



• UNITED IRISH CULTURAL CENTER •

From Youthful Passion to Seasoned Leadership: Shaping The Future of Our Center

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

AS I OBSERVE THE BUSTLING activity at the Center throughout November—a time of celebrations, diverse classes, and engaging events—it strikes me how rich our offerings have become. What truly ignites my enthusiasm are the programs involving children. We now host STEM classes after school three times a week and provide education in Irish music and dance, and have also introduced a Kids Reading Hour at the Library, drawing an engaged crowd each time. Our annual summer camp welcomed 75 kids last June, and throughout the year we’ve showcased numerous Irish dancers from the community as part of our cultural programming.

A Vibrant Hub for Kids

Without a doubt, the Center has blossomed into a vibrant hub catering to the younger generation—an incredible transformation considering previous perceptions of limited offerings for children here. Among our middle-aged community members, many fondly reminisce about days spent racing around the center as children, while their parents dined in the adjoining dining room. Though those cherished memories remain, we eagerly anticipate a future where we can once again welcome entire families to arrive within a few years, following the Center’s reconstruction. Investing in and embracing children within the Irish Center is critical; they embody our future stewards, board members, musi-

cians, dancers, and supporters. Their presence today ensures the enduring vibrancy of our legacy tomorrow.

Today’s Juveniles to Tomorrow’s Seniors

Recognizing that today’s juveniles are the seniors of tomorrow is fundamental for securing the Center’s long-term sustainability. Actively engaging and investing in the younger generation fosters a community that not only thrives in the present but also lays the foundation for a dedicated, knowledgeable, and supportive senior community in the future. Their involvement today shapes these youngsters into the pillars that will uphold the continued success and sustainability of the Irish Center for generations ahead.

Talented Youth

This year has marked remarkable progress in our music program, particularly with the influx of talented youngsters embracing the tin whistle and fiddle through our youth music initiative. Notably, five budding bagpipe players have transitioned to practicing on actual pipes, while others have embarked on their journey into drumming. Our facility witnesses more than sixty dedicated Irish step dancers honing their craft each week during regular practice sessions. It’s evident that securing the future of the Center hinges on our ongoing commitment to nurturing and investing in the potential of our youth.

Join Our Team
Embark on an extraordinary journey with us and become a vital part of a once-in-a-lifetime movement dedicated to rejuvenating the Irish Center. Whether it’s signing up as a new member, renewing a lapsed membership, or actively participating in our building committee or fundraising team, your involvement matters greatly; now is the time to take action. Our journey has been remarkable thus far, and your support will drive us to new heights. Together, we uphold tradition and guarantee that the vibrant Irish essence flourishes in San Francisco for generations ahead. Join us in shaping our legacy!

What’s Ahead for 2024
Several live musical acts have already been planned for the spring. Included in the Center’s lineup are: Aoife Scott, Derek Warfield and the Young Wolfe Tones, Patrick Ball, Vince Keehan, Paddy Egan and Nicola Stathers, Máire Ní Chathasaigh and Chris Newman. Artist exhibitions, an Irish dance residency, three week summer camp, traditional music festival, third annual music Fleadh Rock the Gates, and much more are planned for next year.

Line Dancing Classes
Several members of the community suggested we host Line Dancing classes here at the Center, which is very popular across this country and at home in Ireland. Over 60 people turned out in cowboy boots and

western attire for the first class on November 16. The next class will be held Thursday, December 21.

December Blood Drive
The San Francisco Fire Department Community Blood Drive takes place at the Center on Wednesday, December 13 from 8:00am to 12:00pm. Last September’s Blood drive collected 33 units of blood which helped 99 people.

Annual Giving Campaign
At this significant time of the year, our Annual Appeal donation forms have reached the doorsteps of our valued members, inviting support for our year-end giving campaign. Your generous contributions are the cornerstone of our ability to sustain and enrich our cultural programming activities. We deeply rely on your philanthropic spirit to continue nurturing and promoting the vibrant cultural experiences that define and unite our community. Your support ensures that our programming remains robust, engaging, and accessible to all, fostering the celebration and preservation of our cherished traditions.

Library and Scholarship Raffle
Many thanks to all those who have purchased and returned raffle tickets in support of the Patrick J Dowling Library and Leo T Walsh Scholarship programs. The lucky winners will be announced on December 31 in the Library.

