



# The Cairde Connection

*"Keeping the Irish Arts Alive!"*

Irish Cultural Center at  
Elms College

Volume 10 & Issue 6

July 2009

## President Mary McAleese and Dr. Martin McAleese visit the Center

The president of Ireland, President Mary McAleese, honored the local Irish by visiting the Center on Sunday May 24, 2009. The event was organized by Consul General, David Barry. Because of space and security concerns, the guest list was limited. Upon her arrival, the President spent a few minutes admiring our Center displays before stepping into the larger meeting space to address the assembled guests.

The short program included: Interim Elms College President Walter Breau who gave the greetings of the college; Sister Judith Kappenman who welcomed those assembled on behalf of the board; and Congressman Neal who spoke of America's part in the peace process in Northern Ireland.



President McAleese began her remarks by speaking of the photos and displays she had just viewed in the Center and the sadness of the Blasket Islanders who left their home, as had so many of the Irish. She spoke of the importance of keeping the connection with a place and praised the generation after generation of immigrants who remember their culture and honor the contributions of their ancestors. She praised the founders of the Irish Cultural Center and those who sustain the organization in order to promote Irish culture and "keep the Irish arts alive."

Guests included the founders and board members through the years; Irish language enthusiasts; the Blasket Islanders and other Irish immigrants; Elms College Irish Studies Minor professors and students; and lifetime members.

Photos clockwise from upper right: President Mary McAleese and Dr. Martin McAleese view the Blasket Island photos in the Center; Maureen Carney, Dr. Martin McAleese, President Mary McAleese, Michael Carney, Mairéad Shea and in the background Sean Cahillane (Michael and Mairéad are two of the eight people born on the Blasket Island still living); Dr. Martin McAleese, Sister Kathleen Keating, President Mary McAleese, Tom Moriarty, Sean Cahillane (Sister Kathleen, Tom and Sean are listed as the founders of the Center.) Photos taken by Michael Dialessi.



The Irish Cultural Center, founded in 1999, strives to “keep the Irish arts alive.”

### The Irish Cultural Center...

- Serves as a public forum for events, including lectures, musical presentations, films and exhibits
- Promotes ties between the Center and educational organizations in Ireland, especially with the Basket Cultural Center
- Serves as an academic link with Irish American social organizations in Western New England.

### Director:

Judith Kappenman, SSJ, Chicopee

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**www.irish-cairde.org**

## Summer and fall events highlighted

**Y**ou are invited to attend the program by the Celtic Adventures for Kids on Friday, July 31, 2:00 pm in the Dooley Center at the Elms College. The children will showcase some of the lessons learned during the week – an exhibit of craft projects, singing, playing the tin whistle and even speaking Irish.

The Irish Cultural Center sponsors the Camp for children from grades 1-9 the last week of July. About fifty children will study the Irish language, culture and heritage. They will take part in several classes daily: dance, music, including the tin whistle, Irish language, arts and crafts, story telling and literature. They are “keeping the Irish arts alive!” at a young age. We welcome volunteers, including former campers who work as junior counselors.

From Sept 18-28 we will have an exhibit at the Big E in West Springfield where we will showcase our programs and events, as well as have information on the Elms College and its programs. We'll also give assistance to some of the Dingle merchants. Please stop by to say “Hello” and then visit the merchants to see their wares.

We are pleased to announce the 10-year anniversary of the Irish Cultural Center on the weekend of

October 9-11, 2009. We hope you can join us in our celebration weekend. We have a variety of activities planned that will offer guests and visitors art, music, dance, films, lectures, workshops, liturgy, and a whole lot of fun.

The Irish Cultural Center began as a way to promote Irish heritage and offer cultural events to citizens of Western Massachusetts and beyond. Since the beginning, we have expanded both in membership and in our quality of events, which now include trips to Ireland, a celebration of Irish Christmas, a tea party, annual film festivals, art exhibits, lecture series, ongoing study of the Irish language, scholarships, a summer camp for children with an Irish theme, bus trips to plays and genealogical centers.

