



the freebird

VOLUME I

OCTOBER 2005

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 TO SHARE SUCCESS WITH COMMUNITY

As many readers know, the Irish Fair as an organization exists not only to bring about the wonderful, once-yearly event on Harriet Island, but to support genuine Irish culture on an on-going basis.

Past examples have included lending aid to an Irish music program in a St. Paul public elementary school and to St. Patrick's Day dance festivities. Now, an increasingly prosperous Fair has not only the will but the capacity to strengthen and broaden this type of support. If you or your group have an idea for a great Irish-related project, but haven't had the readies to make it happen, this could be the windfall that makes the difference!

As well, the Fair is committed to supporting events and programs in the broader new immigrant community. This is a *new* undertaking and one which makes the heart swell with pride; if the general public knows one phrase of clean Irish, its "Céad Míle Fáilte" ---a Hundred Thousand Welcomes". **This initiative lives out our core Irish cultural value of being a welcoming people.**

Says Patrick O'Donnell, Irish-born Fair Board member who immigrated to the US in 1993: "Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty as icons of America have always had an extraordinary emotional force for the collective Irish psyche as symbols of an enormous continent of opportunity, particularly in the darkest years of the nineteenth century when the only escape from mass starvation was an emigrant ship. It is more than fitting that we Irish who arrived, struggled, and largely prospered here would, in the 21st Century, reach out to assist more recent arrivals from around the world."

To these ends, the Fair is committed to financially supporting initiatives/programs/events etc from other community organizations and individuals that promote the mission. Specifically, the Board of the Irish Fair of Minnesota is planning to distribute \$30,000 of surplus

funds, with approximately 2/3 for the advancement of Irish cultural activities and 1/3 to assist new immigrant groups. The Board is looking to be able to do another similar size distribution early in 2006.

(As well, the Fair will be initiating a couple additional events here and there in its own right, and you will here about those first in these pages as they come to fruition---but that's another story.)

Here are some details: The Fair Board will award this money as grants to nonprofit organizations, individuals and possibly for-profit organizations. Individuals and for-profits organization must partner a non-profit as their fiscal agent.

Also:

- We will be more interested in supporting new projects rather than general funding of an organization's activities.
- There is no minimum or maximum amount you can request.
- There are no matching funds required.
- We will accept applications on an ongoing basis.
- Applications will be reviewed by a committee with recommendations made to the full board for approval.
- The Board meets November 8, 2005 (no meeting scheduled for December) and Jan 10, 2006. We hope to approve several projects by early 2006.

If you have further questions, or would like to receive an application form please feel free to contact Steve Cervenik at 651-290-9853 or Steve@GreatNorthernCommunications.com.

Please share this information with your friends in the Irish and new immigrant communities. This is our first large-scale distribution of surplus funds and we are excited to see what ideas are out there!

**2005 TURFCUTTER AWARD FOR
IRISH FAIR OF MINNESOTA VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR.**

JOAN ERPENBACH

This year's Volunteer of the Year has quietly gone about her business as an area coordinator since 2002 - and prior to that helping wherever the Fair needed her.

Joan is a great volunteer who serenely manages her committee and organizes her area, efficiently getting the job done. If you see a woman staffing an Irish Fair table at a community event, chances are you've met Joan. In fact, Joan was on the door helping out at the **Thank You Volunteers Celebration** at the Summit brewery this September, where the award was given!



Laurie Murphy, Brigid Ryan-Ling, Michael Gibbons, Joan Erpenbach, Mike Lynch, Steve Cerkenik, Mark Malone, Mike Casey, Maria Flynn Conway

At the end of the year she promptly puts together a report about the good and the bad in her area, with a few suggestions on how she will improve things the next year - "if you'll have me back", as she usually asks the Board!

This year, the Children's Area under the calm, yet effective, leadership of Joan Erpenbach blossomed. From the start of each day until after the activities ended, the Children's Area was full of youngsters making crafts, learning to dance the jig, singing along with the performers, learning about the 9 breeds of Irish dogs or quietly and intently listening to the puppeteer. The energy level in the Children's Area was amazing and it was noticed by lots of people.

I, Siobhán, personally have had the pleasure to work with Joan as she organizes and provides steadfast, reliable support to the Children's Area volunteers so we can give the best experience to the public. As organizer of the Native Dogs of Ireland Area, I don't know what I would do without Joan's help behind the scenes in making it work, in set up, clean up ---and making sure there's enough ice water for all those powerfully parched Wolfhounds!

