



LIMERICK LEADER

McCoy praises JP awards for giving students a 'leg up in life'

■ Champion jockey is guest of honour at All Ireland **Scholarship** ceremony in UL

ALAN OWENS

FORMER champion jockey AP McCoy, a man who fearlessly rode thousands of winners in the green and gold colours of JP **McManus**, admitted to being "quite nervous" about getting up on stage and speaking to a group of students.

AP was the guest of honour at the 2015 All Ireland **Scholarships**, backed by his old boss JP to the tune of €30m, which took place last Saturday at the University Concert Hall, with Minister Jan O'Sullivan and her Northern counterpart Dr Stephen Farry also in attendance.

Limerick-based asylum seeker Anna Kern, Maebh Ni Ghuairim from Castletroy and Conor Cregan from Glin, were the three local recipients among the 125 students from north and south to receive the **scholarships**, which provide financial assistance to high achievers.

The awards are worth €6,750 per year of undergraduate study for the winners through the educational scheme, which has been running since 2008.

The king of the jockeys said the students were "at that stage in their life now where the decisions they make are going to be very important as to what the future holds for them".

"I was very lucky in my life in that all I ever wanted to be was a jockey and I got to do something that I really enjoyed and really loved. And I do think in any walk of life or any career, it is easier to be successful at it if you really enjoy it or love it.

"I know I was one of the lucky ones, so I will be telling them, if they can find something that they think they really enjoy or are going to love and be passionate about, then there is a good chance of success at it."

He praised JP and wife Noreen for their backing of the scheme, which has now helped an estimated 1,200 students throughout the country to benefit over its duration.

"It is something that is going to be of huge benefit to them in their futures going forward," he said.

"I think they are very lucky to have that support and in horse racing terms they are getting a leg up in life, you know, they are getting



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JP McManus and Minister Jan O'Sullivan with Anna Kern and Eoin Corcoran at the All Ireland **Scholarship** awards in the University of Limerick. A total of 125 students were awarded the **scholarships**

Pictures: Alan Place/FusionShooters

a head start and it is important that they make the most the opportunity."

Ms Kern, a 19-year-old who fled war-torn Ukraine two years ago, drew considerable media attention when, having received 575 points in her Leaving Certificate, she could not afford to take up her "dream" college place at the Royal College of Surgeons.

She was subsequently able to take her place studying physiotherapy when the college waived its fees and offered to help her with expenses.

Anna said the **scholarship** was a "dream come true for me and I hope to work in Ireland after I graduate".

Glin's Conor Cregan, who is

studying physiotherapy, said he was "delighted, it is a real honour".

"It means an awful lot to be acknowledged as some of the highest achieving students in the country, it is a really proud moment for me," he said.

Chicago-born Maebh Ni Ghuairim from Castletroy, who is studying in Trinity, said it had given her "a lot more security" to study. She recounted how her mother had opened the envelope on her behalf.

"She sounded very serious at the start so I thought something bad had happened and then when she told me I just couldn't really believe it, I did not expect it and I was just really, really excited," she laughed.



Student Anna Kern with former champion jockey AP McCoy, who was the guest speaker at the JP **McManus**-backed All Ireland **Scholarship** awards