



Carrigaline Education Campus

# DIY SOS A “LIFE-CHANGING EXPERIENCE” FOR MMD’S BRANDON DUARTE

The hit RTÉ show ‘DIY SOS: The Big Build’ was an experience Brandon Duarte, MMD Construction contracts manager, will never forget.



Adam Drummond pictured with Brandon



“It was a life-changing experience which I’d gladly do again in the morning”





The team working on DIY SOS

**B**randon, along with presenter Baz Ashmawy, headed up an amazing group of volunteers who transformed the home of Adam Drummond and his family on the northside of Cork city in just eight-and-a-half days, making it wheelchair-accessible across three floors and out to back of the garden for their son. Prior to the transformation, the 23-year-old former Irish International basketball player could not access his home, having become a wheelchair user following an accident in May 2021. When Adam left the National Rehabilitation Hospital in Dublin, his parents Brian and Mar had to move out of the family house on the North Cork Hill off Redemption Road as the 10 steps down to the entrance prevented Adam from accessing. They moved to a ground floor flat across the city owned by a friend. A call went out for volunteers in March of last year and the nine-day build commenced on the family home in Blackpool two months later. Adam and his parents moved back into the beautifully transformed home on the first anniversary of Adam's accident on May 19 2022. The Drummond's homecoming led to moving scenes at the conclusion of the episode – which was aired on RTÉ1 on Sunday, March 26th – as the family thanked the DIY SOS team



Baz Ashmawy and Brandon Duarte on DIY SOS



Brandon Duarte, MMD Construction contracts manager



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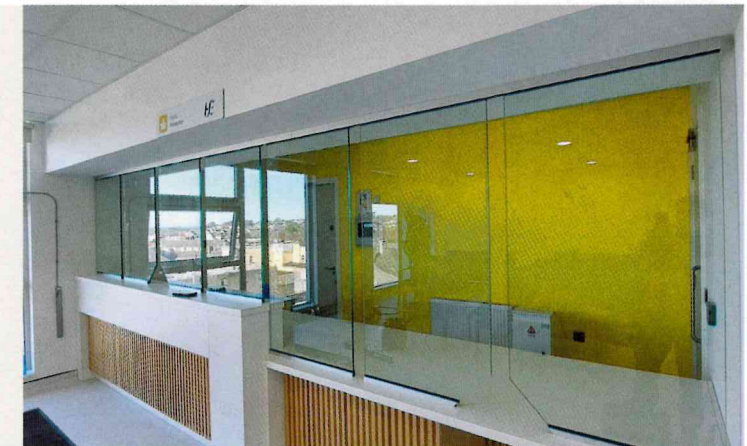
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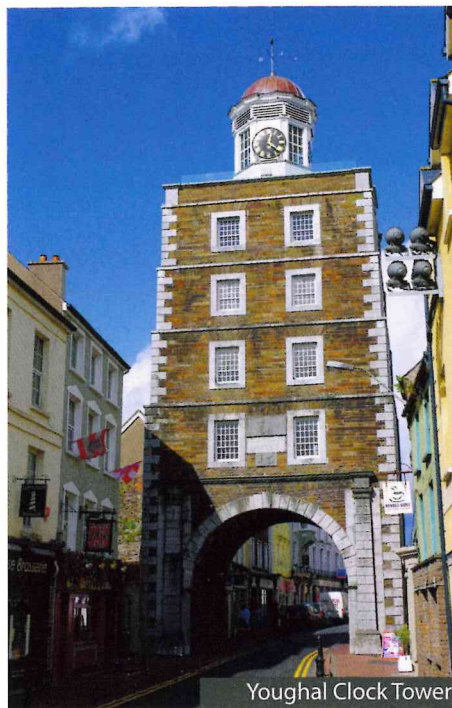
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Youghal Clock Tower

ers and the Irish Wheelchair team, and is also involved with the Neptune Under 20 team.

