

## Coalition of Irish Immigration Centers Newsletter

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***Welcome to the January 2014 edition of the CIIC Newsletter!***  
The CIIC is off to a great start this New Year and is very busy planning our AGM and Training event at the end of January in San Francisco. It will be a great opportunity for member centers to work together and focus on strategic planning, training and development. This includes suicide prevention training, comprehensive immigration reform, subcommittee planning, a J1 presentation, Irish Senior Connect presentation and much more. Taking time to meet one another face to face, and focus on how member centers can work together and plan for future collaboration will significantly benefit member centers and community members that engage with their services.

In this newsletter, you will find articles about past and future events - giving you a taste of what we're up to.

Please share this newsletter and our other e-communications with your friends and colleagues by using the link at the bottom of this page.

All the best,  
Sara McDermott

National Coordinator  
Coalition of Irish Immigration Centers  
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## Aisling Irish Community Center Expands Yonkers, NY



*Pictured: Orla Kelleher, Executive Director; Bridget Flynn with students from the Flynn School of Irish Dance; George Latimer, State Senator; Anne Anderson, Irish Ambassador to the U.S.; Noel Kilkenny, Consul General of Ireland in NY; Eamon Gilmore, An Tánaiste; Mike Spano, Mayor of Yonkers; Dennis Shepherd, City Councilman. Photo Courtesy of Orla Kelleher*

**September 28th 2013** - The Aisling Irish Community Center celebrated the official opening of the newly Expanded Center in September. Those taking part of the opening included Tanaiste Eamon Gilmore, Consul General Noel Kilkenny, Irish Ambassador to the U.S. Anne Anderson, and the Mayer of Yonkers, Mike Spano.

## Celebrating the Holidays in Yonkers, NY



*Volunteers preparing 300+ meals for the homeless*

**November and December 2013-** Events over the holiday season at Aisling Irish Community Center included volunteers who prepared over 300 Thanksgiving dinners for people in the community (pictured), a senior group Christmas dinner, and a visit from Santa to the center.



*Vice Consul of Ireland San Francisco Kevin Bryne, Father Christmas, Father John Madigan, Photo courtesy of Aidan Maher*

**Seattle Seniors Celebrate the Holidays**

**December 7th** - Seniors from the Seattle Irish community came together during the festive season for a Senior Luncheon. Seattle Irish Immigrant Support under the leadership of James Cummins and John Keane identified around 350 seniors in the Puget Sound Region and organized lunches where they could meet. This process is ongoing. Four lunches are scheduled every year. Sometimes music or guest speakers are included. The Christmas and St Patrick's Day lunches have had up to 120 in attendance.

Primarily funded by the Irish Abroad Unit of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, SIISG charges a nominal amount per person for lunch as a donation. The restaurants also contribute by charging a reduced rate for the meal.

**Aisling Irish Community Center Launches its First Annual Exhibition**  
*Yonkers, NY*



The competition attracted over 700 submissions from amateur photographers. The exhibition features over 70 stunning images taken of landscapes and landmarks throughout Ireland and New York. Everybody is welcome to stop by and take a look!

Aisling Irish Community Center is also delighted to launch its first ever calendar featuring over 30 photographs chosen from the various entries. A limited number of 2014 calendars are on at \$15.00 each (plus shipping & handling). Call 914-237-5121 or go to [www.aislingcenter.org](http://www.aislingcenter.org) for details on how to order a calendar. All proceeds will benefit programs and services provided by the center.

# Leaving the Emerald Isle for the Emerald River of Chicago

By Danielle Allen

*Chicago Irish Immigrant Support Group*

Many articles I have read on Irish immigration speak of the History of emigrating from Ireland, the recession and the glum facts of why people simply had no choice but to emigrate in troubled times.

I respect the History of our Country, nonetheless, choosing to emigrate is part of our genes; unfortunately the recession is no stranger to us. Thus for the purpose of this article I would like to take a positive view on Emigrating from Ireland as a Choice.

I originally moved to Chicago for personal adventure and for career development. It was my first experience living in a big city, far from all that was once familiar. Upon graduating college I had a thirst for adventure and a desire to experience a new culture, like most young graduates these days travel, was always at the back of my mind. I knew Ireland was no longer where I wanted to be at least for the moment.

At that point I had already visited America several times on different vacations and on a summer J1 visa. It was here that I broaden my worldview and awakened my interest in perhaps one day returning to live in America.

It was coming up to the one year anniversary of my graduation ceremony from College. I had 6 decent years of study behind me and no real prospects for obtaining a suitable job in my field. Surfing the net one day and exchanging emails back and forth with a first cousin living in Chicago, I decided to apply for the graduate visa with only a mere six weeks left to take up the visa and leave the country. Before I knew it I had packed in my full time job, booked flights, said my good byes to loved ones and there I was, a small town Irish cailín wandering through O'Hare airport.

I desired to embrace the American culture whole heartedly after all that is why I moved here. Nevertheless I landed a job in an Irish organization, moved in with an Irish lady and sat at a large Irish family's table for my first Christmas dinner in America. It was home away from home.

