



Conway Mill Trust

Formerly “Doors of Hope”

P.O. Box 101529
Pittsburgh, PA 15237

June 2010

Merit Grant Recipients Highlighted

Conway Mill Trust has made awards to Conway Education Centre through the Mary Mannion Merit Grant Program, supported by your donations, in order that its recipients are able to continue their education through General Course Secondary Education (GCSE) certification. The program aims to help students 19 years of age and older who have not completed their secondary education. In our last issue, we highlighted one of the award recipients, Brendan Hanvey. In this issue, three more of the recipients are being highlighted.



Deborah O'Sullivan, *GCSE English student and a recipient of a Mary Mannion Merit Grant bursary:*

Deborah took the GCSE English course at secondary school about five years ago and failed because in her opinion of a poor teacher. She never had a chance to take the course again until she heard about Conway
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Bracing for Funding Cuts, Altram Faces Crisis

Following their trip to Northern Ireland to distribute allocated funds from Conway Mill Trust, Secretary Sandy Haas and Treasurer Ed McManus reported that a “common theme in all meetings and discussions [was] significant funding cuts by government agencies. Most groups expect dramatic pressure on their ability to sustain the services they provide in the community.”

Their report has proven to be prescient. A common theme throughout this issue of the newsletter is the financial uncertainty being faced by many of the organizations supported by you, our donors, through Conway Mill Trust. When possible, we are giving direct reports from representatives of these organizations about how they may be affected in the year ahead.

As we reported in the last issue of Conway Mill Trust News, Altram, the early years Irish language medium schools program, has been facing a battle to survive due to the global recession and significant funding cuts. Recent reports from Danny Cassidy, Altram's Project Manager, indicated that the situation is dire.

An appeal for funding for Altram has been made by Conway Mill Trust on its blog as well as a direct appeal made to supporters who have furnished us with their email addresses.

Full coverage of the situation at Altram and an urgent appeal for funds appears on page 3.

Welcoming Changed Times . . . in the Hands Extended in Encouragement!

Following is correspondence from Father Des Wilson to Conway Mill Trust President Bob Kaniecki

“Thank you for your very welcome message. All is well here.

“Changed times - one of the Ministers in the present Administration here, Sammy Wilson, visited Conway Mill and was very courteously received. Sammy is a member of the DUP - Democratic Unionist Party founded by Ian Paisley. The party and the founders and the members have been at times in opposition to the Mill project and at times indifferent.

“Now, however, with the redevelopment of the Mill due to be completed in October, one minister who is a member of the SDLP has already visited the Mill and now Sammy Wilson arrived, both of them welcomed and both of them bearing messages of goodwill.

“We are welcoming changed times not only in the refurbished buildings but also in the hands extended in encouragement! Now comes the time when we all have to climb out of the deep economic depression. Brian Cowen is hopeful and we are all anxious about possible cuts to essential services including health and education, but with united effort on the horizon we can cope with all that!”

Thank you for all your help.
Des

Appeal for Funds for Altram

By Sandy Haas, Conway Mill Trust Secretary

Conway Mill Trust has received word from Danny Cassidy, Project Manager for Altram, a community-based regional support group for Irish language early years programs and family support services in Northern Ireland, that Altram has lost funding that will severely affect its certified Irish-medium early years immersion education training program and Two Windows on the World Centre.

Altram was founded in 1990 by local Irish-medium preschools in Newry, Armagh, Derry and Belfast. It currently provides a wide range of services and publications including training materials, certification training and support publications to some 50 groups in Northern Ireland, some of which have families from both sides of the community who benefit from Altram's services.

Altram undertook development of its Irish-medium early years tutor training program and dedicated training centre in 2008 in partnership with Comhairle na Gaelscaiochta, the organization specifically responsible for the Irish-medium early years sector in Northern Ireland, North West Regional College, Ultach, a Belfast-based charity, and the University of Ulster. The program and centre became fully operational in September 2009 and recently certified its first class of tutors/workers.

