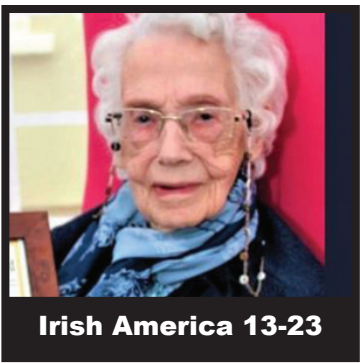
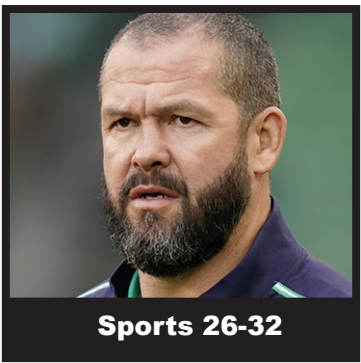




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Bold Vision For The Irish Realized, San Francisco City Council Approves Plans For New Center

by Eileen Mize

ON SATURDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2023, on the sidewalk in front of the United Irish Cultural Center (UICC) against a bright backdrop of blue skies and sunshine, friends, neighbors, benefactors, and members gathered—spilling out onto 45th Avenue—to witness a significant milestone. At a special signing ceremony, San Francisco Mayor London Breed made official what the San Francisco Board of Supervisors unanimously passed earlier that week—building plan approval for the reimagined new Irish Center.

UICC Board President Liam Reidy told the assembled crowd that day: “We are building for the next generation of Irish Americans, building on and preserving the legacy of those Irish and Irish American community members who came before, and continuing to foster community for the benefit of all.”

As the first Irish social center in the United States built entirely by volunteer labor and community contributions, the UICC has continued the work of its predecessors (such as the Knights of the Red Branch) in promoting and preserving Irish culture in the City by the Bay. Since the UICC opened its doors in the early 1970s, it has been a welcoming space for Irish visitors and immigrants as well as community groups and a variety of organizations.

Members and leadership of the UICC today are just as committed as their ancestors were to creating a vibrant and welcoming space for everyone interested in Irish and Irish American history and culture, as well as a place to foster community by nurturing, engaging, and inspiring all who cross our threshold.

With six stories above ground and two subterranean levels for parking and an aquatic center, the re-imagined Irish Center boasts a spacious lobby that will welcome visitors to experience a host of activities.

“The re-imagined facilities will better accommodate our growing cultural programming calendar as well as offerings of many youth and community activities,” continued Reidy. “From Irish Dance and music classes and summer camps to blood drives and voting stations, the new Center will be a beacon in the community. The Center will feature multi-use



From the New Building Signing Ceremony, which took place at the United Irish Cultural Center on December 16:
Front row: UICC President Liam Reidy, Mayor London Breed, Consul General of Ireland Michéal Smith.
Back Row: Myrna Melgar (District 7 Supervisor), Jonathan Goldberg (Joel Engardio's District 4 Office), Redmond Lyons and Leo Cassidy (both members of the New Building Team). Photograph by Kevin Kelleher.



An artist's rendition of the new Irish Center as it will be seen from the corner of 45th Avenue and Wawona Street. Photograph courtesy of Studio BANAA.

event space, pubs and fine food offerings, a gym, theater, and office and meeting spaces. We want to exemplify the best of both the future and the past,” said Reidy, “sharing our history and traditions and continuing to build relationships with all of the cultures in San Francisco with whom the Irish have been partnering since the 1800s.”

The heartbeat of the Center will be its extensive library, museum, and digital gallery with educational resources, interactive exhibits, and scholarly research available to everyone.