The weekend includes: art exhibit and music session on Friday: workshops and films during the day on Saturday with a Makem and Spain Brothers concert at the Warehouse?, Holyoke in the evening; and on Sunday a Liturgy in Our Lady's Chapel followed by brunch with speaker Peter Quinn who will deliver the Kennedy lecture. We look forward to seeing you at any, or all, of our anniversary events in October. Don't miss it!

Please consider supporting us when you receive the ad drive form.

## Sympathy and prayers requested

**M**ary Rivest, faithful member and long-time volunteer died on May 1, 2009. In 2002 she donated a print of a Civil War soldier of the all-Irish 69th New York State Volunteers. It has a place of pride in the Center.

Member Jerri Linn Nielsen Fitzgerald died in June.

We extend our sympathy to Sister Maureen Martin on the death of her brother, James; Dorothy Tuttle on the death of her brother Robert.

We ask for continued prayers of healing for Gerry Callahan, Mike Rancitelli, Kathleen Gilhooly, Mary Franz and Peg Tourloukis, undergoing treatment or rehab.

## Our last days offer new experiences in Ireland by Tim Allen

The trip to Killarney was short and pleasant. We saw a little of Killarney National Park and Torc Falls. The beauty of Killarney would be great to see, but we were still on a Dingle high.

In Dingle the whole trip had come together. People had time to see the beauty, time to experience incredible rainfall followed by a spectacular day of sunshine and clear skies, and time to connect. The free day allowed everyone to do what they want and there were all kinds of stories from the day. From connecting Irish friends to American friends to field trips that stirred the soul, we were connected tighter than we had been. Some of us took a jaunting car ride through the National Park, and a boat trip from Ross Castle around the island of Innisfallen where we could see the ruins of an 11th century monastery.

Our first night in Killarney saw some of us at the nearby session while others wandered the town. Killarney at night, like Dingle, offers many options.

On Friday we took a long day trip to Cobh to see the museum which honors the port where so many ships left for America. There we saw the statue of Annie Moore and her young brothers. The museum is recommended if you'd like to understand a little more about the emigration to America.

Then we headed for Blarney Castle where we hoped to acquire the gift of eloquence. This stop has a reputation of being too touristy and overdone, but I have found most people really love it. Climbing up through Blarney Castle to kiss the Blarney Stone is interesting and challenging. The walk through the lovely gardens and grounds is relaxing. You can find



**Pictured above: The statue of Annie Moore and her brothers. This young woman had the distinction of being the first person processed at the newly opened Ellis Island in New York Harbor. Below: Ross Castle**

good food in the town and overall, it's a fun stop. Our trip back to Killarney was highlighted by a stop at Moll's Gap and a section of the Ring of Kerry.

That night our dinner was highlighted by the awarding of the Paper Plate Awards. Each traveler had been awarded a prize for something special about them. It was a spirited awards session sparked by Jenni, Punky, and Beth Ann. It was followed by a bountiful team dinner.

The following day we left Killarney for the Limerick area and stayed near Bunratty Castle, where we attended the Medieval Banquet. Later we visited and reminisced in the bar, thinking about such good times together, not just on this trip but over the past 8 years.

There was now a little time for reflection. Our trip to Ireland had solidified our friendships. As we

took our various flights back to America on Sunday, it was clear that our 10 days would be etched in our hearts forever.

The athletic careers of our daughters had brought us together, but we would stay together because of much more. This group of people had decided they would travel again together and the next stops were under discussion. Israel? Malawi? Italy?

I felt a sense of relief that the trip had really been a success. I think everyone's expectations had been met or exceeded. As the organizer, it is a great feeling when people are happy they went.

It really didn't matter what the next stop would be. Our friends would be with us.

Afterword.

Since the trip to Ireland, two members of the lacrosse team have gotten married. My daughter Mary Kate's wedding was held on Cape Cod in October 2008 and just last week Allison's wedding was held in Middlebury, Vermont. At each of these festive occasions, the discussion of the next trip has come up. I have been nominated as trip leader so planning will begin soon. In the lead is Malawi (probably a smaller trip), followed by Italy. Something could happen in 2010. Something will happen sometime. The Ireland trip was just a beginning.