Along with some of the most creative minds in the country, including gardener Diarmuid Gavin, architect Paul Redmond and the talented designer Aoife Rattigan from Restless Design, the team created a contemporary, beautiful, accessible home and garden which left the family lost for words.

Located on the ground floor just as you enter the house, Adam's room is spacious and has an ensuite that is wheelchair-friendly. As you walk straight through, the kitchen has been transformed, allowing more light in and offering great views of Cork city from a height.

One level below, there is a light-filled lounge which is accessible by lift and stairs. On the wall, the words 'Strength, Believe, Hope' were printed and framed,

#### CONTACT DETAILS

MMD Construction  
Unit 1,  
Building 2500,  
Avenue 2000,  
Cork Airport Business Park,  
Cork,  
T12 P6PT.  
Telephone: +353 (0)21 497 5979  
Email: info@mmd.ie  
Web: www.mmd.ie

Gavin having designed a wheelchair friendly ramp leading to an amazing hangout area for Adam.

"It was an honour to be involved in a project like this," Brandon says.

"It was a life-changing experience which



Springville House, Blackrock

for their work which has had a life-transforming impact. Even getting to the front door was a transformative moment for Adam, who is driving his own car now, has returned to college in Munster Technological University, is playing wheelchair basketball with the Rebel Wheel-

a phrase that is commonly used by Adam. On the third floor, each of the bedrooms were decorated with different colours, creating a tranquil atmosphere. The final room to be completed was the attic, while outside the garden was completely transformed, with Diarmuid

I'd gladly do again in the morning. The goodness that came out in people was something to behold. They came from all over Ireland to help out. It was a privilege to work with such a fantastic group of volunteers and suppliers, and to have had the opportunity to make a positive



Old Head of Kinsale Signal Tower



The MMD Construction headquarters



Stunning refurbishment of The LE Ciara Naval Ship

impact on the lives of a very deserving family.

"The objective was to provide Adam and his family with a positive path for his continuing adjustment to life in a wheelchair, while also giving him the independence he needs as a young adult."

Being a long-time friend of the Drummond family only added to Brandon's sense of satisfaction.

"Adam worked with me for a summer in MMD Construction. I've known his father Brian for many years. He's an excellent upholster who has worked alongside us

on different jobs," the affable contracts manager reveals.

The transformation was completed in just eight-in-a-half days, which was remarkable given its complexity.

"We were told it couldn't be done. But we did it in under nine days, which was the timeline we were given," he explains.

"We turned what was a two-storey house into a four-storey house. We went underground to create what has become a TV room for Adam which gives him level access to the path outside.

"A lot of preparation work had to be un-

dertaken prior to the commencement of the nine-day SOS build. All of this work was done outside of work hours. We started at 5am and went back at it again in the evening after we had finished our day jobs. We also worked weekends in order to meet the deadline.

"We built a team consisting of excavator drivers, groundworkers and great people like Martin Horgan from Conhor Grab Hire who gave up their own evenings and weekends to remove 420 tonnes of soil from the back of the house. It was a huge undertaking given the restricted nature of the site.

"Everything was carefully planned and prepared over a six-week period leading up to the build. I was in constant communication with the design team which included architect Paul Redmond, designer Aoife Rattigan and engineer Jim Kelly, who developed a fantastic but also challenging design. We had a tradesday beforehand where an appeal went out to the different trades that we needed for the build, and the interest was phenomenal.

"After that, it was all hands on deck. PJ, Duggan my site manager, was hugely involved in this project from start to finish," adds Brandon.

Brandon went on to project manage the next show, which aired over Christmas and which saw Baz and the team take on one of the most ambitious challenges to date. The two-part Christmas special focused on the rehousing of Ukrainian families. So in nine days they transformed six vacant terraced houses at Kingston's College in Mitchelstown, Co. Cork into beautiful living spaces

Baz, with the help of Brandon and a squad of caring volunteers, got to work on creating a space that will benefit the town and community for years to come. Brandon has also collaborated with Diarmuid Gavin on further garden design projects in Ennis and Sligo.

