



Conway Mill Trust

Formerly "Doors of Hope"

P.O. Box 101529
Pittsburgh, PA 15237

December 2010

SEASON'S GREETING'S

As we approach this holiday season, thank you for your outstanding support of Conway Mill Trust and its mission of rebuilding lives in Northern Ireland. Our work would not be possible without the commitment and generosity of all of you, our supporters.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees of Conway Mill Trust, may you, your family and your friends have a peaceful and blessed Christmas and a healthy and prosperous New Year.

Bob Kaniecki, President

Your Contributions at Work!

A serious automobile accident involving Conway Mill Trust (CMT) President Bob Kaniecki and his wife Jean, who also is the Archivist for Conway Mill Trust, prevented them from making their annual Fall trip to Northern Ireland to present grants. We transferred electronically grant money to the community groups that had an immediate need for the funds. Additional grants will be personally presented in late January and early February 2011 when two other CMT representatives will be traveling to Northern Ireland.

Two grants were sent to the Conway Education Centre (CEC). The first was \$1,335 from the Mary Mannion Merit Grant fund, designed to provide financial aid to adult students in pursuit of General

Contributions, cont. pg.3

Bracing for Government Funding Cutbacks

Community Group Perspectives

News about the government funding cutbacks is not good as related to us by three of the bedrock community groups that Conway Mill Trust, formerly Doors of Hope, has supported over the years: Conway Education Centre, Altram and Naiscoil na Rinne.

Conway Education Centre

Fr. Des Wilson, founder of Springhill Community House and one of the founders of the Conway Education Centre, reports, “The situation about future funding is unclear. The Assembly administration here has a budget from the British government which it has some discretion in using. So far there is no clear indication of how it will use this reduced budget. At the moment community groups have come together to put their case for financial support for their work, but the result of that is not known yet either.

Much of the effect of cuts will be upon individuals, and this of course will impact on community groups who will have less voluntary help and more requests for services. In any case, government now wants those who receive unemployment and other relief to offer work – on a voluntary basis – to community groups. This means a strange kind of enforced voluntary work! Whether this will have impact on the day-to-day work of community groups remains to be seen, but clearly it is not a good basis for it.

Unfortunately, we cannot define very clearly what is going to happen, apart from saying that the financial help for the work here is generally available up to March of this coming year. After that it will depend on decisions which have not yet been clearly made. This is very unsatisfactory for you (Conway Mill Trust) as well as for us, but we will keep you informed as well as we can.

With best wishes and thanks from us all,

Des”

Pauline Kersten, Manager of the Conway Education Centre (CEC), writes:

“At the moment we are engaged in a number of meetings with government departments regarding our future funding. The departments at this stage have not yet received their budgets, but we are discussing where we fit in, the added value we bring, and our unique position in the community.

The meetings are extremely hard; we hear things like ‘organizations need to trim their fat.’ This might be true for government agencies, but in an organization like ours, with recycled office furniture, staff and students wearing fleeces in the winter because the place is so hard to heat, with only three full-time staff to manage and service all of the education floor – and that would not exist without the input of many volunteers and our friends in America, CEC really has no fat to cut.

Cutbacks, cont pg.4

Contributions, from pg.1

Course Secondary Education (GCSE) certification. Earning their GCSE enables them to enter into a university or technical school or seek employment. A second grant was awarded to CEC for \$167 to be used to purchase building materials to construct a storage room for CEC students' pottery projects. Pauline Kersten, Manager of Conway Education Centre, successfully recruited volunteers to perform the labor on this project.

As we have been reporting over the last few months Altram, the early years Irish language medium support organization based in Derry, has been struggling to keep the doors of its tutor/worker training unit open because of a funding loss affecting its ability to pay the training unit's monthly rent. Through your generous support, CMT has sent \$2,216 over the last four months to help keep the training unit operating. More about Altram's financial situation is contained in another article in this newsletter ("Bracing for Government Funding Cutbacks, Community Group Perspectives").

A fourth grant of \$408 was awarded to Naiscoil na Rinne, the early years Irish language medium preschool childcare and family support centre serving the families of the Creggan community in Derry.

If you would like to support a specific community group and its work, simply write the name of the group to receive your contribution on your check or money order. You can be assured that one-hundred percent (100%) of your donation will be given to them. Here are the groups Conway Mill Trust supports with your donations. Conway Mill Preservation Trust Ltd., Conway Education Centre, Irish Republican History Museum and Springhill Community House in Belfast; Altram, Naiscoil na Rinne, Dove House and the Museum of Free Derry in Derry; and Drumcree Community Centre in Portadown. For details about each of these groups and their work, go to our website www.conwaymilltrust.org and click on "Our Work" on our home page.

Your Donations are Needed

Deep cuts in funding have left many community groups teetering on the edge of staff layoffs and service reductions, even closure. Your donation could make the difference in sustaining their programs, even keeping their doors open to the communities they serve. Often, these groups are the only resource available to individuals to assist them in improving their lives and the lives of their families.

Please partner with Conway Mill Trust and send a tax-deductible contribution today to Conway Mill Trust Inc., PO Box 101529, Pittsburgh, PA 15237-8529.

Or go to www.conwaymilltrust.org and click the DONATE button to donate securely online through PayPal using your checking account or credit card.

If you wish to direct your donation to a particular group, write the name of the group in the memo of your check or money order and they will receive 100% of that donation.

You can be assured that every dollar you send is needed, well spent and deeply appreciated.

Cutbacks, from pg. 2

What we are looking at is to share resources, like tutors, with other organizations, and we are examining the possibility of increasing our income generation through taking a more pro-active approach in marketing our available rooms for hire, organize workshops on the history of the Mill to fit in with the tourist trade etc.

Yes, there is a serious crisis, but it has been said that crises offer opportunities, and we are looking to see how we can not only sustain our current level of services, but expand where possible.

Wishing our friends in Conway Mill Trust and America all the very best,

Pauline”

Altram and Naiscoil na Rinne

Danny Cassidy, Manager of Altram as well as Naiscoil na Rinne in Derry, has given an update specific to Altram’s current financial situation. The pending government funding cutbacks will only serve to compound Altram’s struggles. Danny writes:

“We are extremely grateful for the funds we’ve received from Conway Mill Trust. In relation to the overall situation at Altram, I would like to give you the latest information I have at hand. Firstly, in relation to the trust in Belfast (Danny had applied for funding from the trust in early summer), I can inform you that they are no longer in a position to consider our application for funding as they themselves have lost grant-aid from the Irish government which means their own future is in doubt. That seems to be the situation for all groups in the North of Ireland. From my own group’s perspective we also are waiting news in relation to our own funding to keep Altram going. As it stands, we are only guaranteed funding to Christmas, and after that there will be a complete review of all the funding on offer; so we all may be unemployed after Christmas. The so-called peace dividend promised by the British has not materialized which is not a real surprise to us.

As for the training unit, we are hoping to keep it going until Christmas, and if the situation does not change then we may have to close it down. I hate to sound so negative, but unfortunately it is a very bleak situation here at the moment, and the stress and uncertainty surrounding the present situation is having a very negative effect upon the Irish speaking community.

As for Naiscoil na Rinne, they are still going and I’m hopeful that we will be able to sustain them until August 2011.

Is mise,

Danny”