



# Ballinasloe Horse Fair

In the early 19th century, The London Times recognised the Ballinasloe Horse Fair as the “largest of its kind in Europe.” Over 200 years later, OM Ireland had the opportunity to participate in this centuries-old event.

A team from Georgia, U.S. joined the Immersion team (OM Ireland’s one-year programme for young adults) to hand out literature, host children’s programmes, offer free tea and coffee on the Big Red Bus, and engage in conversation with vendors, participants, and visitors at the Horse Fair.



For seven days straight, the team faithfully and passionately shared the truth of God’s love, and learned the value of sharing their personal stories of how that Truth has impacted his or her life.

“I have been reminded by God to share my story with people,” commented Marie, the local pastor’s wife who joined the team. “I had gotten out of the habit, and was more concerned with presenting the Gospel in a certain style. I had lost the personal touch of what God had done in me.”

The team also learned the impact a Christian witness can have in a place where God’s love doesn’t shine so bright.

“One night, a man came on the bus,” said participant Scott, from the U.S. “He was drunk and unpredictable at first, making us nervous, but I saw him as a person who needed to hear the Gospel. I talked with him and brought Jesus into the conversation whenever I found the chance. At the end of the night, he came up to me and said, ‘Thank you. You kept me away from the bottle tonight, and I had fun. I have never been welcomed like this before.’”

Participant Julia, from Germany was encouraged by her conversation with a local named Mike. “He saw us talking to some kids and he was very interested in the blue and red card trick we were doing,” said Julia. “I went over and started talking to him. After a while, David (USA) joined in and we talked and talked. He had a lot of questions, but in the end, he really understood the position he was in. He was thankful for the DVD and the Gospel we shared.

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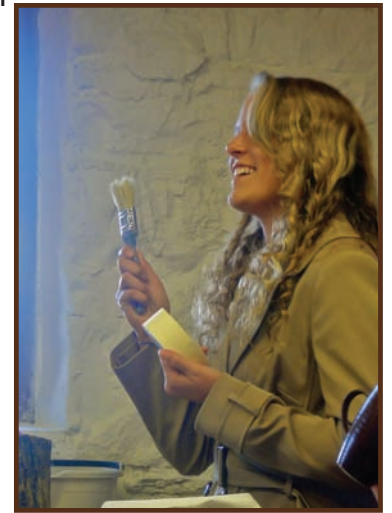
The next day, we met him again and he told us he read the Bible and the things he read were awesome. He looked different. It was like we knew him and talked like old friends. We exchanged contact information and he wants to come to our church.”

Even if team members couldn't see immediate results, the message of hope they delivered encouraged them to keep going and keep praying.

“One evening, during the Big Red Bus outreach event, I met a local,” said Jenni, from the U.S. “She was friendly, animated, and very sweet. She reminded me of my neighbour at home because of her outgoing personality. But she was hurting. She was sad. She was suicidal. Underneath the smiles, she was in deep pain. She longed for a man in her life and to be rescued from living at home with her parents at age 30. I shared about Jesus – the only man who would never let her down and that He would build her an eternal home in heaven. She

shared her deepest hurts, and at the end of the conversation, she promised to read the bible we gave her and call the local pastor if she was feeling overwhelmed with suicidal thoughts.”

For Immersion team member Haley, from the U.S., this outreach changed her perspective about her role in Ireland. “In the beginning of the week, I felt like I was a piece of tape,” Haley said. “I was on a mission to try to fix people – to try to get everyone ‘taped together.’ So many people don't know what Christ has done for them and how simple His love and His story really are. I just wanted to tell everyone everything all at once. But now that the week is over, I'd like to think of myself more like a paintbrush. I don't have to stuff Jesus down anyone's throat. I just have to show His love in how I live my life. So many people commented on how nice born-again Christians are, and how all of us were so different. I realized I'm just splattering paint on a portrait that's not yet finished. The colours may look random and may seem out of place now, but in the finished product, every colour makes the whole picture beautiful.”



Tim, the pastor of a local Ballinasloe church, commented that he could already see the impact from this outreach event, and the positive affect it had on the community. Please pray for the seeds planted and that they will continue to grow. For more information, stories, and outreach opportunities, visit [www.ie.om.org](http://www.ie.om.org)