



December 2012

Coalition of Irish Immigration Centers Newsletter

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Greetings!

Welcome to the December 2012 edition of the CIIC Newsletter.

On behalf of CIIC, I would like to wish you and your family a very happy and healthy holiday season, and all the best in the New Year! Thank you for continuing to follow our updates and emails, and for all that you do to support the CIIC mission of representing immigrant organizations throughout the United States who are committed to providing services to Irish immigrants.

In 2013, please keep me informed about your member center or organization, so we can share your news and achievements with the community. Also, forward this newsletter onto friends and colleagues by using the link at the bottom of this page, and encourage them to sign up to receive our emails.

Best,

Aileen Leonard Dibra
National Coordinator
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A Day of Action for the Irish Community in NY

The Irish Day of Action Committee, facilitated by the New York Consulate General of Ireland, coordinated a Meitheal na Nollaig, which included two Irish Days of Action, as well as a Christmas Shoebox drive. Both initiatives were a community-wide endeavor in the true holiday spirit of helping others. The committee consisted of numerous Irish and Irish American groups, including New York Irish Center, Emerald Isle Immigration Center, Aisling Irish Community Center, the American Ireland Fund, the Ancient Order of Hibernians, the Emerald Guild, the GAA, Irish Network New York City, Irish International Business Network, Irish Business Organisation, Irish American Society of Nassau, Suffolk & Queens, Hudson Valley Irish Center, as well as businesses and media, such as Irish Central, Liffey Van Lines and Padded Wagon. The effort was also supported by individuals, including Brian McCabe and a number of hospitality contacts, such as Ronan Downes, Paul Hurley and Mike Carty.

Approximately 1400 volunteers participated in both the Meitheal and Meitheal na Nollaig, starting the process of rebuilding areas most affected by Hurricane Sandy on November 24th and December 15th, respectively.

In conjunction with the Irish Day of Action, the committee also initiated a Christmas Shoe Box Appeal. The Christmas Shoe Box Appeal is an ordinary idea that has an extraordinary outcome. Over the last 13 years, the Irish organization, Team Hope, has sent an Irish Christmas Shoe Box gift to more than 2,600,000 children in 21 countries, living in the some of the most war-torn and poverty stricken areas in Africa and Eastern Europe.

Inspired by this, the committee decided to emulate a version of this initiative for the children affected by Hurricane Sandy, to ensure that as many children as possible receive a little holiday cheer in the form of a shoe box gift. The end result was the donation of 700 shoeboxes to be given to children through the Rockaway Community. Jane McCarter, Arts & Cultural Director at New York Irish Center, indicated that "it was an absolute honor to join so many selfless and kind Irish, Irish American and Irish at heart to help bring a little holiday cheer to the children and families of Rockaway, particularly with something as ordinary as a shoe box. Hopefully we have helped to renew a sense of hope and new beginnings for Rockaway in 2013."

[Click here](#) to view some of the volunteer work accomplished on December 15th as reported by Agnes Chung from NY1.



Ireland Pledges Monetary Support to Voluntary Organizations in the US Assisting Those Affected by Hurricane Sandy

On Tuesday December 11th, Ambassador Michael Collins and Mrs. Marie Collins, the Congressional Friends of Ireland and the American Ireland Fund DC Gala Chairs and DC Young Leaders hosted a special event at the Irish Embassy in Washington as an expression of solidarity with victims of Hurricane Sandy.

The event followed the previous week's announcement by Tánaiste and Deputy Prime Minister of Ireland, Eamon Gilmore, that the Irish Government will provide €250,000 (c. \$322,000) in emergency funding to Irish voluntary organizations in the eastern United States to assist those members of the Irish and wider communities worst affected by Sandy. More than 200 guests were in attendance, including Friends of Ireland Chairman Rep. Peter King (R - New York). The event was also successful in raising additional monies for the [AIF Washington DC Young Leaders Hurricane Sandy Relief 2012 Fund](#).

Ambassador Collins expressed thanks and appreciation to Irish community organizations, including New York Irish Center, Emerald Isle Immigration Center, Aisling Irish Community Center, Irish Network New Jersey and the Ancient Order of Hibernians from New York and New Jersey and beyond, as well as the American Ireland Fund, for the inspirational assistance and support which they and others have provided since Sandy

struck. This support includes two very successful Irish Days of Action held on November 24th and December 15th, with assistance and coordination from the Consulate General of Ireland in New York.

Bishop McKeown Visits NY

The Irish Apostolate USA, in collaboration with the Aisling Irish Community Center, St. Barnabas Church and Project Irish Outreach of Catholic Charities, coordinated the December 2nd visit of Bishop Donal McKeown to the Irish community in the Bronx and Yonkers. He is the Auxiliary Bishop of Down and Connor in Northern Ireland, and also serves on the Irish Episcopal Council for Emigrants. Bishop McKeown celebrated the Sunday family Mass at St. Barnabas Church and a reception followed in the Church Hall. There was a very warm welcome for him and his visit was enjoyed by all.

Sr. Christine Hennessy from Project Irish Outreach, Father John McCarthy from the Irish Pastoral Centre in Boston and Msgr. Kevin Sullivan, the Executive Director of Catholic Charities, were all present. All of the participants were grateful for Bishop McKeown's presence, and are hopeful hope that he will return for future visits.