Brandon has worked for MMD Construction in Cork for nearly 20 years. MMD Construction is one of Ireland's most dynamic building and civil engineering companies with a workforce of 150. The expertise of their employees is the basis on which their core construction competencies rely, and it has been that way for the last three decades. The company's experience, coupled with their extensive technical and project-management know-how, mean that they are capable of delivering the most ambitious of projects. Health and safety, and quality are fundamental parts of the company's philosophy.



MMD Construction believe that their employees are their greatest asset, and over the last number of years have developed many exciting programmes to encourage more and more young people to work in the construction industry. They have excellent graduate and in-house development programmes which place an emphasis on training and progression, ensuring a continuing high standard of engagement with their employees.

MMD Construction prides itself on its capacity to apply optimum professionalism in the management of all projects. Their collective experience and expertise allow them to provide a diverse range of services, within the traditional contracting, design and build, and management contracting areas. Some of the projects that MMD Construction are currently working on include the provision of over 130 much-needed social housing units across two sites in Cork City, for the Cork City Council. They have a large portfolio of schools and healthcare projects underway in Blarney, Carrigaline, Millstreet and Carrignavar. They also have projects ongoing for Fota Wildlife Park, Architectural Metal Systems and two ALDI Ireland stores.

The company has just handed over a very innovative and sustainable design and build project to the Cork City Council, where they converted a vacant office building into a modern residential building consisting of 35 units to assist in tackling social housing demand. This Downsizing Scheme, which is a first for the Cork City Council, will be used to free up existing larger local authority homes that are under occupied by older persons.

Most uniquely, the company has a Specialist Works Division, who pride themselves on completing bespoke building projects, conservation works, and projects for the Irish Naval Service.



Bandon Primary Care Centre

Some landmark projects completed by the Specialist Works Division include the conservation and restoration of the Youghal Clock Tower and the Old Head Signal Tower located in Kinsale.

MMD Construction is registered with the Heritage Contractors of Ireland, and relied on this knowledge to meticulously restore the two buildings back to their former glory. The Specialist Works Division is currently restoring, redesigning and extending an exclusive Georgian style property in Cork that was constructed in 1848. The project team is carefully addressing the old fabric of the building, using specialist conservation techniques such as lime rendering to respectfully restore the building.

The meticulous restoration work being undertaken includes the removal, refurbishment and reinstallation of the

sash windows, all completed by specialist tradespeople. Remarkably, once the project is completed, the Georgian home will have an A energy rating, by incorporating the latest geothermal heating system, photovoltaic panels, energy efficient glazing and high levels of insulation and air-tightness.

Brandon concludes by saying: "It was an absolute honour to work alongside Baz Ashmawy who was an absolute gentleman and friend. He gives so much positivity and motivation in every DIY SOS job. Diarmuid Gavin was absolutely fantastic in his garden designs and it was a privilege to work with him.

"Aoife Rattigan's designs were so creative and professional, and she was also an absolute pleasure to work with. Stephen Brennan from Kirby's Electrical brought his extensive experience to all the projects. He is just a great person to be around. Helena Ryan, Health and Safety Advisor, kept everybody on their toes, Helena's experience, kindness and professionalism didn't go unnoticed. "Kerri Hiddleston who was one of two designers in Mitchelstown who was a pleasure to work with. Motive and the entire production team from DIY SOS were just fantastic to work with. They were so kind from the very beginning to both families and volunteers which consisted of Anne McLoughlin, Jamie Dalton, Joanne McGrath, Ciara Bresnan, Lily O Gorman, Shiv Ross.

"I have made friends for life."



Heather House, Community Nursing Unit

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from all at Andy Gahan Plumbing and Heating

**086 1748608**  
E: andygahanplumbingandheating@gmail.com

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**CORK & WATERFORD**  
Phone: 058 52899  
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Coolmain, Kilbrittain,  
Bandon, Co. Cork  
023 884 9233 | 086 828 3121  
denis.cronin@croninelectrical.com  
www.croninelectrical.com

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