



• UNITED IRISH CULTURAL CENTER •

Investing In The Future: Nurturing Young Minds Through Music, Arts, Dance And Education

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

HERE AT THE CENTER, WE continue to embark on an exciting journey of investing in the future of the institution by nurturing young minds through the power of music, arts, dance and education. Last month we awarded 63 individual scholarship awards through the Leo T Walsh program. Over 250 young Irish dancers participated in the Save the Planet Feis and our youth Irish traditional music students entered their fifth month of instruction. This month, we have over sixty young kids enrolled in the annual Irish camp. The camp offers a comprehensive experience that includes not only music but also dance, language, and song, allowing participants to immerse themselves fully in Irish culture.

Platform for Irish Arts

Recognizing the importance of engaging children in their rich Irish heritage, the Center is dedicated to providing a vibrant platform for the exploration and celebration of Irish arts. With a newfound commitment to creating inclusive and captivating programming for kids, the Center aims to ignite a lifelong passion for cultural expression while fostering a sense of community and connection. As the Center continues to open its doors to a new generation of enthusiasts, it sets forth on a mission to weave together the threads of tradition, creativity, and youthful spirit, ensuring that the Irish legacy thrives for years to come.

Cultural Sustainability

Investing in kids and providing opportunities for them to engage in the arts is crucial for the growth and sustainability of any cultural Center. Not long after I joined the board back in the spring of 2019 I was struck by a comment from a member of the community who said: “there is nothing for my kids at the Center, why would I go there?” The statement stopped me in my tracks and I pensively thought about the remark. These words came from a first generation Irish American who essentially grew up at the Center. I wondered to myself about how we could change that attitude?

As a new board member, my initial focus was on generating desperately needed funds by attracting adults to events. However, the comment about the lack of offerings for children stayed with me, as I recognized the importance of creating programming specifically designed for kids. If we provided the right programs, children would naturally be drawn to participate. This realization prompted us to take action and find ways to involve more kids in the Center's activities.

Irish Camp Anyone?

One of the first initiatives we planned was a first ever summer kids camp in early 2020. Unfortunately, the onset of the pandemic forced the cancellation of the camp, hindering our plans temporarily. Despite this setback, we expressed the ongoing commitment to in-

spiring young people to engage with Irish arts at the Center. In early 2021 we set about establishing our first summer camp that summer. It proved to be a huge success with forty young community members signing up for the three week program.

Investing in the kids by offering music, arts, and dance programs can have numerous benefits. It helps children develop their artistic skills, fosters their creativity, and provides a platform for cultural expression. Moreover, such initiatives can contribute to building a sense of community, preserving cultural heritage, and ensuring the continuity of traditions.

Irish Center Priorities

Continuously finding ways to inspire young people and involving them in Irish arts should remain a priority for the Center. This can be done through a variety of activities, such as music and dance classes, art workshops, cultural events, performances, and collaborations with local schools and community organizations. By nurturing the interests and talents of the younger generation, the Center can create a vibrant and inclusive community that values and appreciates Irish arts and culture.

It may have taken us a few years here at the Center to expand our kids programming, but we have an answer now to anyone that says there is nothing for their kids to do at the Center!

Leo T Walsh Program

The 30th Annual Leo T

Walsh scholarship awards recognize and support the academic achievements of local Irish American students. Established in 1994 the program has awarded over 670 scholarships and has been instrumental in providing financial assistance to talented students pursuing higher education. We disbursed \$58,000 as part of this year's awards. Four new awards were introduced this year to honor and remember individuals who made significant contributions to their communities and schools. These awards include the Marian Connelly Memorial Award, James Keenan Memorial Award, and memorial awards from the families of Pat Fergus, Mary Lucey, Timothy Driscoll, and the SFYGAA Memorial Award for Nicole Killigrew.

The success of the program is owed to the generous contributions of community supporters and donors. The organizers extend their gratitude to everyone involved, with special recognition given to Peggy Nevin and Carmelle Reiser for their tireless efforts behind the scenes.

Comhaltas Céili, June 4

The Comhaltas Summer Céili will take place from 6:30pm-9:30pm. Live Music with Tune Station.