Annual Boutique
Local artisans, vendors, chocolatiers, and crafts people will have plenty of Christmas gifts to offer at the Holiday Boutique on Saturday December 16, which will also feature festive holiday music by David Austin. The Irish Shoppe will be fully stocked with a large range of Irish Biscuits and Chocolates.

Thank you
Best wishes to board directors Tom McKeon and Kathleen Kraus who are stepping away from their roles on the UICC Board at the end of December. Tom has been involved with the Center for the past 25 years, the most recent five years as a board member, and a volunteer for the first twenty years. Kathleen was our Human Resources lead for the last three years. Thank you for all your help behind the scenes!

Members Meeting
On Thursday, December 14 at 7pm, the UICC board will meet with UICC members during the Christmas Social for the December meeting. Come and hear how the Center performed in the past year and what is planned for 2024. The UICC will celebrate 49 years on 45th and Wawona in 2024.

Merry Christmas
On behalf of the Board of the Center I want to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Community Gallery

There were several community events at the Center in November. Here are some of the visitors we hosted.



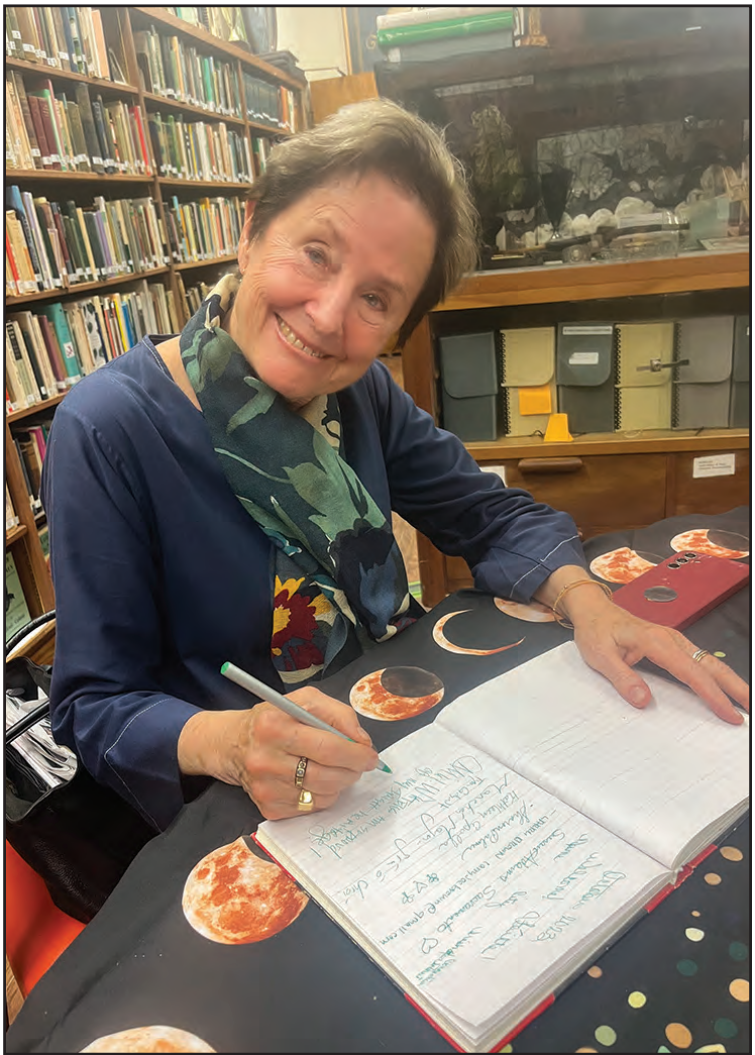
Margaret Baxter, Peggy O’Sullivan, Carol Barazi, Anne Flores and Monica McGuire.



Magraret O’Neill and Joan Spaargaren.

Diarmuid Philpott and Lynn Burkart.

Alice Waters of Chez Panisse Visits The Irish Center



Alice Waters, (Chez Panisse, Berkekey) recently visited the Dowling Library. After signing the Visitors Book the famous chef, writer and restaurateur commented: “I’m so proud of my Irish heritage!”