“Our celebrated Patrick J Dowling Library is bursting at the seams, and new exhibitions and cultural preservation efforts such as the popular ‘Keepers of the Steps’ (Irish dance history/archive) require proper display space and room to grow. In addition, state-of-the-art performance spaces will ensure we continue to attract top talent from Ireland, abroad, and other places near and far, allowing us to deliver a wide range of programs to keep members and guests engaged and entertained,” Reidy shared, adding:

“It has been nearly two years since we submitted our initial documents, and we are proud to announce that we are now on track to bring this dream to life with an actual building, not just a concept. Over the past year, we encountered several challenges, but thanks to the unwavering support of our community, we are moving forward and paving the way for construction. With the ongoing support of our membership and our Project 2025 supporters; San Francisco Mayor London Breed and the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, especially Supervisors Joel Engardio and Myrna Melgar, who brought the project forward; Irish Consulate Micheál Smith and his team, as well as the Irish Government, we are on course and building momentum.”

The enthusiasm is palpable as the real work of making this dream a reality begins. “Let us join hands and hearts in this remarkable journey to keep our culture alive and thriving. Together, we can create a lasting legacy that will inspire and unite our community for years to come,” urged Reidy. “It’s a great time for the Irish of the Bay Area to celebrate our history and our future.”



• UNITED IRISH CULTURAL CENTER •

City Greenlights Construction Of A New Irish Center

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

AFTER NEARLY TWENTY months navigating the city's planning procedures, our blueprint to reconstruct the Irish Center was officially endorsed at City Hall by the board of supervisors on Tuesday, December 12, 2023.

A celebratory milestone was marked at the Center on Saturday, December 16, with Mayor London Breed gracing us with her presence for a ceremony that sealed the deal to progress with the new building plans.

What initially began as an exploration to modernize the facility in the spring of 2021 has now culminated in the approval of a splendid new building. This state-of-the-art establishment will house a diverse range of event spaces, a museum, library, exhibition areas, and will serve as a hub for the numerous cultural and educational initiatives we envision for the future.

A heartfelt thank you goes out to everyone who has contributed to propelling us to this stage in the development

process. Our donors, supporters, and the members of the new building team—specifically Leo Cassidy, Mark Conroe, Redmond Lyons, and Michael Coleman—have played pivotal roles in this achievement.

Today, we stand at a significant juncture in the narrative of our Irish-American journey in the western region. More than fifty years ago, a passionate alliance of individuals from diverse backgrounds united to establish a haven for the Irish community.

Those who came before us didn't just construct a center; they forged a legacy and strengthened a community. As we face the challenge of reimagining and rejuvenating this cherished space, we require that same collective spirit.

Your participation isn't merely welcomed; it's imperative. The reality is, the success of this vital project hinges on your support. We implore you to be part of this new chapter in our center's legacy, one that will ensure our traditions and stories thrive for generations.

Whether you can offer time, expertise, or financial backing, your involvement will be the bedrock of our future. This is a rallying call to all who hold dear our Irish-American heritage and the power of a unified community.

Join us in this monumental endeavor. Together, we can craft a future as luminous and enduring as the legacy we've inherited. Your support is the linchpin to transforming our vision into reality.

For more information on how you can contribute, please reach out to us. Each show of support brings us closer to our objective.

Thank you for being an indispensable part of shaping our community's future.

Line Dancing Anyone?

Whether you are an avid fan of line dancing or want to keep fit over the Winter—classes are now expanding to two sessions per month. Sign up online for classes on January 12 and 25. Classes run from 7-9pm.

Winter Féile

Join us for the Winter Féile! The John and Maureen Kennelly Memorial Feis sets the stage for a lively weekend of Irish music, song, and dance from Friday, January 12, to Sunday, January 14. The festivities kick off as we reopen the pub for 2024 at 5pm on January 12, featuring the musical talents of the Kavanaugh Brothers from 7pm onwards.

Our two-day Féis starts at 8am and keeps the energy going until 6pm each day. Plus, there's a special fundraiser hosted by local Irish musicians supporting a humanitarian kids' charity starting at 4pm in the pub. And for a thrilling night, don't miss The Hooks, a local rock band, as they pay tribute to The Pogues in a concert starting at 8:30pm.

As the Féis comes to a close upstairs in the St Patrick's room, the music continues with The Shams performing from 2pm to 4pm in the pub. It's a celebration not to be missed!

