



• UNITED IRISH CULTURAL CENTER •

Irish American Heritage Month Celebrated With Success Throughout California

by Liam Reidy, President, United Irish Cultural Center, (lreidy@irishcentersf.org)

MARCH 2024 MARKED A significant achievement for Irish Americans as California joined in honoring Irish American Heritage Month, following a proclamation by President Joe Biden at the White House. This declaration was reinforced within the state by the passing of California Assembly Concurrent Resolution 149 at the state Capitol in Sacramento on March 14th.

State Capitol Visit

The atmosphere at the state capitol was charged with pride as supporters of the measure, including Consul General Micheál Smith, Vice-Consul Jennifer Chadwick and visiting Irish Senator Jerry Buttimer, and UICC board members Leo Cassidy and Redmond Lyons, gathered to witness the resolution's journey through both the California State Senate and Assembly. With resounding bipartisan support, the resolution was met with enthusiasm and approval from lawmakers in both chambers.

Assembly Members James Gallagher, Lisa Calderon, Damon Connolly, Heath Flora, and Matt Haney introduced the resolution in the Assembly, while Senate Bill was championed by Mike McGuire, the Pro Tempore leader of the California State Senate.

Century of Relations

The resolution, jointly passed by both houses, commemorates the 100th anni-

versary of diplomatic relations between the United States and Ireland. It also highlighted the significant contributions of Irish Americans to the country and the state of California, emphasizing the importance of celebrating Irish American Heritage Month throughout March, with particular emphasis on St Patrick's Day.

In a statement, the legislature declared, "Everyone is Irish on St Patrick's Day," underscoring the inclusive spirit of the celebration. The resolution further directed the Chief Clerk of the Assembly to transmit copies to key figures including Ireland's Ambassador to the United States, Geraldine Byrne Nason, and other dignitaries.

Reflecting on being present for the historic occasion, you could feel a great sense of pride and accomplishment resonating among attendees. I thought to myself "Wow!" Here we are in the political halls of power in the fifth largest economy in the world, taking center stage, which encapsulated the significance of the moment for me.

Concurrent Resolution 149

The successful passage of California Assembly Concurrent Resolution 149 not only recognizes the vibrant heritage of Irish Americans but also underscores the state's commitment to honoring and celebrating cultural diversity. As

Irish American Heritage Month concludes, its impact on fostering unity and appreciation for diverse cultural contributions remains palpable across California.

Irish American Success Story

While walking the halls of the state capitol building, I couldn't help but marvel at the prominence of Irish Americans on this stage. Their journey, rooted in the waves of immigrants who sought refuge from famine, pursued economic opportunities, and escaped political upheaval, has woven a tapestry of pride in their Irish ancestry. John Downey was the first foreign born Irish governor of California (1860-1862) and more recent Irish American governors with Emerald Isle heritage include Edmund Brown (1959-1967) and his son Jerry Brown (2011-2019) and current Governor Gavin Newsom (2019-2024). Through the annals of history, Irish Americans have wielded significant influence, shaping the very essence of American society across realms of culture, politics, business, and beyond. This narrative persists to this day.

Preservation of Irish Culture

At the heart of this pride lies a steadfast commitment to preserving and celebrating Irish traditions. From the toe tapping beats of traditional

music to the spirited movements of dance (there was Irish dancing through the halls of the State Assembly on March 14th!), from the lyrical beauty of language to the savory delights of cuisine, Irish American communities across the nation unite during Irish American Heritage Month. Through vibrant festivals, spirited parades, enlightening cultural events, and educational endeavors, we all pay homage to our heritage. These gatherings stand as poignant reminders of the enduring spirit and resilience that define the Irish people, both in their homeland and scattered throughout the world.

St Patrick's Season

With just two days to celebrate the St Patrick's season on site at the Irish Center this year, we had record attendances both on March 16th after the parade and again for St Patrick's Day which coincided with the GreenFest block party. We sold out of corned beef dinners early on March 17th! It was delicious based on the number of positive reports from happy UICC members. A special thanks to all the musicians and Irish dancers who did so well entertaining the crowds.