Plans for St Patrick's Day or 'Patty's Day' as some would call it, (that friends and I would cringe at), were in full motion, the anticipation and fuss leading up to the big day was like nothing I had ever experienced or would ever experience in Ireland. I was in awe at

how all the different cultures that made up the Chicago population had embraced our culture and taken on the idea that "everybody was Irish on St Patty's Day".

Nothing would prepare me for the "Big Day" people I met on the streets, at work or in social settings would express how sensational St. Patrick's Day is and how enjoyable it would be. Our organization had a float in the parade so I felt privileged to experience the day from the center of the action. My first St. Patrick's Day abroad, and it was clear to me it would be the biggest celebration of this day that I would ever experience which is why I believe that it proves to be much more importance to Irish Immigrants around the world than at Home in Ireland.

The dyeing of the Chicago River Emerald green is a unique way to celebrate the day. Not only unique to the US but also the world.

After reaching the end of the parade route on our float filled with multicultural immigrants of varying ages all dressed in Green, My friends and I made a beeline for the Chicago River, the one unique component of the day, which would blow our minds at first glance. We could not get down there fast enough to take a picture of which we would post to social media for those at home in Ireland to share our awe.

Recent years have seen a larger scale Emigration of Irish due to two major reasons, one the downturn of the Economy and secondly the younger generation is more open to travelling the world before they settle down and we have realized there is a whole world beyond the green hills of Ireland.

I believe the celebration of St Patrick's Day will continue to grow worldwide as more and more young Irish choose to emigrate and the countries we select as our new homes choose to welcome us by celebrating with us. Perhaps those of us who have emigrated and decide to settle and integrate into their adoptive country, can lend a hand to our native Country by promoting it through celebrating St. Patrick's Day worldwide, and also encouraging visitors and tourists to travel there.

I for one do not believe a majority of young Irish immigrants will one day return to Ireland as some hope; they will have set up new lives, made new friends and perhaps started families. Ireland will forever be in our hearts but distance will leave us failing to find common ground upon our return.

***Upcoming Events at CIIC Member Centers***

## **Annual St. Brigid's Day 'La Feile Bride' Celebration**

*Irish Pastoral Centre*

*Boston, MA*

**February 1st** - The Annual St. Brigid's Day 'La Feile Bride' will take place on Saturday February 1st, 2014. St. Brigid of Ireland was born around 453 AD in Faughart, Co. Louth. She is one of the patron Saints of Ireland and is affectionately known as "the Mary of the Gael". Her feast day is February 1st, which is also the first day of Spring in Ireland. This is the beginning of Imbolc, one of the four great pagan festivals of the Season. Activities include craft workshop for children, celebration of mass, food, traditional music, set dancing, and ceili. Please visit IPC Boston's [website](#) for more details.

## **Bachelor of the Year Fundraiser Aisling Irish Community Center**

*Gaelic Park, Bronx NY*

**March 8th 2014** - The Aisling Irish Community Center is excited to host the Bachelor of The Year 2014 Fundraiser on March 8th at Gaelic Park in the Bronx. Last year, this event was acclaimed one of the most successful and entertaining nights for the Irish and Irish American Community in New York.

Tickets are \$30 per person. The center is still taking entries, if you think you have what it takes to be the "Bachelor of the Year", or would like to get more information, please visit their website [here](#).

## **Emerald Isle Immigration Center will host the 21st Annual Briscoe Awards**

*New York, NY*

The 21st Annual Robert Briscoe Awards hosted by the Emerald Isle Immigration Center will be taking place in March 2014. The Briscoe Awards are bestowed each year on members of New York's Jewish community in appreciation of efforts to better the lives of Irish Immigrants. Rober Briscoe was the first Jewish Lord Mayor of Dublin, Ireland. He was elected to that Office in 1956, a time when New York had not yet seen its first Jewish Mayor. Please look for further updates on the [EIIC website](#).

## **Murphy's Unite!!**

*Toronto, Canada*

Are you a Murphy? Come to Toronto for a "reunion of the Murphy Clan," which invites anyone with the last name Murphy to march in a section of the 2014 Toronto St. Pat's Parade. Any "Murphy" interested in participating should e-mail [murphy@topatrick.com](mailto:murphy@topatrick.com) for further details.

With much thanks,  
Cathy Murphy

Cathy Murphy  
Executive Director  
Irish Canadian Immigration Centre

## **Irish Senior Connect**

**855.249.5146**

**Calls to Date** - ISC volunteers have received 254 calls to date on the listening line, and have made 680 well-being check-in calls.

**What's New** - ISC volunteers and staff will be focusing on senior men's outreach. Calls and emails to local men's groups have started in order to heighten awareness of ISC services, and offer program presentations.

**Give us a like!** We're on [Facebook](#)

**For more information** about the program, contact ISC Program Coordinator, Susan Doody, at [susan.doody@ciic-usa.org](mailto:susan.doody@ciic-usa.org)

## **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 CIIC is funded by a grant from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's Emigrant Support Program and by generous support from the American Ireland fund for its Irish Senior Connect Program.

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](http://www.ciic-usa.org)