• UNITED IRISH CULTURAL CENTER •

Keepers Of The Steps Tap Into The Irish Traditional Music Archives In Dublin

KEEPERS OF THE STEPS IS A special cultural program at the UICC begun in 2020 that collects and shares the history of Irish step dancing in the San Francisco Bay Area. Committee members are actively planning another exhibition and programming in 2024 and have begun research on some new aspects of the history they have been gathering—and this time their research is taking them to Dublin, Ireland!

Keepers committee lead, Eileen Mize has long been following an international authority on Irish Dance—historian Dr John Cullinane who is also a longtime teacher and adjudicator (who also happened to be on the judging panel at the first Western Regional Oireachtas in San Francisco held in the 1970s). Eileen has a collection of Dr Cullinane’s various books on different aspects of his research, and they were of great help to her when curating the first Keepers of the Steps exhibition at the UICC in 2021.

By following the Irish Traditional Music Archive (ITMA) located in Dublin, Ireland on social media, Eileen was alerted to a very interesting acquisition in 2021. Dr Cullinane donated his decades-old collection of research and historical facts and articles on Irish Dance to An Coimisiún le Rincí Gaelacha (CLRG) who then in turn entrusted it to the ITMA in a special arrangement where the items will be preserved, organized, and made available on behalf of CLRG. Eileen enjoyed following the ensuing weeks and months of reports on cataloging the collection, often thinking how similar the meticulous efforts were to what the Keepers are doing on a localized west coast scale.

Energized by increased global efforts to preserve and document the history of Irish step dancing, and anticipating a planned trip to Ireland with her sister, Eileen reached out to Maeve Gebruers, ITMA head archivist, to inquire about the possibility of taking a look at the collection while she was in town in late November—and plans were made! The Cullinane Archive Collection is an extensive multimedia collection of material relating to the history of Irish dance compiled by Dr Cullinane over his lifetime—and the native Corkman is now in his 80s!

Eileen spent several hours on late November day in the Merrion Square archive room of ITMA and was amazed and inspired by the amount and breadth of content. She was particularly looking at items related to the western expansion of the CLRG and the emergence of Irish dance in the west with notable names such as Maureen McTeggart Hall and the Healy School. “It was fun to see important pieces of our San Francisco story carefully cataloged in the Dublin archive, and exciting to think how our Keepers of the Steps program at the UICC can play a part in this global effort,” shared Eileen.

Eileen is also now in direct contact with Dr Cullinane himself and is more motivated

Pictures from Keepers of the Steps Director Eileen Mize’s trip to the Irish Traditional Music Archives (ITMA) Merrion Square, Dublin.



Keepers of the Steps Director Eileen Mize with ITMA head archivist Maeve Gebruers.



than ever to learn from him as he is up in years and facing some health challenges. “There is a sense of urgency in our preservation work so as not to lose access to these first-hand accounts. I look forward to learning more from Dr. Cullinane and am delighted to be in touch. He was very happy to hear of the efforts of Keepers of the Steps.”

The Keepers committee looks forward to sharing exhibition and other programming

dates regarding Keepers of the Steps in the new year and look forward to seeing the unfolding of our rich history of Irish Dance. In the meantime, visit their table at the UICC Christmas Boutique on December 16, 2023 from noon—5 pm in the St Patrick’s Room at the UICC and find out how you can get involved. They are still collecting stories and ephemera!

More: www.irishcentersf.org/keepers-of-the-steps

Line Dancing Classes

Line Dancing classes returned to the Center for the winter season and we had 60 participants for the first class on November 16. A thoroughly enjoyable evening kept everyone on their toes and heels! The class provides lessons for the first hour and social dancing for the second hour. Here are some photos of those who attended. The next class is Thursday December 21 at 7pm.



Claire Hinchion, Michelle Green and Josephine Brogan.



Aileen Dulohery and Anne Marie Carr.

25 Years of Service



AFTER A QUARTER OF A CENTURY of volunteering, most recently as a board member since 2019, Tom McKeon has stepped away from the Board of the UICC. Tom was instrumental in building out the technological infrastructure for the Irish Center during his tenure (website, email, security and firewalls). Tom also conceived and executed the

St Patrick Appeal during the pandemic which was a financial lifeline for the Center while we were shuttered due to public health ordinances. Tom will still be available in the background to support the Center going forward which is great news.