Spring Membership Drive

Our spring membership drive is now on, and we welcome you to continue supporting us here at the Center. Contact Maggie 650-892-4050.

Summer Camp

Our Summer camp has already over 75 participants signed up for the annual camp which starts on June 10. Registration is open throughout the spring until the camp is fully enrolled. The camp is ideal for kids aged 6 years and up.

Leo T Walsh Scholarship

Many thanks to all those donors and supporters who have once again contributed to the annual scholarship awards. The deadline for applying is now passed and the judges are busy reviewing the entrants. The award ceremony will take place in May. Good luck to all the eight graders and high school seniors who applied for a scholarship.

Céilí on the Lake

On April 27th and 28th, there is an Irish Dance and music Festival at the beautiful Lagoon Park, Marin County Fairgrounds. The Irish Center will be represented at the event with an Information Booth, while many of our members will be playing music and step dancing at the festival. More details at www.ceilionthelake.com/

Thank you to the Staff & Volunteers

A big thank you to our event staff Aileen, Wheatley and Heidi, the team of part time workers and volunteers for the trojan work undertaken all through the month of March. Go raibh raith agaibh go léir!

UICC Delegation In Sacramento

IN THE EARLY HOURS of Thursday March 14th, 2024, we embarked on a journey to the State Capitol in Sacramento with a singular purpose: to bear witness to the historic

passage of California State Resolution 149.

This resolution, embraced with unwavering bipartisan unity, heralded the designation of March as Irish Heritage

Month within the Golden State.

Here are some of the people with met in Room 317 in the state capitol building for a reception.



Liam Reidy, California State Senator Nancy Skinner, Redmond Lyons and Leo Cassidy at the State Capitol.



Consul General Micheál Smith with Irish Senate Chairman Jerry Buttimer, and Patrick Kennedy of the Sacramento Board of Supervisors.



James Gallagher (Assembly District #3), Chair of the Irish Republican Caucus with Liam Reidy, UICC President.

2024 Block Party, March 17



Current board member Redmond Lyons with past Vice-President of the Board; Mark Burke and past Secretary Molly Burke.

Surprise Visit From Arizona



Valerie McGrew was in San Francisco for the month of March and stopped by the Patrick J Dowling Library on one of her many visits to the Center. Valerie was the Patrick J Dowling Librarian between 2011-2019, but relocated to Surprise, AZ in 2020. Her new home is about 30 miles northwest of Phoenix.

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Crossroads Festival 2024 Panel Discussion



Anne Cassidy Carew, Tony Bucher and Eileen Mize photographed at the Crossroads Festival on March 10, 2024.

ANNE CASSIDY CAREW gave a wonderful overview of all the programming at the UICC stressing the wide array of offerings and commitment to cultural preservation. She cited past leaders and members, such as her own late father Gerry Cassidy, as being the “giants upon whose shoulders we stand” especially as the Center embarks on a major capital campaign and building project that will provide space for the growth in programs and events that serve the greater Bay Area community.

Eileen Mize spoke about the origins and development of the Keepers of the Steps program—one of the cultural programs of the UICC that is