Youth GAA Fight Night

Amateur boxing returns to the Center on Saturday, June 10, as part of a fundraiser for San Francisco Youth Gaelic Athletic Association which hosts the CYC this summer in the East Bay city of Dublin. First

bout is at 5pm.

Bloomsday, June 17

As part of the global Bloomsday Festival for Ulysses by James Joyce, author Michael Fallon will discuss his new book, Ulysses Abridged, in the St Francis room from 1pm. Cormac Gannon and friends will lead a music session.

Photo Exhibition, June 23-27-

We welcome Belfast documentary photographer Seán McKernan on Friday, June 23 at 7pm to open his exhibition: “Belfast—Conflict to Peace” featuring a stunning series of images of life in Belfast from the Hunger Strikes through the Peace Process and beyond. Seán will also present a talk on Sunday, June 25, at 2pm. This event is part of the celebration of the 25th Anniversary Year of the Good Friday Agreement. The exhibition runs until Tuesday June 27.

Wawona Gates, June 24

We will mark the third anniversary of Wawona Gates on Saturday, June 24, with music, Irish dancers and a large birthday cake! The Irish Shoppe will be open.

Camp Showcase, June 30

The culmination of the Irish summer camp will be a grand showcase on Friday, June 30, at 7pm produced by the campers themselves. The eagerly awaited performance will feature an enchanting blend of Irish music, captivating dance routines, heartfelt songs, and even the melodious tones of the Irish language.

Leo T Walsh Scholarship 2023 Awards

THE 30TH ANNUAL LEO T Walsh Scholarship Awards, held on May 7th, 2023, was a significant event that recognized and supported the academic achievements of Irish American students. The Scholarship program, established in 1994 at the UICC (United Irish Cultural Center), has been instrumental in providing financial assistance to talented students pursuing higher education.

Since its inception, the scholarship program has awarded over 670 scholarships, and this year's ceremony marked a milestone with a total of 63 individual awards. Four new awards were introduced this year to honor and remember individuals who made significant contributions to their communities and schools. These awards include the Marian Connelly Memorial Award, James Keenan Memorial Award, and memorial awards from the families of Pat Fergus, Mary Lucey, Timothy Driscoll, and the SFYGAA Memorial Award for Nicole Killigrew.

A total of 37 graduating high school seniors and 26 eighth-grade students received support ranging from \$750 to \$1,000. Notably, the grand prize scholarships were awarded to Kieran Batchelli-Hennessey (\$750) and Sean McKeon (\$1,000).

The success of the Leo T

Walsh Scholarship program is owed to the generous contributions of community supporters and donors. Their donations, totaling \$58,000, make it possible to fund these scholarships and invest in the educational future of young Irish Americans.

The UICC community plays an integral role in the scholarship program, and their gracious generosity ensures its continuation. The organizers extend their gratitude to everyone involved, with special recognition given to Peggy Nevin and Carmelle Reiser for their tireless efforts behind the scenes. The scholarship committee works diligently to source judges for the student essays, evaluate the online portion of the program, notify the successful finalists, and organize the awards ceremony.

Looking ahead, the UICC remains committed to promoting and supporting the scholarship program as an investment in the youth who will go on to become leaders in the Irish American community. Furthermore, some recipients may eventually become stewards of the UICC or board members in the future. Opportunities are available for named scholarships in the 2024 program, and interested parties can contact Peggy Nevin at scholarship@irishcentersf.org to contribute and learn more.



Tom, Nora, David and Meredith Mannion.



John, Kevin, and Jeanne Connolly.



Peggy Nevin and Carmelle Reiser.



Tom McGarvey with Tom and Nancy McGarvey student scholarship winners: Micah Zogaric, James Lucey, Kieran Batchelli-Hennessey, Luke O'Brien and Geneva Lee Kissane.



Jimmy, Sean, Kathleen, Michael and Thomas McKeon



Suzie Sheedy with her father Jack Fitzpatrick, Taylor and Eddie Harnett.

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Lots Of Laughs At “The Humours Of Bandon

by Eileen Mize

What a thrill to welcome award-winning playwright, dancer, and actress Margaret McAuliffe to the UICC for a brilliant night of live theater on the St Patrick’s stage. Guests enjoyed a humor-filled coming of age story set against an Irish dance backdrop that had anyone who had lived through preparing for or attending an Irish Dance competition in stitches—the agony of hair curlers, mother-daughter relationships, pre-competition rituals and anxieties, enduring friendships, attitude and sportsmanship, and more.

