

August 28, 2023

Crowds turned out in big numbers to 2nd Annual ROCK the GATES!

On Saturday, August 26, 2023, over 1,200 turned out for the 2nd annual Rock the Gates Summer Music Festival at the United Irish Cultural Center in San Francisco's Outer Sunset. This family friendly festival certainly had something for everyone—not just in terms of a range of music, but also various other attractions such as a Classic Car Show that dominated their block of 45th Avenue, a special art exhibition featuring large mixed media on canvas by Irish-born, SF artist Jerry Daly, the Irish Dance museum “Keepers of the Steps” hosting a dress and shoe drive for no-longer-needed Irish dance regalia, a special Whiskey Workshop by a local rep from Clonakilty Irish Whiskey, a special Irish Coffee collab with next door neighbor Java Beach, face painting (thanks Kevin Birmingham) and a bounce house (thanks, Cyril Hackett) for the kids, and so much more!

The festival featured over a dozen bands, primarily from around the Bay Area, across three stages along with appearances by dancers from seven Bay Area Irish Dance Schools and several pop-up processions by the San Francisco Irish Pipe Band. The Irish Center is very much a neighborhood community center, so this summer festival serves as a great way to connect with friends and neighbors during the back-to-school time when people are back from summer adventures.

Aside from celebrating a team of extraordinary volunteers who turned out in force, event highlights include the Irish dancers (nearly 100 in total!), 80s dance band, Dirty Spoon, the U2 tribute band—L.A.vation, The Hooks closing down the Emerald Pub, the Whiskey Workshops set against the backdrop of the Jerry Daly art exhibit in the St. Francis Room, the SF Irish Pipe Band, the multi-generational fun being had by all, and a lot of rockin' great music!

The festival serves as a great Open House of sorts for all the amenities the Irish Center has to offer for members, prospective members, neighbors, and friends. The Irish Center is a great event space and also boasts a library and research room for all things Irish, meeting space for youth music lessons, local church services, blood drives, polling place, meetings and events, and more. Check out our website at www.irishcentersf.org for a calendar of events or for event rental information. People know about us around St. Patrick's Day in March, but we are busy throughout the year as a full functioning community center. And membership has its privileges! Our next couple of events for the public are a fundraiser for our Library called the Mad Hatter Tea Party on September 10, and then a special Halfway to St. Patrick's Day/International Irish Dance Day Celebration on September 17. Check the website for details.