## The year in review



### Irish Language

Introduction to Irish throughout each semester  
Irish Study Group throughout each semester  
Independent Irish language group—year round  
La Gaelige (day-long workshop)

### Just for children

Celtic Adventures for Kids  
Middle School essay contest

### Elms College Students

Sligo Seven set off for study in Ireland

### Lectures and book reading

Tom Moriarty  
Damien Murray  
Peggy O'Brien  
Ann O'Farrell



### Travel

Journey of the Soul to Ireland  
Worcester play—Stones in his Pockets  
Stockbridge play—Faith Healer  
Pittsfield—genealogy research



### Special events

Christmas with an Irish Touch  
March Tea Party  
Wine Tasting with an Irish Accent  
Holyoke's St. Patrick's Parade



### Big E

Exhibit and information  
Music sessions  
Entertainment by the children from the Camp

### Art exhibit

Ireland's Literary Revival  
R. Todd Felton



### Films

Fall series of 3  
Winter series of 4

### Ongoing

Genealogy assistance  
Monthly Music session  
Resources—books, tapes, etc. available by calling or visiting the Center

## Bus trips offer entertainment and pursuit of roots

During the last several months two bus trips traveled to opposite ends of the turnpike to attend high quality plays. Twenty-eight participants enjoyed a dinner theater experience in Worcester on May 3 when they saw the Pilgrim Souls Production of Stones in His Pockets. The play, written by Marie Jones and directed by Matthew J. Carr, tells the story of two west Kerry men trying to earn an “easy” living as extras for a foreign produced film, some of the only work available. The real story is about the lives of the members of the community impacted by the “movie people.” The play includes much comedy and humor, but also much sadness.

Following the performance the group enjoyed a buffet presented by the Hibernian Center, thus enjoying the full dinner theater experience.

On June 14 a smaller, but no less appreciative group traveled west to Stockbridge to attend the Berkshire Theater Festival play The Faith Healer by Brian Friel. We boarded the Elms College athletic department bus and headed to the Berkshires on a lovely Sunday. We began our visit in Stockbridge with a quick stop at the Divine Mercy Shrine and then went to the theatre. Eric Hill (formerly of Stage West) directed this play about a man losing faith in himself. We met Frank, the Faith Healer, his faithful

wife Grace and his manager Teddy and heard them all question themselves and Frank’s work. It is a very powerful production with several plot twists.

A great day for all.

Plan to join us for another dinner theater experience in Worcester November 15 for Big Maggie by John B. Keane.

On a Saturday in May another group traveled to Pittsfield to use the resources of the National Archives in pursuit of their family roots. With several volunteers available to help anyone who required help, some came home satisfied that they had begun the study of their ancestors.

## The Irish Cultural Center Celebration of its 10th Anniversary 1999-2009

**Save the date!**



*Join us in the celebration*

Friday, October 9:

Vincent Crotty art exhibit opening  
Evening Music Session

Saturday, October 10:

Workshops and films during the day  
Evening Makem and Spain Brothers concert

Sunday, October 11:

Liturgy in Our Lady’s Chapel  
Brunch with speaker, Peter Quinn  
(novelist, essayist, Chair of the Irish Echo)



## John Johnson's gift promotes the language by Gearoid MacOisdealbhaigh

### IRISH LANGUAGE AWARD APPLICATION

**Read the article below before completing the form.**

Complete and mail to the Irish Cultural Center, 291 Springfield Street, Chicopee, MA 01013

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

**Answer the following questions; use additional paper, if necessary.**

Circle the organizations of which you are a member: ICC, Sons of Erin, John Boyle O'Reilly, AOH

Why would you like to study the Irish language?

