



• UNITED IRISH CULTURAL CENTER •

# Proud To Be Irish American

by Liam Reidy, President, United Irish Cultural Center, (lreidy@irishcentersf.org)

PARTICIPATING IN MANY OF last month's St Patrick's season festivities around town and at the Irish Center, I felt a great sense of pride as an Irish American. I have spent the last twenty-six years living here in the San Francisco area, which means I have spent more time in the US than I have in my native Ireland! I never saw myself staying long term in America upon my initial arrival via Brooklyn, New York in 1995, but my journey west in 1997 (following a sojourn in Ireland in 1996) sealed my fate.

Since then, I have built a life here in San Francisco, and it has become my home. Yet, I have always felt a strong connection to my Irish roots and culture, and I have made a point to celebrate and honor my heritage. Over the years and through raising a family here, I have made many friends and created a community that has become my extended family. The Irish Center has been a second home to me—a place where I can go to connect with my heritage and feel a sense of belonging. I have attended and organized countless events at the Center—from dinners, concerts, music classes, and camps to cultural workshops.

### Everyone Celebrates Irish Culture

The St Patrick's season festivities are always a highlight of the year for me. From

the colorful parade to the lively Irish music sessions, there is an energy and excitement that is infectious. I love seeing people of all ages and backgrounds come together to celebrate and share in the joy of Irish culture.

Attending events at the Irish Center is always a special treat for me because of the connections and community, but it's not just about the celebrations and events. Being Irish American is a part of who I am, and it has shaped my values and perspective on life. The Irish are known for their warmth, humor, and resilience, and these qualities have been passed down through generations of my own family. They have helped me navigate the challenges and joys of life with a sense of grace and gratitude.

As I reflect on the past month's festivities, I feel a deep sense of pride and gratitude for my Irish heritage and the community of Irish Americans of which I am a part. Through my experiences in San Francisco, I have learned that being Irish American is not just about celebrating St Patrick's Day or wearing green, it is about embracing and preserving the rich culture and traditions that have been passed down through generations. It is about connecting with others who share a similar sense of cultural pride and creating a community that celebrates and supports one another. I

look forward to continuing to celebrate my heritage with all of you and contribute to the vibrant community that I have come to love. I may have spent more time in America than I have in Ireland, but the connection to my roots is as strong as ever. And that is something to celebrate.

### Green Road Shines

We hosted the Irish music group Green Road from County Wexford over the parade weekend. The group were enthusiastically involved in several productions with us. The band joined us in the St Patrick's Day Parade, delivered master classes and workshops with local musicians, performed a jam session at Wawona Gates, and closed out the weekend with a concert in front of a capacity audience in the St Patrick's room. Míle Buíochas (Thank you) to Sean Reidy (organizer) and to PJ Sinnott and the band.

### St Patrick's Report Card

While Parade Day attracted the usual bumper crowd, the Green Fest block party had reduced crowds due to the poor weather. We had the best ever St Patrick's Day on March 17th and welcomed a raucous crowd of local boxing aficionados to watch the boxers from Ireland and California on March 18th and support a community partner, Fire in the Ring Boxing. We nearly sold out of corn beef dinners on March 17th. And based on the number of

reports I heard personally, it was delicious! We shared the extra corn beef and other food items with the St Vincent Paul Society Food kitchen on Fifth Street. Overall, a few weeks of activity. Special thanks to all the musicians and Irish dancers who did so well entertaining the crowds. Bookended by the fantastic Black Brothers concert to kick off the season, the St Patrick's Day weekend concluded with a fantastic Celtic roots concert by RUNA.

### Spring Membership Drive

Our spring membership drive is now on, and we welcome you to continue supporting us here at the Center. Contact Maggie Overbay at 650-892-4050.

### Rock the Gates

Throughout the month of April, we will announce the entertainment line-up for our second annual Rock the Gates music festival in August.

### Summer Camp

Our Summer camp has already over 40 participants signed up for the annual camp which starts in June. Registration is open throughout the spring until the camp is fully enrolled. The camp is ideal for kids aged 6 years and up.

### Leo T Walsh Scholarship

Many thanks to all those donors and supporters who have graciously contributed to the annual scholarship awards. The deadline for applying has now passed, and the judges are

busy reviewing the entrants. It is hoped to hold the award ceremony in late May. Good luck to all the eighth graders and high school seniors who applied for a scholarship.

