



# LARISSA NOLAN

Straight talking...

## Farrell gives a voice to special needs parents

**THE song Somewhere Only We Know takes me back to the early 2010s, a time in my life that felt like walking through fog.**

To me, it's a hymn for parents of special needs kids.

It fits the feelings of being bonded together on a journey that was not as expected, with no idea what will happen next.

"Is this the place we used to love? Is this the place that I've been dreaming of? Oh simple thing, where have you gone?"

"So tell me when you're gonna let me in. I'm getting tired and I need somewhere to begin."

The defining feeling of the song is the sense of being alone.

So when Colin Farrell spoke about his son James last week, it meant an awful lot to those of us parents of kids with extra needs.

Colin knows that "Somewhere" too. He understands every day of it; he identified the main challenges; outlined the hopes and fears of everyone in that place.

He gave an interview to launch the Colin Farrell Foundation, which aims to

support families and individuals with intellectual disabilities.

His message was simple: "I want the world to treat James with kindness and respect."

He put into words what it's like when your child does something the professionals have said they'll never do. The determination it takes.

He told how significant a diagnosis is, providing the pathway towards the right

treatments to reach potentials. He highlighted how, when those with disabilities turn 21, they age out of the supports previously given and are on their own.

By being a voice for such families, he showed how it doesn't matter if you're a star, the experience is the same.

In speaking out so well about James, who has the rare and complex neurodevelopmental disorder Angelman Syndrome, he became an important advocate for parents.

He brought openness, reality, dignity, beauty, humour and truth to it, helped others to understand and gave strength to families.

I've always thought there are some wonderful privileges about being a mother to an autistic child, difficulties and all.

You become a better person. I was a bit of an a\*\*\*\*\*e before my son.

Like Colin said, I learned things – how you need to be present, how you need to be clear of mind and body to be there for them, because they need you more. My

son and his challenges taught me to be a nicer human being, I think. As Colin said: "I'm not the perfect dad – I f\*\*\* up left right and centre. But you have to be present to f\*\*\* up."

I've had far less to deal with than Colin and yet issues at the lower end of the scale have a huge impact on life.

In my case, we fortunately steered out of the fog and into a good place.

Colin and his son's mother Kim Bordenave thought James was just a quiet baby, but then he turned out to have profound needs and will never live a fully independent life.

My story is the opposite, my son's issues made themselves very loud and clear early on, but he turned a corner around five and has since grown into a kind and capable young man, making his way through secondary school.

Whatever end of the spectrum you're on, we're all in the same large boat.

Thank Colin Farrell, for speaking for all of us.



BOND Colin Farrell & son James



HEROIC Kellie Harrington

### Kel's more than a just a great boxer

THE sight of Kellie Harrington crying tears of joy and pride as she returned to a hero's homecoming on Portland Row was some moment.

I had tears in my eyes looking at her, and even Sharon Ni Bheolain got emotional about it on the Nine O'Clock News.

Kellie is the greatest Irish Olympic boxer ever, in the record books with her double gold medals from Paris and Tokyo.

But she is also a brilliant, natural orator, judging by her speech to the Dublin north-inner city community she's from.

It was powerful, not preachy; authentic and straight from the heart – an inspirational message young people from the area won't forget.

Kellie told the crowd: "I hope all the kids, teens and young adults here watching me for the last few years, seeing all the hard work and dedication and the highs and the lows..."

"That it gives you the heart and the grit to understand we can do anything we set our minds to."

"But we have to work for things, they don't come on a plate."

"We've got to work." "I don't know what else to say, except: Bob's Your Uncle, Fanny's Your Aunt – Goodnight Irene!"

### Lar's HERO of the week

**TEAM IRELAND** Our stellar Olympic Team were cheered by 20,000 fans at a homecoming on O'Connell Street on Monday. Their performance at the Paris Olympics has been a huge boost to the nation.



### Lar's ZERO of the week

**BLUEFLIES** Seem to be everywhere at the moment and I spend half the day chasing them out of the house. Rack off.



## TIME'S UP FOR LONG MOVIES

WHEN did films get so long?

I rarely go to the cinema now because of what director Ridley Scott calls "the bum ache factor".

The legendary director cut the run time of Napoleon because: "You're sitting there thinking, 'Oh God, there's another hour!'"

Napoleon is still an arse-numbing two hours and 38 minutes though.

Bring back the running times of the 80s and 90s, I say.

My favourite movies are all around this length, such as the classic comedy So I Married An Axe Murderer and the coming of age flick Rushmore, which are both one hour and 33 minutes.

Cult hit The Warriors comes in at one hour 32 minutes and Ferris Bueller's Day Off and black comedy Heathers are both one hour and 43

minutes. But go to the movies these days and you'll grow old in there. Oppenheimer, starring Cillian Murphy, went on for three hours, Dune lasted two hours and 35 minutes.

Even romantic drama It Ends With runs for two hours and 11 minutes.

You could be learning Mandarin Chinese in that time, or how to play the glockenspiel.

Less is more when it comes to movies.



NUCLEAR OPTION Cillian Murphy in Oppenheimer