John Johnson was a man devoted to the Irish Language. In addition, he wanted to give others the same opportunity to enjoy and learn about the distinctiveness of this Gaelic language. When he died two years ago, his family suggested that gifts be given for language study. Both the Center and the Sons of Erin received donations in his memory; subsequently the Sons sent the funds to the Center for this purpose. We will award a scholarship for the Irish language courses offered through the Elms College and the

Center each semester.

In order to be considered for the award, we ask that the applicant complete a written application explaining why the course would be valuable. Completed applications must be received by August 24, 2009 to qualify for the first semester courses. Complete the above form and send to the Center.

The selection and granting of the award(s) will be made in September 2009 for the fall semester that begins in mid September 2009. Interest

in the language has grown over the years. Each semester we offer an introductory class and an intermediate group. Throughout the years since the Center started in 1999, Irish language study has been a steady component in our programming. The ordinary cost of the class is \$150 or \$100 for members of the Center. If you have always wanted to know more about the language of your ancestors, this is a great opportunity to learn in a fun and relaxed setting.

## La Gaelige brings together language enthusiasts

On a beautiful June Saturday fifty people gathered at the Elms College either to be introduced to the Irish language or to hone their language skills. They ranged in age from high school students to senior citizens. Each of the four levels was taught by an expert teacher, either from the Irish program in New York or Boston.

After registering and enjoying a cup of coffee or tea, and scones, they

moved to the first of two language sessions, where they chose their level of competence.

In between the two language classes of the day, the participants had an opportunity to take part in two of three workshops: drama, dancing and Irish Internet sources, led by ICC members.

After a buffet luncheon of salad and sandwiches, the group reported to the Alumnae Library Theater to

view the documentary Bibeanna, where Kerry women told in Irish of life when they were young: we viewed the section on superstitions. At the end of the day, all gathered in the Center for a session. Many of those attending sang an Irish song or led the group in a sing-along. To conclude the program Kathleen Gilhooly led the session and accompanied those assembled in singing the Irish National Anthem.

## A Bit More Irish By Gerald Chip Costello

When I left Ballyferriter last summer, my teacher suggested that I study and take a test in the Irish language administered through the Language Center at NUI Maynooth. There are several levels offered from beginning to advanced, yet only the first level was to be offered in New York in April. I had the bug, however, and accepted her challenge.

The program is formally known as Teastas Eorpach na Gaeilge (The European Certificate in Irish). It provides a structured syllabus with clearly stated aims that enable you to monitor your learning and to maintain your focus. Since I can neither find my glasses in the morning nor remember where my car keys are, focus might just be what the doctor ordered.

There were fourteen topics that served as the basis for the exam. The syllabus was very helpful and provided good study materials. I studied on Saturday mornings and found pockets of time while traveling for work. For example, I would be sitting in the Detroit Airport with my syllabus and thinking "Ba mhaith liom cupán tae anois" (I would like a cup of tea now) or some other part of the lesson plans while others were headed to their gates enabling the wheels of commerce to start for the day.

My confidence was high when I thought about preparing for the exam in August. But as I got closer to April, I started wondering. I had not really taken many exams since graduating from college in the 1970s. After all the work, I was still the same guy searching for his glasses and keys.

In any event, I left the train station in Springfield on Friday, April 17th, for

New York. The test was held at New York University Glucksman House on Saturday at 9:00 a.m. When I arrived at Penn Station, I took a cab to the Marriott on the Upper East Side, spent some time studying that afternoon, walked down to the river, and thought about why it was important to me to be taking this test. I thought about my classes in Ballyferriter and the people whom I had met from Lithuania, Poland and the Netherlands who studied Irish because they felt it was necessary to preserve the language. Taking the exam in the morning was the least I could do.

I awoke on Saturday, hoping for the best. I hailed a cab and arrived at Glucksman House at 8:30 a.m. As it turned out there were fifteen of us who were to take the exam. I had met four of these people at other Irish language events. Of course, my antennae went up since I knew they were much stronger speakers than I. *Ná bí buartha; bí sasta!* (Don't worry; be happy!)