Danny writes, "Despite all our hard work to establish the training centre, we are now at the stage where we have to close it by July as we have no money to maintain the rent on it (£450 per month). This, to say the least, is heartbreaking for all involved in the project. All the money invested into the centre will have been for nothing and is a terrible waste of resources."

In addition to the Centre's imminent closing, all members of the Altram staff will be placed on notice within the next two weeks. However, Danny went on to say, "This is not about our [the staff's] future, it is more about the future of the children who attend the Irish-medium early years schools. Without our support I have no doubt that the sector in general will experience a downturn in terms of quality and care."

Danny reports they are currently lobbying the local politicians and remain hopeful that they can avert this crisis, but as it stands now, even if funds are secured to maintain the staff, he doesn't believe they will allocate funds for rental costs. "Unfortunately, I can't see a way out of this situation, and we may have to accept closure of the centre," Danny ended.

If you would like to help Altram, simply send your tax-deductible contribution to Conway Mill Trust Inc., P.O. Box 101529, Pittsburgh, PA 15237-8529. Mark your check or money order "Altram." And one-hundred percent (100%) of your contribution will be sent to them. Or, go to www.conwaymilltrust.org and click the "DONATE" button top right to donate online through PayPal.

Progress and funding report from Conway Education Centre

Following is a report from Pauline Kersten, Manager of the Conway Education Centre

The GCSE students are in the middle of their exams at the moment, with the last Mathematics exam having taken place on the 11th of June. The results will not be known until mid August, so it's a bit of a wait for them!

With regards our own funding, we are still unsure. Our current contract for our core costs finishes in March 2011 and we are currently conducting a review of all our services and examining different options for improvement. The review will contribute to the development of Conway Education Centre's strategic development plan 2010 - 2015.

Because we will be in competition with other organizations in the voluntary sector to obtain core funding, we need to ensure that the organization and its services are the best that it can be, that we know where we want to be in 5 years time and that we have support and a sound strategy in place to get there.

A busy couple of months are coming up, but it's exciting as well. Please give our regards to all our friends and supporters in Conway Mill Trust.

Electronic Version of Newsletter Available

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editorconwaymilltrustinc@comcast.net

Dove House report regarding funding into 2011

Following is a report from Deborah Cross, Manager of Dove House in Derry, in response to Conway Mill Trust's inquiry regarding the state of their funding.

At the moment all of our services are secured until March 2011 as we have retained all of the full-time and part-time posts associated with each project. This is fantastic and will ensure the same level of delivery as previous years.

However, we have limited running and programme costs attached to each of the projects and this in itself can be difficult due to the amount of funds necessary to keep things ticking smoothly. We have been fundraising to help build up a reserve at this time which can be used for running and programme costs this however is not exhaustive and we continually need to keep fundraising.

Aside from the funding pressures of the last few months everything has been great here at Dove House. We are presently in the process of planning for the summer months and also the feile 2010 which Dove House plays a central role in delivering.

More recently we have employed six new members of staff through the step ahead government funded programme for unemployed people. This has helped six people gain employment and furthermore has enabled Dove House to put community support services in place for older and vulnerable individuals throughout the local community this includes services such as gardening, painting, decorating, respite support, befriending, listening ear, etc

Irish Republic History Museum receives Conway Mill Trust Grant

On February 5, 2010, Conway Mill Trust Secretary Sandy Haas and Treasurer Ed McManus went to the Irish Republican History Museum and met with Johnny Haddock and Susan Hickey, sister of Eileen Hickey, to present them with the £600 (\$1050) grant for the museum. They were deeply appreciative of the grant and indicated the grant would enable them to continue the full-color pictorial time-line of Irish history around the walls of the museum. The first mural is completed, thanks to the grant we made to the museum last February.

Johnny and Susan showed Sandy and Ed their latest exhibit – a pictorial/news display of the Civil Rights Movement in Northern Ireland. Their plans are to create short-term displays that they will place in the museum periodically.