We thank you, Joan, for your many years of outstanding service to the Irish Fair

CHANGES TO THE IRISH FAIR BOARD

A huge round of thanks goes out to retiring board member **Dawn Lock**. As Volunteer Coordinator, Dawn systematized the volunteer operations and recruited hundreds of new volunteers, the lifeblood of the Fair. She also spearheaded the introduction and growth of Gaelic Sports at the Fair.

We are delighted to welcome new board member **Tom Kelly**, who will help us make connections to the civic community and expand our individual contributor program. Tom Kelly is a communications consultant from Roseville, Minnesota specializing in message development and media relations for non-profit organizations and political candidates. Says Tom : "*The Minnesota Irish Fair is the most authentic and enjoyable cultural event I have ever experienced. I am honored to join the board as it works to expand the program and as it reaches out to Minnesota's recent immigrants who are experiencing the same challenges that generations of Irish families have faced. I look forward to helping the board expand our fundraising effort to make it the premier Irish Fair in the nation.*"

IRISH FAIR SUMMER SCHOOL

The Irish Fair of Minnesota Summer School made its debut this year with a well-rounded and well-attended complement of cultural offerings from ‘upstarts’ to icons.



The day opened with a showcase of students from the **Center for Irish Music** which opened about a year ago and is currently thriving in the Twin Cities as a place where a new generations---and such oldsters as are interested---can learn traditional music and song. “These young students are our future” says Irish Fair Board member Maria Flynn Conway who was in attendance “and it was great to see them carrying on, *renewing* the great traditions that were talked about throughout the day.”

Local musicians **Brian Miller** of the Sean-nós Singer’s Club and **Tom Klein** of the Great Northern Irish Piper’s Club gave us a flavor for their areas of authentic Irish music.

Patrick O’Donnell of the English department at Normandale College spoke on **James Joyce**, giving us a portrait of the artist, the man and his times and how they interacted to leave us his body of work. O’Donnell described Joyce’s propensity to create for himself a life that he could use as his own material.

The self-identified young genius Joyce who became increasingly opaque and egocentric as he got older contrasts with hard- knocks graduate **Sean O’Casey**, whom we saw portrayed lovingly in “Under a Colored Cap”, a documentary by his daughter **Shivaun O’Casey**. O’Casey was born in 1880 to a Protestant family living in the slums of Dublin. His grim childhood led to a lifelong commitment to justice for the working class, and for women. In spite of the bitter circumstances of his youth, O’Casey seems to have survived with a remarkably warm heart and Shivaun O’Casey spoke with an infectious affection about her memories of her father.

In common, both authors’ works were censored for many years in Ireland while fêted in other parts of the world.

Joe Dowling, Artistic Director of the Guthrie Theater, gave a highly personal account of the impact of O’Casey’s work on him. When "The Plough and the Stars" was shown at the Abbey in 1964, the magic

IRISH FAIR SUMMER SCHOOL LAUNCHES BOOK CLUB!

The Irish Fair Summer School Book Club is a new activity that allows interested participants to read books by speakers who will appear at the August 2006 Summer School at the University of St. Thomas. Its first meeting will be on Tuesday November 22nd from 7-8:30 pm at the snug in "The Liffey".

The first book will be Gearoid O' Hallmhuirain's "The Pocket History of Irish Traditional Music". The regular retail price is \$10.95, but participants in the Book Club will get it for only \$5.00.

" The Irish Fair Summer School Book Club will allow participants to deepen their appreciation of Irish culture by reading books by authors who will be appearing at the August 2006 Summer School at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul. The hope is that a wider pool of informed participants will attend the Summer School because they have enjoyed the Book Club."

If interested, please contact patrick.odonnell@normandale.edu and he will tell you how to pick up your copy.

of the language and Dublin's slum characters being presented on stage made a huge impression on Dowling. Dowling's own career was boosted by presenting O'Casey's "Juno and the Paycock" on Broadway in 1988 and, in fact, helped lead, over the years and miles, to his being eventually hired to helm the Guthrie here in the Twin Cities.

Tommy Makem's presentation crackled with an acerbic wit as he unflinchingly asserted that the Irish in the last 20 years were abandoning their culture more completely and thoroughly than the past 800 years of colonial oppression could have achieved. Makem opined that to the "Celtic Tiger" economic boom in Ireland is turning it into a zone of a vast homogenized plastic 'Uni-culture', eroding all that was distinct and unique in Ireland's heritage.

