



the freebird

VOLUME II

FEBRUARY 2006

The Freebird is the newsletter of the Irish Fair of Minnesota. Its purpose is to keep us connected, provide updates, celebrate successes and share our stories, and to support the mission of the Irish Fair by promoting and cultivating Irish culture.

IRISH FAIR GRANTS \$40,000 TO 13 GROUPS

As you read in the last edition of The Freebird, the Fair Board decided last Fall to give back to the community some of its prosperity in the form of 50,000\$ in grants to non-Irish new immigrant groups and to further Irish-oriented activities. At their February meeting the Irish Fair Board had the enjoyable but challenging task of figuring out which proposals they would fund in this first round of disbursements.

Here are some of the beneficiaries and their projects that the Fair will support:

The *Center for Irish Music* is a jewel in the crown of our Irish cultural community, cultivating a living tradition of Irish music in the Minnesota. Their chief goal, to engage more people in playing genuine traditional Irish music, strengthens the Twin Cities community as a center for traditional music performance and music education well into the future. The Center opened in 2004 and has been wildly successful since, having become *the* central place in the Twin Cities for students to find lessons in Irish traditional music, with a student base that grew by 50% the first year.

In 2005, the Center expanded their offerings and also the performance opportunities for students. For example, the Center for Irish Music Student Ensemble (ages 10-16) began to perform in a variety of venues, culminating in a performance in the lobby of Orchestra Hall prior to the Cherish the Ladies Celtic Christmas Concert (see photo at right) AND joining them onstage for two numbers!! The students received many compliments from people who were impressed with both their skill and professional aplomb.



Faculty at the Center are well-respected performers of Irish music, including Dave Cammack (bodhran), Jode Dowling (fiddle, ensemble), Kate Dowling (tin whistle, flute, ensemble), Sean Egan (theory, piano, tin whistle), Tom Klein (uilleann pipes), Laura MacKenzie (tin whistle and flute), Shawn McBurnie (Voice), Tom Schaefer (fiddle, and John Winston (fiddle).

Looking forward, the Center hopes to become an internationally recognized center for Irish traditional music and submitted a grant application to the Minnesota Irish Fair to help with that. The Irish Fair board responded enthusiastically and will be donating funds to the Center for Irish musical instruments, some administrative support and to launch an "Irish Music Weekend for Young Adults".

This will be annual event for young Irish musicians (under 21) where they can meet, learn and perform music together in a spirit of sharing and camaraderie, without the stress of competition. Activities over the weekend will include a concert by local and guest Master musicians, workshops on different instruments, ensemble play, regional techniques, student performances, a ceili and time for some sessions.

AN GHAELGE

Courtesy of Gaeltacht Minnesota <http://www.gaelminn.org/index.htm>

This month's Irish proverb honors the collaboration in our community so evident in the grants submitted to the Fair:

Chíonn beirt rud nach bhfeiceann duine amháin.

Two people see what one does not.

In other words, working together we see possibilities that we would miss on our own.



The mission of *COMPAS* is to strengthen people and communities in Minnesota by engaging them in creating art. COMPAS' goal as far as advancing Irish Cultural activities in Minnesota is to provide schools with an opportunity to host week-long residencies, workshops and performances that focus on Irish Culture and its connections to the American immigrant experience.

Last year COMPAS, with funding from the Fair and the Irish Music and Dance Association, supported a 2- week school residency with Ross Sutter and others at Franklin Music Magnet in St. Paul, linked with attendance at the Ordway performance of Eileen Ivers & Immigrant Soul. The residency concluded with a community event, during which students were able to celebrate and demonstrate the songs and dances they had learned. A majority of the students involved were Hmong American, and also included recent newcomers Latin America and the urban areas of Chicago and Gary, Indiana.

COMPAS plans to use the grant from the Irish Fair to partner with schools that have significant immigrant populations to provide students hands-on arts activities related to Irish culture. Besides the direct experience of doing Celtic art forms, students would learn some of the commonalities of the immigrant experience and gain deeper understanding of the role the Irish have played in shaping our shared American culture.

