

DES EKin'S DIARY



Crappy new year texts

IRISH texters sent a record 41 million "happy new year" greetings from parties last Monday. (Although with the night that was in it, I'd guess that 40.9 million of them were sent to the wrong people.)

Maybe next year the phone companies will give us statistics for the number of texts sent next morning saying: "Sorry I wrecked your gaff", "Did I really fall asleep in your closet?", or "OmiGod, I can't believe we did it last nite, where can I get a morning-after pill?"



BERTIE'S STRETCH AND EARN

GERRY Ryan is launching a new fat-busting TV show this week. And there's hardly a female celebrity without her own aerobics video. What OTHER workout programmes can we expect this month?

Bertie Ahern's Digout Workout:

If you're the sort of person who gains pounds over dinner - including 8,000 pounds at a single dinner in Manchester - then this workout is for you.

SWEAT buckets as you endure the Tribunal treadmill! LOSE your cool as your finances are questioned! RUN from Charlie Bird's microphone!

And here's the workout bit - try to WORKOUT how that controversial bank lodgement could ever equal sterling instead of dollars.

Mary Harney's Hospital Boot Camp:

If you like being demeaned, humiliated and given the run around, you'll love this routine. It includes competing for unoccupied beds, chasing after appointments and suffering the infamous 10-day trolley endurance test. But order early: there's a nine-year waiting list.

George Lee's Gloomathon:

Join RTE's money guru in his weekly whinge about the economy - guaranteed to turn anyone into a long streak of misery.

The PD Seat Trimming Routine:

Lose three quarters of your body mass in a single day... election day. Get rid of 75kg of unsightly flab, and send him back to the Four Courts.

SCIENTISTS in Ireland are mystified by a giant Bronze Age ring structure spanning 20 acres and enclosed by two concentric circles of walls. They say it was soon abandoned "despite the staggering effort that went into its construction". I'm no expert - but it sounds very like a very early version of The Bertie Bowl.

Barbra Streisand's Ultimate Mudwrestling and Kickboxing:

First, buy an expensive ticket for a Streisand concert. Then try to wrestle your way through the mud and kick out whoever's taken your seat.

Aer Lingus Aerobics:

Trek 200 miles up to Belfast, and the pounds will just melt away... from your wages bill.

The Beverley Flynn Makeover:

Are you a loner? Feel out of it all? Trim the fat off your libel bill, and you'll get lots of invites to parties... the FF Party.

Supergran strikes back

MY heroine of the week is Florida granny-of-eight Pat Wells, whose car was hijacked while she was still inside.

The feisty gran snapped: "Look, if you don't stop this car I am going to stab you in the eye with this ink pen...and I am serious."

Exit cowardly thief, proving that sometimes, the pen CAN be mightier than the sword.

NOT QUIT FOR THE JOB

OVERHEARD in Government Buildings: "Did you read about that Malaysian Minister who resigned after being caught on a sex tape?"

"Yes. Thank God, that would never happen here."

"What, Ministers on sex tapes?"

"No - Ministers resigning."

A MAN'S STRESSED FRIENDS

Poor pooches have woof time over Christmas



IT'S A dog's life for man's best friend.

These loveable pooches have had a woof start to 2008 - and are unlikely to see much more of it unless they find new homes.

They stare out at us from their cages in the dogs' and cats' home, where they have been since before Christmas.

It's literally raining cats and dogs at the centre, where the staff of 22 have to cope with scores of unwanted pets being handed in every day - each with a sad tale.

The Dublin sanctuary is bursting at the seams because staff refused to hand out puppies before Christmas. "We were afraid people would give them as presents and then they'd be dumped in January," the home's boss, Jimmy Cahill, told the *Sunday World*.

But some callous owners decided to ring out the old year early - and got rid of their pets before the festivities.

Gillian Bird, education officer with the DSPCA, says: "We got a lot of calls from people asking us to have their older dogs re-homed. The excuses they gave us ranged from 'We have visitors' to 'I'm getting a new extension for Christmas'. Some even said 'I don't want the dog any more - it smells.'"

Disposable

"It's the disposable society we live in. Dogs are something to be thrown out just like the old TV or washing machine. It's no way to treat a loyal family pet at the end of his life."

Of the nine old dogs found over Christmas, just five - a spaniel and four corgis - have been reclaimed by their owners. She doesn't hold out much hope for the rest.

"Not many people want to take an old dog," she says as we meet Scruffy, a grumpy old codger who has snapped at some of the staff.

He looks warily out at us through the bars, decides to make friends, then changes his mind and retires to a corner.

"We're not sure what age he is because he won't let us examine his teeth, but he's no longer young," says Gillian.

Scruffy was found wandering in nearby Dodder Valley Park on Christmas Eve.

Another stray missing his family is Timmy, a terrier-cross who was found limping around Finglas, north Dublin. Poor Timmy tries to give us his bandaged paw but is too weak to hold it up.

But Gillian believes Timmy's owners are looking for him. "There's been a lot of

By GERALDINE COMISKEY

money spent on him - he's had very expensive cataract surgery on one of his eyes and dental work."

He's also been toilet-trained and barks until staff member Celia Quigley takes him out of his kennel to go for a wee.

The only thing he hasn't had is the snip. But, while there is a vet on standby to neuter animals, Timmy will be hanging on to his old manhood, it's all he's got.

Across the aisle, Susie, a 10-year-old terrier, whimpers and scratches at the bars of her strange home until the DSPCA's Caroline Storey-Croft takes her out for a stroll.

Making puppy eyes doesn't work when you're long in the tooth, Gillian points out. "Ten-year-old dogs are hard to re-home. So we're hoping her owners will reclaim her."

But it's not only the old dogs who find themselves victims of ageism.

Five beautiful, boisterous boxer pups were handed in because their mum's owner couldn't cope with them. They will grow up to be energetic dogs but despite their macho appearance, are very gentle.

People looking for small house-pets are more likely to go for two 12-week-old shih-tzu-type pups who were found tied to a pole outside an office in Sandyford, south Dublin. And for cat-lovers, it's pussy galore, with scores of kittens looking for homes. The little fluffballs are so desperate to be cuddled, they keep their claws in as they greet visitors - and make pitiful meows as we walk away.

Gillian has a solution for animal lovers who can't keep pets. "Come up and help us. We're always looking for volunteers."

DOG'S LIFE: DSPCA's Caroline Storey-Croft with Timmy the dog. Below, our Geraldine with a puppy