Irish musician, music historian and author **Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin** presented a more upbeat viewpoint on the future of Irish culture. Dr. Ó hAllmhuráin is currently the Jefferson Smurfit Corporation

Professor of Irish Studies and Professor of Music at the University of Missouri-St. Louis and author of the highly praised [A Pocket History of Irish Traditional Music](#). He spoke of the increasing numbers of cultural Irish centers being created, and warmly praised the efforts in the Twin Cities to be a part of the genuine heritage of Ireland. He pointed to times past when the impetus for an upswing in



Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin

traditional music came in fact from the Diaspora and in turn recreated an upsurge at home. Irish fiddle music, for example went through just such a process in the 1930's. In Ireland the fiddler population had dwindled to a somewhat rudderless, listless lot, while immigrant fiddlers Michael Coleman, James Morrison and Paddy Killoran brought a new dynamism to the art in the US. Recordings of these 3 artists eventually filtered back to Ireland, where they jumpstarted the traditional fiddling in the mother country.

Given the great response this year, Summer School organizer Patrick O'Donnell is already laying plans for a great line up next year!

FAIR SHARE

Maggie McEneny writes:

"I am sending you my favorite Irish Fair photo. Tommy Makem was kind enough to pose with me for this picture -- and then sign my bodhrán. What a guy! A weekend that I will remember for years to come."



Tommy Makem also made a memorable impression at Irish Fair Summer School, which made its triumphant debut this year, where he sang played and spoke on the past and future of Irish traditional music.

Fair Share is a space where you can share your experience of the Fair with the rest of us. Have a great item (anecdote, photo, Limerick(!) etc to share from your visit to the Irish Fair? Send it to me: siobhandugan@comcast.net .

AN GHAELIGE

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

This month's Irish proverbs honor the decision to commit a substantial share of the Fair's prosperity to Irish cultural and new immigrant community activities:

Bíonn an rath i mbun na ranna.

'True prosperity is shown in the sharing.' That is, that you aren't truly successful until you are sharing your success.

Mura gcuirfidh tú san earrach ní bhainfidh tú san fhómhar.

'If you do not sow in the Spring, you will not reap in the Autumn.'



UPCOMING EVENTS



You are cordially invited to the Pot O'Gold and Silent Auction Benefit for the CHILDREN'S PROGRAM OF NORTHERN IRELAND

Saturday, November 5th
Cretin-Derham Hall Gymnasium

6:00 Silent Auction Begins

Tickets \$60 (\$35 is tax-deductible)

Featuring hors d'oeuvres & desserts catered by Tinucci's.
Silent and live auction of Irish goods and other fine items.
Drawing for prizes of \$500 and \$1000 cash.

For tickets, contact the CPNI office at
651-405-1108 or email cpni@cpni.org

CELTIC SHOPPING DAY 2005

DUBLINER PUB, University and Vandalia, St. Paul. Sunday, November 6, 1.00pm-6.00pm
A day of love Irish music, celebration, and shopping. Featuring handcrafted Irish, Celtic clothing, jewelry, photography, pottery, music CD's, books, glassware and more. For more info, call 651 488 6840

CD RELEASE CONCERT SWEET COLLEENS

Saturday, November 5th at 8 p.m. **Cedar Cultural Center** www.thecedar.org. Advance tickets available; \$10 advance / \$12 door. Say the Colleens: "We'll be playing new tunes from the album as well as old favorites and will be joined onstage by guest musicians and friends. *It wouldn't be the same if you weren't there!*"



MORNING IRISH LANGUAGE WORKSHOP



Gaeltacht Minnesota and [The Center for Irish Studies](http://www.gaelminn.org/gaelevent.htm) offer *Cear dlainnín 2005*, a morning workshop on the Irish language for students at all levels, absolute beginners to advanced, on Saturday, November 12, 2005. You can download a form and more info from <http://www.gaelminn.org/gaelevent.htm>. **Your form and payment (\$27) must be in by Monday November 7th.** Workshops are a great way to get a taste for the language, meet very interesting people, and have a great time. I went to the Spring 2005 workshop and have been hooked since!

*Until next month,
Best Regards from the*
**Irish Fair of
Minnesota**