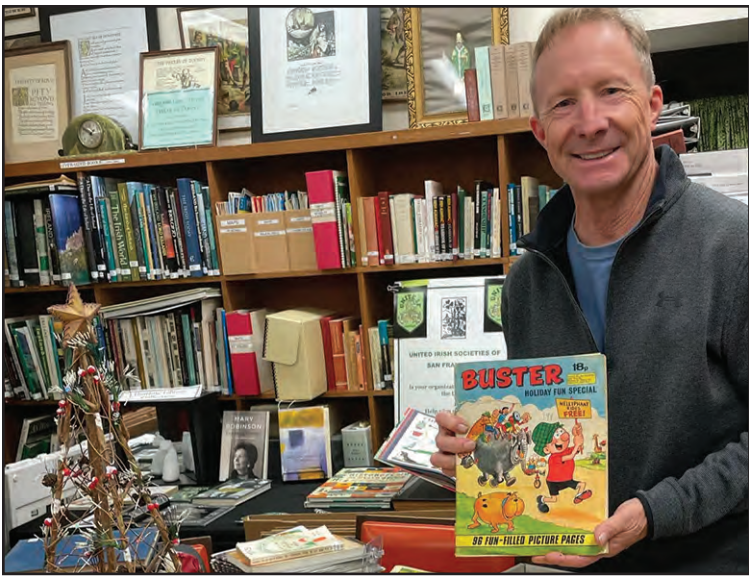
near and dear to Eileen. She refers to her efforts in the history and preservation of Irish Dance in the San Francisco Bay Area as a “passion project” and credits her early interest to her own dance teacher and longtime friend Annie McBride. Eileen talked about the current exhibition at the San Francisco Historical Society which opened on February 29 and will be on display through May as well as some exciting future plans.

Thanks to Crossroads Director Margaret McPeake for organizing such a unique chance to engage in a vital discussion, and as she concluded the panel—“This may well be Part 1 of an on-going discussion.”

The Gift Of Comics

A special thank you to Sean Callan and his brothers Joe, Francis and Brian who donated over 350 kids comic books to the Dowling Library recently. Among the titles donated were: Roy of the Rovers, Beano,

Dandy, Buster and Shoot. Anyone who grew up in Ireland in the 1970s and 1980s will remember fondly these comic books available in their local shops and newsagents throughout Ireland. Thank you Sean!



Our Newest Member

WELCOME TO SUNSET RESIDENT TOM GOLDEN who became a UICC member during the St Patrick’s season. Tom is photographed here with Vice-President Anne Cassidy Carew. Tom tells us that his wife Dawn also became a member! Have you joined yet? Our spring membership drive is ongoing now!



Emerald Pub Meet Up

UICC SUPPORTERS Cathy and Craig Viehweg with long time friend Tom Corsiglia on March 17th in the Emerald Pub.



Irish Center Floats Wins First Place At The St Patrick’s Day Parade

THE CHINESE AND IRISH laborers who contributed to the construction of America’s first Transcontinental Railroad was the focus of this year’s Irish Center float in the parade which was a collaboration between the Chinese and Irish communities in San Francisco.

The UICC’s float, fashioned as a vintage train, proudly showcased symbolic elements of the railroad’s construction, including spikes, wooden ties, and metal rails. Emblazoned with banners proclaiming “Chinese and Irish Railroad Workers,” the float served as a stirring tribute

to these unsung heroes. UICC Board member, Leo Cassidy, highlighted the historical oversight of these workers’ sacrifices, stressing their unacknowledged contributions. Determined to honor their legacy, the two communities joined forces to shed light on their vital role.



The United Irish Cultural Center parade float stops for a quick photo opportunity in front of City Hall, March 16th, 2024. Included on the ground left to right are: Daniel Laurie, Consul General Micheál Smith, Irish Senator Jerry Buttimer, City Attorney David Chiu, Mayor London Breed, Liam Reidy and Leo Cassidy. Included on the float are Supervisor Aaron Peskin and Lotus Wong, along with Pat and Ute Goggins.

Photo Exhibition During St Patricks Festival

WE WERE DELIGHTED to be able to welcome photographer, Irish artist Annie Holland back for a photographic exhibition called “Textiles of Rural Ireland” and her sister, Kathleen Holland, who debuted a new collection of Claddagh jewelry over the St Patrick’s Day weekend events. Annie Hollands trip was supported by Laois County Council and Culture Ireland.



Family and friends of the Holland sisters came out to support the artists on Opening night March 14th, 2024 at the Center.



Please visit irishcentersf.org
For information about the Center, the 2025 Project, Membership, events, and much more ...