Annual Appeal Thanks

Many thanks to all those who have supported our end of year appeal with a contribution that will be used to support our Irish cultural programming this year. A portion of this year's appeal will help support our three week summer camp and the youth music classes at the Center.

St. Brigid's Festival

The festival of St Brigid will be honored on Saturday February 3 with a cross weaving workshop. Registration closes on February 2.

Kids Library Program

During the Winter Féile weekend, Ms Nancy's read Aloud runs from 10:15am-10:45am in the library. Musical instruments and storytelling, sign up online.

Sean's Puppet Show

Our kids programming continues to expand with a puppet show on Sunday February 4 with Sean Powers. Don't miss it! Sign up online.

Happy New Year!

I want to wish all those in the UICC community a safe and prosperous new year!

2023 Cork Dinner Dance Celebration

The Rebel Cork annual dinner dance attracted a bumper crowd of 350 people on December 9 at the Center. The Rebel Cork Benevolent Association celebrated 140 years in 2023 while the Rebel Cork Ladies celebrated 110 years in existence.

Cork City native Christy O'Connell was named Cork man of the Year amid loud applause.

These pictures of the event are courtesy of jQuerzon Pictorials.



Michael McVeigh, Danny Guiney (RCBA President), and Ailish McVeigh.



Dympna and Christy O'Connell (Cork Man of the Year).



David Kenneally and Liam Reidy



Geri and Pat Burke.



Kathleen and Danny Manning.



Jackie Flynn and Lynda Buckley.

Shine! Gathering Full Of Gratitude

We kicked off a very busy and special day at the Irish Center on December 16, 2023 with a special reception in the St Francis room—Shine! We had a moment to pay special thanks those early investors and believers in our #Project2025 and hear a few remarks from President

Liam Reidy and Micheál Smith (Consul General of Ireland, San Francisco) as well as get a sneak peek at a UICC website redesign that Mary Teahan and the Marketing Committee are working on. So much to celebrate! It is with much gratitude that we enjoy the progress that continues to be made.



Nastaran Mousavi and Dane Bunton (Studio BANAA) with UICC board member Mark Gorman.



Suzie Sheehy and Edel Gorman.



Tim Murphy, Noeleen and Marycora Pattison, Elizabeth Creely.

CHASE THE WINTER BLUES away at our three-day Winter Féile with live music, a feis, food concessions, Irish Shoppe, Dowling Library, and more!

The Irish Center comes alive kicking off Friday, January 12 with the Kavanaugh Brothers and the Celtic Experience in the Emerald Pub from 7-9 pm; \$10 suggested donation to benefit our cultural programming efforts.

The John and Maureen Kennelly Memorial Feis is from 9-5 pm on both Saturday and Sunday upstairs in the St Patrick's Room. You'll find our well-stocked Irish Shoppe with all your favorite treats from Ireland and other feis vendors. Food concessions will be available throughout the day starting with breakfast items.

On Saturday from 4-8 pm a fantastic group of our local Irish Musicians are hosting a Benefit Concert for the Children of Gaza, benefiting MECA (Middle East Children's Alliance). They are asking a suggestion \$20 donation toward the cause and will be playing tunes and songs in the Emerald Pub. All ages welcome. It's for the kids, so bring the kids! Musicians: Shay Black, Eamonn Flynn, Darcy Noonan, Hector Bragado, Ben Hunter, Christy O'Connell, Stacy Samuels Erica & Friends, Ceol Na Mná (Iseult Jordan, Marla Fibish & Susan Spurlock), Colm O'Riain, Erin Ruth, The Gas Men, Rory McNamara, Matt Lacques, Sean Kelly, Neill O'Neill, and more ...

Our Saturday night Winter Féile headliner from 8:30-10 pm, The Hooks present a Tribute to The Pogues and the late Shane McGowan featuring our favorite Sligo brothers, Keith and Ronan Mulligan with Colin Delaney and Mark Nicholson. They will be rockin' all the hits of The Pogues in the Emerald Pub. Tickets available online and at the door.