### Landlines Move to Cell Phones

After almost five decades of physical landline telephone use at the Center, we recently moved our available telephone numbers to cell phone lines. The motivation to do this was because AT&T are no longer supporting landlines, and doubled their pricing to maintain them. In consultation with the finance team, and AT&T we decided to move to cellular, and we will now have more flexibility in managing incoming calls and controlling voice messaging.

### Thank You to the Staff

A big thank you to our event staff Aileen, Lauraine, and Heidi, the team of part time workers and volunteers for the trojan work undertaken all through the month of March. The St Patrick's committee headed up by Event Manager Aileen Dulohery and her team—made up of volunteers and Board members—also deserve a special mention. Go raibh raith agaibh go léir!

### Happy Easter

While we are closed on Easter Sunday, we extend our warmest thoughts to you and your family this Easter.

## Visit From Green Road From County Wexford Proves Successful

THE COUNTY WEXFORD BASED GREEN ROAD MUSICAL group were hosted by the United Irish Cultural Center over the St Patrick's Day parade weekend.

Green Road musicians joined us on our parade

bus, held an impromptu Irish music sing along under the tent at Wawona Gates and provided master classes in the banjo and uilleann pipes to local musicians. Green Road toured and performed in Danville, San Francisco, Millbrae here in California,

and also toured the east coast with stops in Savannah, GA and Boston, MA. The nationwide tour was supported in part by Culture Ireland. A capacity crowd enjoyed the concert at the Center on the evening of March 12th.



Green road uilleann piper Ned Wall with local SF pipers Dave Winter and Michael Drane at the Irish Center on March 18th.



Jon Reville and Fergal O'Hanlon play during the session under the Wawona Gates tent. Mike Dunbarr in the center signals his approval of the music.



Green Road banjo player Jon Reville with Kenny Sommerville, Bryce Drukin and Shane Reidy, as part of the cultural musical exchange with the visiting band and local musicians.



Sean Reidy (O'Neill Ancestral Trust, Wexford, Ireland) with Dan McGovern.



Eileen Mize with Green Road lead singer PJ Sinnott.



PJ Sinnott and Ned Wall entertain the crowd in Wawona Gates.





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Youth Music Classes Enter Spring Season

THE REPERTOIRE OF THE YOUTH music class participants continues to grow each week. The young pipers and fiddle players were back practicing as soon as the dust settled after the busy St Patrick's season at the Irish Center. The young musicians are making great strides and we aspire to having our own Youth music group in the not too distant future. Thanks to all those who contributed to the UICC Annual Appeal which supports the Youth music program.



Francis Dillenshaw, Hazel Kearney and Roisín Reidy with fiddle teacher Valerie Rose. Sawyer and Tanner Manning getting instruction from Mike Bowler.



UICC St Patrick's Food Donation To SVDP

WE ROUNDED UP THE LEFT over corned beef and hot dogs from the St Patrick's weekend and made a stop at the to the St Vincent de Paul food kitchen on 5th Street on Saturday morning, March 18. Below: Rich Chagniot, Stan Gee and Liam Reidy prepare the donated food for delivery.



RUNA Concert Captivates Irish Center Audience

Celtic roots musical sensation, RUNA, took center stage to close out the St Patrick's Day weekend and brought high energy and big talent to the packed St Francis Room crowd. Thanks to all who attended—your support ensures the continued success of traveling tour groups like RUNA and allows the UICC to attract top talent for the benefit of our members and greater community!



Pictured here are some of the large audience to see Runa.



Clockwise from top left: Eileen Sweeney, Mary and Patrick Taylor. Hanna Newmark (visiting from Scotland) and Kathleen Butler. Jim Tillison and Liz Graham. Lucy Robinson Garcia and Luca Garcia. Karen Roark and Laura Hendry.



Minister Harris Visits The Irish Center

MINISTER FOR JUSTICE Simon Harris visited the Irish Center over two days during the St Patricks parade weekend. Mr Harris was amazed at the crowds that assembled at the Center to celebrate the post parade party. He Harris also got to discuss the 2025 Project with the community on Sunday March 12th and offer the support of the government of Ireland for the project as we move ahead. Above right: Minster Harris with Liam Reidy and Consul General Micheál Smith. Below right: Mary, Liam and young John Frost with Minister Harris. Below: Patricia O'Reilly and Minister Harris.



THE UNITED IRISH CULTURAL CENTER presents

IRISH CAMP

Youth Summer Program

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UNITED IRISH CULTURAL CENTER INCORPORATED

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June 12-30, 2023