

TOP OF THE CLASS

MASTERCLASS!



Conor Cooney shows off his skills to the visiting students.

PHOTOS: JOE O'SHAUGHNESSY.

● All-Ireland star on the ball with hurling lesson for visiting students



BY DARA BRADLEY

SPANISH and American students visiting the city this Summer were given a masterclass in how to play hurling - from one of Galway's great exponents of the game.

St Thomas' and Galway corner-forward Conor Cooney - an All-Ireland senior hurling medal winner with club and county - gave an exhibition of our ancient game, to visiting students from the Salthill-based, Celtic Irish American Academy.

Mr Cooney, a popular member of Micheál Donoghue's All-Ireland winning heroes of 2017, gave the visitors a tutorial in how to pick and puck the sliotar, at St Enda's College earlier this week.

It was just one strand of a packed schedule for the international secondary school students, in this the fourth annual summer school organised by directors of Celtic Irish American Academy, Dr Johanna Clancy and Brian Fahy.

Some 26 students in total, aged 14-18, came to Galway, including six from SNAP School of English in Benicassim, who were led by their principal, Alicia Flores; and 20 from the US.

The Americans are here for two weeks and the Spanish come for a third to focus on intensive English language classes. They stay with local host families in Salthill, giving them a flavour of traditional Irish family life.

The aim of the school is to explore the bonds between the US and Ireland and Spain and Ireland; and to solidify

the links between the countries and encourage greater connectivity.

As well as a hurling training session, among the activities the students enjoyed were horse riding, a visit to Coole Park near Gort, a boat trip on the Corrib Princess, bowling, swimming at Blackrock, and public speaking and debating with Maria Walsh of St Enda's.

They also were given an Irish dancing lesson with World champion dancers of the local MacLaverty School of Dance; visited the Galway Arts Festival exhibitions, and Mary Robinson's talk on Climate Change; they climbed Diamond Hill in Connemara, visited Kylemore Abbey, the Cliffs of Moher, the Curragh, and Trinity College.

The students raised money from their walk on Diamond Hill, for homeless charity, Galway Simon Community, who gave the students a talk.

"It is great fun and everything but the wellness of students is so important to us and we want to broaden their horizons so that they see themselves as global citizens, interested in the arts, interested in sustainable goals of the world. We want to help them to gain independence but also to understand their role in society, as well as learning in this cross-cultural experience.

"The Spanish and Americans being integrated with Irish families has really immersed them in a cross-cultural experience where they've made



friends for life. They are excellent ambassadors for their countries and have helped to strengthen the transatlantic bonds between the countries," said Dr Clancy.

The American students came from all over the US, including with the help of Michael Gaffney (Chicago and Roscommon), who supports the programme with the O'Brien Scholarship every year.

Students from Bishop Fenwick High school in Massachusetts were accompanied by leader Chris Nagle, while Xavier High School, Manhattan, New York were also represented, as was Pope John XXIII High School in Sparta, New Jersey, where the school's

▲ Celtic Irish American Academy students Olivia O'Hearn, New Jersey; Samantha Allen, Florida; Brieden Peel, New York; Regan Kelly, New York and Adriana Bonet Ulloa, Benaccism, Spain.

president is Father Kieran McHugh, a native of Caherlistrane.

There were students from Florida-based Irish American Young Leaders and three came under the Mulcahy Scholarship, which is sponsored by Mulcahy family, Project Children and the Aisling Irish Centre, New York.

The four pillars of the programme are Culture and Heritage, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics), Service Learning and Global Citizenship.

HAVE YOUR SAY!
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