Flags donated to Irish Republican History Museum: *The Irish Republican History Museum has on display American and Irish flags, donated by the South Maryland AOH, that is accompanied by a placard that reads, "Between May 1985 and May 2006 an annual mass was celebrated at the Holy Redeemer College, Washington, D.C. to remember those who died during the hunger strike of 1981. The American and Irish flags were displayed in the Redemptorist Church each year during the mass. The flags and photograph of the annual event have been donated to the museum by Fr. Des Wilson who received them from Rita Brown, one of those involved in the organization of the remembrance masses."*

A Special St Patrick's Day

By Conway Mill Trust President Bob Kaniecki

March 17th was a picture perfect day in our nation's capital as visitors and residents alike ignored the occasional clump of snow and lounged on office steps and park benches. Green was in evidence everywhere, including the White House fountain.

Jean and I had been invited to a reception for the Taoiseach (Prime Minister) Brian and Mrs. Cowan. We were greeted at the door of the East Wing by the Washington City Pipe Band. Once inside we were entertained by young step-dancers from the Bronx and a military band playing reels, jigs and slides.

We munched on appetizers and strolled through the various rooms of the East Wing rubbing elbows with politicians, celebrities and just plain folk. Irish pride was in abundance.

The highlight of the evening was the presentation of the Waterford bowl of shamrocks from the Prime Minister to President Obama, a standing tradition for many years. But this year was different.

The Taoiseach is from County Offaly as are President Obama's ancestors and the soil that the shamrocks were planted in is from County Offaly. The President assured everyone that for the first time instead of being discarded, the shamrocks would be planted in the White House garden, mixing Irish soil with American soil.

The White House belongs to all the citizens, regardless of political affiliation or nationality, but on this day it belonged to the Irish.

It was our privilege to represent Conway Mill Trust, the other volunteers and especially you, our donors.

“Merit Grant,” from page 1

Mill Trust and was told she could take the course there. She also learned that she might be able to get help with the cost of the course through a merit grant program from Conway Mill Trust. She applied, was accepted and has financial help through the Mary Mannion Merit Grant program.

She expressed her deep appreciation for the financial help and said, “You’ve given me a second chance.” She further stated she would recommend the Conway Education Centre definitely. She indicated she is doing well in the class and expects to pass the class and get her certificate. Deborah currently works part-time but wants to become an accountant.



Niall Montgomery, GCSE
History student and recipient of a Mary Mannion Merit Grant bursary:

Niall is seventeen years old and has been home schooled. He now wants to pursue formal education. He and his mother live some distance from the Conway Education Centre, but he willingly travels to the Centre in order to take the course. He said his mother heard about the course and encouraged him to apply. He also said that his dad had taken classes at the Education Centre. Because of his age, he was eligible for an Education Maintenance Allowance which combined with the merit grant enabled him to take the History course. He is doing well, says he has a great teacher and wants to continue his education.

Margaret Brady, GCSE History student and recipient of a Mary Mannion Merit Grant bursary (not pictured): Margaret travels in from Crumlin every week for her history class because of the support she receives from Conway Education Centre.

Margaret writes, “My name is Margaret Brady. I’m age 59 years and recently retired because of ill health, so coming to Conway Mill has done me the world of good and learning a subject which I love from a great teacher. I have always loved History but didn’t have much chance at school. I left at 15 years to go to work. Conway Mill has given me an opportunity which I never would have had and getting the bursary was just great. I’m very thankful to the people who made this possible for me and others.”

Drumcree Community Centre’s Mini World Cup



Among the events developed by Drumcree Community Centre for its younger members is a mini “World Cup” soccer tournament. Who knows whether one of these young athletes might one day be catapulted into international soccer stardom? The trophy in the mini “World Cup” (center of picture) was awarded in honor of a long-standing and esteemed volunteer at the Drumcree Community Centre who had died in a tragic accident.