Sunday afternoon while the Feis is continuing upstairs, Sean Daly and the Shams will be bringing the Irish Rebel Rock in the Emerald Pub from 2-4 pm; \$10 suggested donation to benefit our cultural programming efforts.

The Dowling Library will be open Saturday, so stop by and check out this local treasure. In addition, our Keepers of the Steps are collecting items for upcoming exhibition, so bring your old ghillies, dance dresses, and feis gear and look for their table and drop off point at the feis.

We look forward to a great weekend!

OUR PATRICK J DOWLING Library received a significantly large number of donated books and cultural treasures from community members during the past year. Due to space constraints and limited onsite storage at the Center, we are forced to move some of the duplicate books offsite temporarily until we move into the new library space down the road.

A big thank you and shout out to Keith Mulligan & Co, at Shannon Moving and Storage for taking care of our storage needs.



Pallets of Irish Center books await final storage.

Local Irish American Community News

The image is a collage of four photographs. The top-left photo shows two men, Jerry Stynes and Liam Reidy, smiling. The top-right photo shows three people, Liam Reidy, Marycora Pattison, and Evan O'Driscoll. The bottom-left photo shows a man and a woman, Julie Lacap. The bottom-right photo shows two men, one in a suit and one in a green shirt, Paul Cumnie.

Jerry Stynes - one of the chefs who worked the kitchen at the Center during mid-1970s swapped stories with Liam Reidy .on a recent visit to the Center.



Liam Reidy with Marycora Pattison, Saint Ignatius Irish Culture Club President and VP Evan O'Driscoll at the December 16 Mayoral signing ceremony at the Irish Center.



Julie Lacap stopped by the membership table at the center on December 16th and became a new member. Are you a current member? Sign up or renew today as part of the spring membership drive.



**ST. BRIGID'S CROSS
WEAVING WORKSHOP**

**AT THE UICC
SATURDAY
FEB 3, 2024**

**FUN FOR
THE WHOLE
FAMILY**

www.irishcentersf.org

UNITED IRISH CULTURAL CENTER of SAN FRANCISCO

Céad míle fáilte

Welcome to Our Newest Members!

Hallie Alameda
Jared Alexander
Amanda Suzanne
Alvarado-Ford
Gen. Katherine
McCormick Baca

Mary Baez
Matt Boschetto
Stephen Boyce
Monica Rose Brennan
Shane David Callan
Ariel Carey-Murray
Denise Carr
Charlotte Louise Crane
Mike D'Arcy
J Daly
Orla M O'Malley Daly
Kevin Deihl
Daniel Dineen
Patricia (Colleen) Doing
Jennifer Fallon
Daniel Mark Ford

Regina Marie Gibson
Michael Harney
Jim Horan
Allison Grant Katayama
Matt Alban Kelly
Julie Lacap
Rhonda Stagnaro Low
William Macdonald
Linda Maher
Roseanne Maloney
Kevin Edward Mann
J Patrick McCarthy
Niall Padraic McCarthy
John McDevitt
Richard McKenna
Anne T Murphy
David A O'Connor
Rory Pena O'Connor
Molly Anne O'Malley-Fivian
Mary Norton
Rory O'Neill

Capt. Larry
Christopher O'Shea
Sean Patrick O'Bryne
Lauren Ores Phillips
Brian Rafferty
Brendan James Rawson
Mark K. Schutz
Jo Ann Wisen Shannon
Michael X Sullivan
Brendan Nicholas Sullivan
Peggy Taylor
Thomas Townsend
Geri Anne Webb
John Tyler Hurley Wilkinson

We are so grateful for
our members. Did you
know that a membership
makes a great gift?
Interested in learning
more about the benefits?

Membership is a fantastic way to support
the United Irish Cultural Center!

Questions? Maggie Overbay at 650.892.4050

www.irishcenters.org

Names listed became members
between July 2023 and Dec. 2023.