Ross Sutter and Laura MacKenzie will offer a variety of performance and workshop opportunities focusing on Irish music and dance. Sean Brown, a storyteller, will share with a wealth of stories drawn from Irish Culture and history and Nora Murphy, a writer and poet, will help students delve into Irish literature and guide them to create their *own* immigrant stories applying the Irish narrative tradition.



The *Irish Genealogical Society International*, headquartered in the Twin Cities, is a non-profit organization dedicated to assisting members in genealogical research of Irish and Scots-Irish ancestry and to encouraging the development of sound methods in documenting family histories and the compilation of Irish records. To that end, the Society collects and preserves Irish historical and genealogical materials and teaches classes about Irish genealogy and history. They also publish a quarterly journal, 'The Septs'.

The Irish Fair is granting funds to partially support the purchase of a new Microfiche-microfilm viewer/printer which would have the capacity to transfer an image to a computer. This would lead to increased efficiencies and retrieval capabilities for people seeking records.



The well-known and respected *Center for Irish Studies at the University of St. Thomas* advances teaching and scholarship in Irish Studies. Their proposal, which the Fair is partially funding, is for a conference "Irish Voices, Indian Voices" that would explore the interrelations of the Irish and the Native American experience, examined from many different perspectives. The Center notes that the overlap and complementary nature of the Irish and Native American experiences has drawn increasing attention from scholars and creative artists in both in Ireland and the United States and that such a conference would provide a "distinctive opportunity for the Minnesota Irish community to participate in the broader public discussion of multiculturalism and diversity -surely one of the most lively civic conversations of our time."



Lóma Mór Irish Dance Club will use funding from the Irish Fair to help set up a workshop on Irish Social Dancing. The workshop, held in conjunction with the Fair, will attract new members to the Irish community, strengthen the social dance community, and introduce the local dance community to the unique values of set and old-style step dancing. Old style Step Dance is the solo, performance-oriented dance that gave rise to modern step dance, clogging and American tap dancing. Set Dancing is a popular form of Irish social dance that typically features simple footwork, such as that done to polkas, but with intricate patterns, somewhat similar to Square or Contra Dancing. Irish dance masters will be hired from Ireland to teach set dancing and intermediate and Master level all style step dance.



The **Traditional Singers Club** supports and encourages involvement and excellence in Irish and related singing traditions. They provide a regular singing session in the Twin Cities for those who are interested in learning, performing, and sharing knowledge on unaccompanied traditional songs. They host concerts by respected singers from the Irish and allied traditions such as Brian Hart and Aine Meenaghan.

The funds from the Irish Fair grant will be use to help support concerts and workshops by acclaimed traditional singers who will demonstrate and/or teach their style of singing, and share specific information on songs, history, and heritage.

Several more grants were funded and those will be revealed in a future issue of 'The Freebird'.

EVENTS



Pangea World Theater Presents Direct from Dublin

CATALPA

March 1-2, 2006

Written and Performed by Donal O'Kelly, live music and sound design by Trevor Knight. O'Kelly plays dozens of characters in telling the true story of an American whaling ship's 1870's voyage to Australia to rescue a group of Irish political prisoners. Seen at major arts festivals around the world, this is a truly breathtaking theatrical experience.

For more information 612-203-1088 www.pangeaworldtheater.org

Family History Writers' Retreat in Ireland October 7-14 2006

Genealogists Sharon DeBartolo Carmack and James W. Warren are leading a week-long tour/workshop focused on learning about the live of your ancestors in Ireland a using the material to write a family history. The dates of the trip are from 7-14 October 2006. Home base will be Fitzgerald's Woodlands House with daytrips to historic sites. This retreat comfortably alternates days of writing workshops with day trips to three historic sites where you'll learn about daily life in Ireland and the emigrant experience. Even if you have no prior genealogical research or writing experience, in this workshop you'll learn the basics of writing a family history: how to record family stories, and how to blend family information with relevant social history. **EARLY BOOKING BONUS: Book by 31 May 2006, and save \$120!**

For more information on the Family History Writers' Retreat, go to www.EnchantingIreland.com or www.YourIrishGenealogy.com, or contact Jim Warren at 719-660-8445 or e-mail: jim.warren@juno.com.

