties as well as a food innovation area and the restoration of the old Oyster tavern.

The work, which is expected to take just over a year, will support up to 200 construction jobs, a very welcome boost to a sector which has been hard-hit, and one of several projects which are bringing a significant lift to the Cork economy.

It is good that disruption will be minimised, and the start of work represents a good start to 2016. The city centre has seen a rise in the occupancy of retail outlets in the last 18 months and the Capitol complex development will bring further footfall and economic stimulus back to our city centre and help maintain Cork as a key shopping destination.

Sort issues before merger

THE proposal to create the Munster Technological University by merging Cork and Tralee ITs is a very interesting one with great potential.

However, a number of issues have been raised which need to be sorted out. It is completely understandable that lecturers should be concerned to ensure their terms and conditions, specifically their pensions, are not adversely affected. And the point raised by independent Cork city councillor Mick Barry yesterday must also be considered — namely that major difficulties will be created for students who would have been able to access the course of their choice in one of the two locations, but may now have to move and go into rented accommodation. We know how difficult to get and how expensive such apartments are.

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Being out of work left Cork mum Maeve Ahern O'Neill in a bad place. She reveals how a return to education at UCC turned into a new idea for a marketing business, which is now flourishing.



IT'S very easy to lose your confidence after being made redundant.

No matter what background you come from, sudden unemployment can be soul-destroying. Somehow it seems that when others around you are able to secure work, your own future becomes bleak.

This is how I felt for many years.

I suppose I was happy. I had a loving family, two wonderful girls to care for. Unable to find a job, I got into the routine of everyday life, of being a mum and wife.

Like so many others, money became tight and my husband worked a lot of hours to keep us afloat.

However, something was missing. As a woman, you always have the need to do something for yourself, to make your mark in the world outside of motherhood.

Jobs in marketing at the time were very scarce. Also, the marketing world had changed to adapt in the digital world and I was ignored for many jobs as I wasn't the young graduate with all the digital know-how.

Although I was self-taught in many aspects of digital marketing, I was lacking that piece of paper or actual experience that employers required.

Sometimes the idea struck me that someone with my amount of experience could be viewed as someone who wanted to earn the larger salary... honestly, I just wanted to work! Just to get back out there.

I succumbed to Jobbridge. It was a wonderful experience that did get me out of the house and back into what I loved — marketing and communications.

In a way, my confidence was slightly heightened with the work itself, but it didn't pay the bills with that extra €50, it merely paid for the petrol and lunches.

But what I took from my Jobbridge experience was that it reinforced the belief that I was good at what I was trained to do.

I wasn't going to leave it go, so I was accepted in University College Cork to study a Masters Degree in Digital Arts and Humanities under the Springboard Programme initiative.

I figured this course would fulfil the digital gap in my marketing background.

It was a daunting thought, returning to education after such a long time, but an exciting one at the same time.

I had the idea in my head that I would be the only one with an actual pen and paper in class. Turned out I was wrong.

My year in UCC was such an enlightening one. It was able to bring out aspects of myself that had long been forgotten.

It was hard work to study and care for a family with two small children. But the support of my family and their pride in me kept me going.

One module I took was Teaching in the Digital Age, where my assignment was to develop a course with some elements of online activity.

I took my own experiences of marketing in particular branding and the task of looking for employment to heart and developed a course entitled: 'How to maximise your digital footprint as a personal brand'.

The course outlined each week ways to create a personal brand, from establishing who you are, to week by week lessons in social media, CV development both online and hard copy, blogging and networking.

The feedback I received from my course from my lecturer Dr Mike Cosgrave was such a boost and it paved the way to my overall

I decided my career needed a re-brand, so I did it!



ON THE UP: Maeve has set up her own marketing business after returning to college. Posed by models

thesis topic. While researching for my thesis, I developed a workshop where jobseekers, department heads and researchers attended with amazing enthusiasm about the topic.

The first workshop was filled to capacity so another was held.

I was overcome with how my topic was creating such a buzz around campus. Everyone wanted to learn more about how to create their persona online and how to use social media tools such as Twitter and Facebook, along with blogging and networking skills.

The overall outcome I learned was that this kind of knowledge was not available as one single workshop or course. I had stumbled upon a niche market.

Last summer was spent researching, creating a website as a support and writing my thesis that was submitted in September.

UCC was still approaching me about future workshops. The Branding of Me was born out

of this interest. As a social welfare recipient, I was able to apply for the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance to get the business off the ground. It is a great stepping stone to launch an idea into a business.

Because of the support and hard work I put into my year in UCC, I have now set up my own business where I educate and train people in how to create and manage a personal brand with the use of online tools.

I am now at a place in my life where I can express who I am and what I can do because of my time in UCC, where my confidence was reinforced.

I have also guest lectured in UCC through the careers office and held a workshop for jobseekers on behalf of the Chamber of Commerce.

2016 is looking good but there is a lot of hard work ahead. I will graduate with first class honours next month.

I would encourage anyone to take that leap back to education — work hard to make your dreams come true.

■ See www.thebrandingofme.ie.