USCIS Introduces Online Resource for Immigrant Entrepreneurs

On November 28, 2012, the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Director Alejandro Mayorkas unveiled [Entrepreneur Pathways](#), an online resource center that provides entrepreneurs who seek to start a business in the U.S. an intuitive way to navigate the immigration process. Entrepreneur Pathways is a product of USCIS' [Entrepreneurs in Residence \(EIR\) initiative](#), which has focused on realizing the current immigration system's full potential to attract and retain startup enterprises that promote innovation and spur job creation in the U.S.

The EIR initiative was launched earlier on October 11, 2011. It draws on industry expertise to strengthen USCIS policies and practices critical to American economic growth. The team comprised startup business experts and USCIS immigration experts working collaboratively over a short period of time to streamline pathways for a range of existing nonimmigrant visa categories often used by entrepreneurs. It began its efforts by focusing on assessing current policies, practices, and training across a range of existing nonimmigrant visa categories used by entrepreneurs. Through a comprehensive training course on startup enterprises and the landscape for early-stage innovations developed and delivered by the EIR team, Director Mayorkas said, USCIS is better equipped with the tools to adjudicate petitions presented by entrepreneurs.

Director Mayorkas also explained that, recently, the EIR team embarked on a new challenge, expanding its focus to existing immigrant visa pathways that may enable foreign entrepreneurs to start a business and pursue a path to permanent resident status in the U.S. This new emphasis, he said, will bring training to an additional portion of USCIS' workforce and supplement the team's continued work on the development of policies and practices relevant to the entrepreneurial community.

In addition to creating Entrepreneur Pathways, the EIR team:

- * developed and deployed a training workshop for USCIS employment-based immigration officers that focuses on startup businesses and the environment for early-stage innovations;
- * trained a team of specialized immigration officers to handle entrepreneur and startup cases;
- * modified request for evidence (RFE) templates for certain nonimmigrant visa categories to incorporate new types of relevant evidence into the adjudicative process; and
- * developed a plan for quarterly engagements with the entrepreneurial community to ensure that USCIS stays current with industry practices.

To sustain the momentum and build on the team's accomplishments, USCIS extended the EIR project through April 2013.

Article submitted by John Stahl, Director of Legal Services, [Emerald Isle Immigration Center](#)



Making New Friends

Words for Irish Senior Connect Volunteers

This week, we asked two of our volunteers to share some of their thoughts on volunteering with the Irish Senior Connect (ISC) program at the [Irish Pastoral Centre in Boston](#).

When asked what are the biggest benefits of ISC, one volunteer said "Both volunteers and senior callers benefit from making the listening line connection. It's very enjoyable making new and interesting relationships and it makes me feel good that I have helped someone. It helps me feel that I am doing something positive with skills I've developed from my volunteer training and throughout my lifetime."

Another volunteer offered "We're giving the caller an opportunity to share what's happening in their life, talk about upcoming or ongoing events, share a problem, share a recipe or a memory and to make a friendship." He added, "If you're having a problem, there's a real benefit to being able to talk something out, to get it out there. Speaking out helps to get another person's view of your problem and may help to resolve it. You have a learning experience while sharing with someone else."

With the holidays upon us, we celebrate the spirit of the season, but it can also be a time where some of us are feeling lonely. There is support if you or someone you know feels this way. Call Irish Senior Connect and share your feelings with supportive friends who understand.

Volunteers are here to answer your calls on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday from 10am to 12pm EST, as well as Wednesday, Friday and Saturday from 2pm to 4 pm EST. We are waiting to hear from you and to listen at **855-249-5146**.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from the volunteers and staff of the Irish Senior Connect Listening Line.

For more information about ISC, please contact CIIC ISC Coordinator, Susan Doody at susan.doody@ciic-usa.org.

CIIC News

CIIC would like to take the opportunity to welcome its newest Board Member, Kathleen Rohan, from the Irish Pastoral Centre in Boston. Kathleen has been working at IPC Boston since 2007. Kathleen brings a wealth of programmatic, cultural and historical knowledge of the Irish community in the US, and CIIC looks forward to her work and input on the board level.

CIIC recently held Board Officer elections and the following members were re-elected to their positions for this year:

Siobhan Dennehy, EIIC - President

Celine Kennelly, IIPC - Vice President

Breandan Magee, CIIS - Secretary

CIIC congratulates James Cummins (SIIS) on his appointment as the newly elected Treasurer.

CIIC also thanks Orla Kelleher for her past years service as Treasurer, and her continued commitment as a CIIC Board Member.

ABOUT THE COALITION OF IRISH IMMIGRATION CENTERS

The Coalition of Irish Immigration Centers (CIIC) is a national umbrella group for all of the Irish Immigration Centers in the US. The CIIC was established in 1996 to promote the welfare of Irish immigrants in the US at a national level.

The mission of the CIIC is to represent immigrant organizations throughout the United States who are committed to providing services to Irish immigrants. The Coalition provides support and assistance to the various centers in their work through advocacy, education and the exchange of information. CIIC member organizations are located in California, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, Philadelphia, Washington and Wisconsin.

To learn more about CIIC visit, www.ciic-usa.org

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