The venue at NYU was like a private club, with nice paintings, books and furniture. We all gathered in a room where the facilitator gave the directions for the test in Irish, and we started with Listening Comprehension. There were stories read, and we had to respond to the questions, testing our understanding.

Next came a section on reading comprehension, and then to finish the morning, there was a section on writing. I think we were all ready for lunch at that point.

We all agreed that it was so nice out that we would walk through the neighborhood. As it turned out, there were ethnic festivities

taking place, so we had a wide variety of food from which to choose. I walked with a gentleman who grew up in Queens and was now living in Buffalo. There was no Irish in his background; he just enjoyed talking Irish and wanted to strengthen that skill. The most interesting person that I met that day was a gentleman who grew up in Belfast and moved to Paris in his early twenties. He is now 55. He was on holiday with his family in New York and knew that the exam was going to be given while he was there. It was interesting to be speaking with him in Irish and listening to his Irish laden with a heavy Parisian accent. Just as was my experience in Ballyferriter, the language is what connected us all from Springfield to Buffalo to Paris.

We walked back to Glucksman House for the final part of the exam. Each of us now had a twenty minute conversation with two ladies who had been flown into New York from Donegal to administer this part of the exam. We all waited to be called and were individually summoned upstairs. It was a bit like visiting the principal's office. In any event, we were given some material to look at and then were expected to talk about it and answer questions. For me, this was the hardest part of the test. At the end, we all breathed deeply and went back downstairs to meet our new friends, speak a bit more Irish, and finally say goodbye.

It was a short trip back to Springfield. I probably caught up on the sleep that I didn't get the night before the exam. After eight weeks, I finally received the results and happily can report that I passed. The next level of the program will be held in New York next spring. I hope I can convince one of you to join me. It is supposed to snow from November through March. What else are you going to do? *Slán go fóill.*

**Irish Cultural Center  
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[www.irish-cairde.org](http://www.irish-cairde.org)**

## ICC Calendar of events

**Ongoing: Language groups meet weekly:** beginners, intermediate, conversation, advanced. Call the registrar at 265-2314 for fall classes that begin on Sept 14-15.

**Genealogy volunteer**  
Ed Callahan (413) 527-5091  
email [eastgram@aol.com](mailto:eastgram@aol.com)

**3rd Sunday of each month, except March: Irish Music Seisiún,** 1:00-4:00 p.m. Dooley Campus Center, dining hall annex  
**July 27-31** Celtic Adventures for Kids: week-long fun and learning experience, celebrating Celtic culture

and traditions.

### **Sept 18-October 4**

Big E exhibit and information

### **October 9-11**

a weekend of great events to celebrate our tenth anniversary (See page 2)

### **November 15**

Bus trip to Worcester for the play Big Maggie

### **Dec 5**

Christmas with an Irish Touch

### **Jan 27-Feb 3, 10, 17**

Film series

### **Mar 7** Tea Party

## Other events of interest

### **John Boyle O'Reilly**

July 11 bus to New Britain Rock Cats

August 8 11th Annual Music Festival. Several bands to perform: headline band Black 47

August 12 Mid-week trip to Saratoga \$50 per person. See Bill Jones

August 22 Saturday trip to Saratoga \$30. See Eric Devine. [www.jbo-club.com](http://www.jbo-club.com)

### **Sons of Erin**

August 1: 9th Annual Pat Hurley Open  
[www.sonsoferin.com](http://www.sonsoferin.com)

### **AOH**

July 11 at 6.30 p.m. Wherehouse? Picnic-scholarship awards. Tickets are \$12 for adults \$7 for children. Hot dogs, hamburgers, salad, dessert and entertainment: Pat Kelleher and family.

### **Glasgow Lands Scottish Festival**

Saturday, July 18 at Look Park, Florence Cost \$15, children 6-12 \$5, children under 6 free.

[www.glasgowlands.org](http://www.glasgowlands.org)

### **Blackstone Valley Festival**

Saturday, July 25 Indian Ranch, Webster  
[www.blackstonevalleycelticfestival.com](http://www.blackstonevalleycelticfestival.com)