



There's always something happening at the Irish Center!

1 June 2024

A chara,

As President of the Commodore John Barry Arts & Cultural Center (the “Irish Center”), I am committed, along with the Board of Directors, to communicate directly with you, our donors, on an annual basis to share news about the Irish Center.

As you know, the mission of the Irish Center today is to sponsor and support programs and activities in the Greater Philadelphia area that teach, celebrate, and promote Irish culture, history, art, music, and heritage. Our vision for what the Irish Center could, and should be, reflects our ancestors’ history and foresight. Our ancestors came together out of necessity as they arrived in Philadelphia from Ireland. Our vision is to create a place to honor them, to showcase our history and culture, and to support the multi-cultural beauty of modern Philadelphia.

The Irish Center is asking you to help us continue to make this vision a reality. There are many ways you can support the Irish Center – make a tax-deductible donation directly to the Irish Center at www.theirishcenter.org; join us at the Summer Fundraiser at Llanerch Country Club in Havertown on July 21st; become a sponsor of the Summer Fundraiser (details are attached); attend Irish Center events (just a few listed below); invite your friends and family to all the Irish Center events; if you are an artist, or know an artist, arrange to show the artwork at the Irish Center; if you are a skilled tradesman, volunteer your time to assist us with our facilities management; if you have an idea – any idea about how we can continue to make the Irish Center better - please talk to me or Lisa Maloney, Vice President of the Irish Center’s board.

Since the last President’s Letter, the Irish Center has accomplished so much – the list below only really scratches the surface of events going on at the Irish Center.

- Hosted a St Bridget’s Day Tea and welcomed Consul General of Ireland Helena Nolan
- Hosted the return of the 32 County Ball, welcoming members of the community from all 32 Counties
- Welcomed Paul Bedford, author of “Swampoodle Trilogy”
- Hosted an Irish College Night – sharing scholarship opportunities for American college students to attend university in Ireland
- Hosted our Storybook Hour series for children aged 3-7 years old
- Film Screening of “Frederick Douglass and the White Negro”
- Showcased the art of local artists, including but not limited to, John McGarvey, Ann Matey, Eileen Ryan, James Boyle, as well as the annual Student’s art show

COMMODORE JOHN BARRY ARTS & CULTURAL CENTER

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- Welcomed Chloe Agnew, Meadhbh Walsh, Ger O'Donnell & Trevor Sexton, Celtic Flame Dance & Music Show, among other live shows
- Hosted Timoney Pride of Erin Dance Feis, Rince Ri School of Dance Feis, and Cummins School of Dance Christmas Party
- Hosted monthly senior lunches, providing a quality meal and time for community members to socialize
- Hosted Philadelphia Ceili Group Festival (music, dance, storyteller, crafts) over three days
- Hosted Irish Society and Community meetings (Mayo, Donegal, Tyrone, Derry, St Patrick's Day Parade committee meetings, AOH conference, GAA coaching classes and monthly board meetings, Friendly Sons & Daughter of St Patrick's Quarterly Meeting)
- Hosted Bloody Sunday Memorial Mass
- Celebrated the Delaware Valley Irish Hall of Fame Dinner
- Held monthly Ceili Set Dancing with John Shields & Friends
- Enjoyed twice monthly music sessions & Ceili dance lessons sponsored by Philadelphia Ceili Group
- Held Tuesday night Balkan folk dancing, fiddle lessons and pipe band practice
- Hosted Wednesday night Kelly Street Chorus (Choral Society founded by Victor Herbert in the 1880s)
- Held Thursday night jazz session and Contra Dancing
- Hosted First Sunday Silent Book Club
- Hosted St Patrick's Day After Parade Party and Parade Awards Dinner

In addition to the above cultural-related events, this past year, the Irish Center focused on engaging our neighbors, creating new relationships with so many community partners and have successfully held:

- Quarterly blood drives sponsored by the American Red Cross
- Food collections for local Ukrainian community (led by Maureen Brett Saxon)
- OMC Parish Fundraiser
- Holy Cross Parish Men's Retreat
- CW Henry Middle School Dance
- West Mount Airy Neighbors Eco Lab Roundtable
- Emlen Street Commons Homeowners Association Meeting
- Mt Airy Learning Tree Cocktail Class
- Mt Airy Learning Tree Awards Banquet
- Historic Germantown Annual Banquet & silent auction
- CW Henry Elementary School graduation ceremony
- Allons Dancer Cajun Dance
- West Oak Lane Sports Banquet
- Chestnut Hill Youth Soccer Banquet

It is important to our mission that we create a place where everyone is welcome, and the multi-cultural beauty of Philadelphia is respected and celebrated.

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I know that we are all personally dealing with the high cost of goods and services – likewise, it costs \$9,000 - \$10,000 per month to keep the lights on at the Irish Center – a significant sum which doesn't seem to be coming down any time soon. The Irish Center is run by a volunteer Board, but rest-assured that we watch every penny and make strategic decisions about how to use our cash, as if we were a fortune 500 company.

In addition, in the last year, with the help of many our volunteers, the Irish Center has improved its facilities by:

- Purchasing a defibrillator and facilitating CPR training for volunteers
- Soundproofing areas off Fireside room
- Upgrading lighting in Ladies room, garage area and driveway
- Installing ceiling fans in Fireside room and bar area
- Installing art railing in Barry Room
- Patching the kitchen floors and ceilings

The Irish Center's facilities operating plan for the remainder of 2024 and 2025 will focus on the exterior of the building including pointing, power-washing, and painting, as well as soundproofing the Ballroom, building out the side stage areas and acquiring new stage curtains.

We are truly grateful for the Irish community, and the Greater Philadelphia, New Jersey and Delaware communities who continue to partner with us to bring Irish art, history, culture, and heritage to this area. Your contribution today ensures that the Irish Center has sufficient operating cash to cover its monthly expenses, to implement its 2024-2025 facilities operating plan and to continue to host magnificent cultural events that attract large and diverse audiences. I am confident that our ancestors would be proud.

If you have any questions about anything at all, please do not hesitate to contact me or any of the Board members.

Very truly yours,



Sean McMenamin

President

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