On behalf of the Board of Directors—Thank you Tom for your service over the years !

• IRISH AMERICA •

Celtic Thunder Unveils Their Latest Musical Journey With New Album ‘Odyssey’



FOLLOWING A TRIUMPHANT 35-city tour across the USA and Canada, the internationally acclaimed musical sensation Celtic Thunder is thrilled to announce the release of their highly anticipated album, “Odyssey.” Featuring songs inspired by their recent tour, the Celtic Thunder—Odyssey CD hit all streaming platforms in the USA on November 24. Fans can secure their copies by ordering the CD on the band’s official website, www.celticthunder.com.

“Odyssey” embarks on a captivating exploration of Irish music and culture, weaving together the ensemble’s rich history with innovative new sounds. The album takes listeners on a sweeping journey through traditional Irish music heartlands, the rhythmic beats of contemporary Irish tunes, and original arrangements that define Celtic Thunder’s distinctive sound. Each member of Celtic Thunder contributes their unique voice and charisma to this musical expedition, creating a harmonious blend that resonates with a diverse audience. The shared musical chemistry, deeply rooted in their Irish heritage imbues the performance with compelling strength.

“Odyssey” presents a diverse selection of tracks, weaving a rich tapestry of emotional and musical tones. Audiences will be captivated by the dynamic rendition of “Go Lassie Go,” infusing new life into the traditional folk song with vibrant harmonies and fresh interpretations. “City of Chicago” stands as a poignant tribute to the Irish diaspora,

weaving heartfelt lyrics with evocative melodies. A standout moment is their rendition of “The Parting Glass,” an iconic classic from the annals of Irish music, delivered with profound emotion that reverberates through the soul. The raw vocal interplay creates a deeply moving musical experience, capturing the nostalgia and beauty of this timeless piece. Exploring introspective territory, “Sailing” is a tender ballad showcasing Celtic Thunder’s ability to convey profound emotions through seamless vocal harmonies and emotionally charged performances.

The Celtic Thunder Band, with their instrumental prowess, adds an authentic and sonically rich backdrop to the vocal performances. Their expert musicianship underscores the music’s Irish roots, ensuring that each song, regardless of genre, is treated with the respect and creativity it deserves.

In essence, “Odyssey” pays homage to Celtic Thunder’s musical legacy while blazing new trails. It’s a compelling journey through time, sound, and culture that educates and entertains. The captivating fusion of music and storytelling makes “Odyssey” a must-listen release for fans of Celtic Thunder and Irish music enthusiasts alike.

Established in Dublin in 2007, Celtic Thunder has garnered global acclaim for emotionally charged performances and cutting-edge productions. Billboard magazine has awarded them Top World Album Artist five times, solidifying their position as a musical powerhouse.

Thirty Minute Energy Healing available.

Have an issue you need help looking at on an energy level.

<https://www.energy-healing-rest-stop.com>

Or email Sheena:

sheenab00@yahoo.com (zero zero).

Here’s a resolution you can keep in ‘24

Attend more cultural events



Saturday, January 6
Children of Gaza Fundraiser Concert



Tuesday, January 30
Irish Night at the Warriors



Sunday, February 4
Shadow Puppet Show & Workshop with Sean Powers



Saturday, February 10
San Francisco Rose of Tralee Selection Night



Friday, February 16
Aoife Scott in Concert



Saturday, February 17
Derek Warfield and the Young Wolfe Tones



Friday, February 23
Grand Marshal Dinner

Thursday, March 7
Patrick Ball presents “Come Dance with Me in Ireland” Yeats Show

Saturday, March 9
Fire in the Ring Amateur Fight Night

Thursday, March 14
Vince Keehan & Friends joined by Nicolas Stathers (pipes) and Paddy Egan (concertina)

Saturday, March 16
San Francisco St. Patrick’s Day Parade UICC Post-Parade Party

Sunday, March 17
St. Patrick’s Day Celebration/Block Party Featuring Melanie O’Reilly and many more!

www.irishcentersf.org

UNITED IRISH CULTURAL CENTER of SAN FRANCISCO

Happy New Year

LIVE IN CONCERT

THE IRISH TENORS



WITH ORCHESTRA

A FAMILY CHRISTMAS

25TH ANNIVERSARY

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