Keepers of the Steps hosted a “Dress Drive” and showcased a small sampling of the growing collection to raise awareness and encourage anyone with Irish dance stories and ephemera to reach out. Their dress collection has grown and

they are most grateful to those who have shared their Irish dance treasures with the collection for all to enjoy.

One particularly endearing part of the evening was a surprise gesture aimed at our guest performer. At the end of the show, Anne Cassidy Carew called Margaret back up on stage, much to her surprise, and presented her with bubbly and tulips in honor of her daughter who had turned two that day while mom was away on tour. Everyone sang “Happy Birthday” to Margaret’s daughter in Dublin as a very touched Margaret fought to keep her composure. Well done to Anne and Jennifer Drennan for showing such wonderful hospitality!

Thanks to all who joined us and to Culture Ireland and Fishamble: The New Play Company for helping bring this show to San Francisco!



Clockwise from top left: Vice Consul General Jennifer Chadwick, UICC President Liam Reidy, playwright and actress Margaret McAuliffe, and Consul General Micheál Smith. Several Keepers of the Steps committee members Anne Cassidy Carew, Noreen Boyle, Jennifer Drennan, and Eileen Mize. Marie Woods, Consul General Micheál Smith, and Suzie Sheedy. Marie Gavney, Mary Dunne, and Sally Cassidy.

Save The Planet Feis

KUDOS TO THE MICHAEL DILLON SCHOOL, organizers for the recent Save the Planet Feis at the UICC. The two-day competition was full of great dancing and camaraderie all while raising awareness about ways to care for our planet. Sustainability goals and eco-friendly practices are great lessons we can all learn and be aware of. Well done to all the competitors and participating schools.



All smiles on the sustainable podiums.



Back: Trisha Feeney, TCRG and Melissa Sheridan. Front: Annie McBride, ADCRG; Mary Jo Murphy, ADCRG; and Michael Dillon, ADCRG.



Accordionist Luke Sooy from New Jersey.

“Belfast—Conflict to Peace,” A Photo Exhibition By Seán McKernan

THE UICC IS DELIGHTED TO welcome Belfast documentary photographer Seán McKernan presenting his exhibition: “Belfast—Conflict to Peace,” featuring a stunning series of images of life in Belfast from the Hunger Strikes through the Peace Process and beyond. The series portrays his personal 40-year documentation of a deeply divided city, its turbulent path to peace, and transformation into a city determined to succeed. Fresh from a show at the London Irish Centre as part of an event to celebrate the 25th Anniver-

sary Year of the Good Friday Agreement, Seán brings his collection to San Francisco for a series of events with the Irish Consul General Office in San Francisco and the United Irish Cultural Center.

A native of West Belfast, Seán has worked with many hundreds of local community groups, using the medium of photography to reflect and highlight a diverse range of social issues in his native city that is divided because of political and sectarian conflict. As a freelance documentary photographer, he has further

developed his educational work with the community sector in Belfast and abroad. His first-hand experience of living in a divided society compelled him to undertake community projects in Palestine, Sarajevo and the indigenous Aboriginal community in Australia. His work has been exhibited throughout Europe, USA, and Australia since 1984, and his current exhibition ‘Belfast—Conflict to Peace’ was shown at the University of Colorado and the New York Irish Centre in 2022 through the support of Culture Ireland.

CAMP BEGINS on JUNE 12, 2023

THE UNITED IRISH CULTURAL CENTER presents

IRISH CAMP

Youth Summer Program

2700 45th AVE @ WAWONA in SAN FRANCISCO'S OUTER SUNSET

20 **TÍR NA NÓG** 23

www.irishcentersf.org

Don't miss the camp show on June 30 at 7 pm

IRISH CENTER
SAN FRANCISCO

“Belfast—Conflict to Peace” Photo Exhibition
June 23—June 27, 2023
featuring the work of Sean McKernan

©Sean McKernan

Opening Night Reception Fri, June 23, 2023 7 pm	Artist Talk Sun, June 25, 2023 2 pm
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NO COST/REGISTER: www.irishcentersf.org

United Irish Cultural Center | 2700 45th Ave San Francisco