AURA in Concert at the Ginkgo Coffeehouse

Thursday March 2nd, 7:30 PM \$12

721 N. Snelling Ave, St. Paul 651-645-2647

www.ginkgocoffee.com Harpist Andrea Stern and Multi-wind player/singer Laura MacKenzie combine dynamic Celtic harp with wooden flutes, whistles, pipes, concertina and voice, for a rich spectrum of aural hues.



Host Families Sought For Northern Irish Kids Summer 2006

Each year 75-100 children from Catholic and Protestant homes in troubles areas of Northern Ireland have been hosted by families in Minnesota and Western Wisconsin through the auspices of **Children's Program of Northern Ireland (CPNI)** . Protestant and Catholic children are brought together to work on conflict resolution and reconciliation skills here in an atmosphere of trust and security. **Interested in hosting an 11-year old Catholic or Protestant girl or boy for 4 weeks this summer? Call (651) 405-1108 or go to www.cpni.org for more information.**

Volunteers are needed for 25th Annual St. Patrick's Day Irish Celebration & 4th Annual Day of Irish Dance at Landmark Center especially on Friday 3/17 . Please contact Jan Casey jcaseymn@msn.com to volunteer.

Last Notice on Minnesota Swarm Go Irish

The Irish Fair of Minnesota and Minnesota Swarm (lacrosse) are jointly organizing an Irish night at the game at the Xcel Energy Center on March 24. It'll be a good introduction to the fast-paced sport of lacrosse AND the event will include Irish half-time entertainment and a post-game Irish concert on the club level. Watch for the 5 on 5 exhibition games with guys from the Robert Emmet Twin City Hurling Club. Wild Colonial Bhoys will sing the national anthem and play in the lounge after the game, dancers from Rinca na Chroi will perform before the game and between quarters, and bagpipers from the Brian Boru Irish Pipe Band will play before the game. Tickets will be discounted ticket to \$12 lower level corner seats (normally \$22). The Irish Fair of Minnesota will also be promoted at the event. **Lot's going on here for one ticket price!!! Don't miss out! For ticket info see <https://secure.xcelenergycenter.com/GT/default.asp?Group=Irish98302>.**



Speaking of Hurling, you're are invited to **A Night at the Races**, a fundraiser the **Robert Emmet Hurling Club** on **March 2nd: 7pm - 10.30pm at the Titanic Lounge in Kieran's**. Concept: Bet on six telecast races using "funny" money, over the course of the night. Races are telecast. Use "funny" money winnings to auction for prizes at the end of the night. It sounds as though it will be good craic. All proceeds go to buying equipment for the club.

Irish dance school, Rince na Chroi, will showcase its talents in **"From the Stage to Your Heart"** at 2:00 p.m. on **Sunday, Mar. 5 at the EM Pearson Theater at Concordia University**.

Students from the school, whose name means "Dance of the Heart," will perform traditional Irish dance numbers that students have been perfecting since fall. The Minnesota Police Pipe Band, a bagpipe ensemble, as well as a traditional Irish music band, Five Mile Chase, will accompany the performance. For more info:

katie@rincenachroi.com see also www.rincenachroi.com

Romantic Holiday In Ireland For Two -a benefit raffle for Mixed Blood Theatre as part of its 30th Anniversary celebration. The winner will receive airfare for two people and luxury accommodations for 3 nights in Dublin and 3 nights in the Lakes of Killarney region. Tickets are \$30 each and only 500 will be sold. The drawing is May 14th, 2006. For more info development@mixedblood.com

**Until Next Time,
Best Regards from the**

**Irish Fair of
Minnesota**