



Conway Mill Trust

Formerly "Doors of Hope"

P.O. Box 101529
Pittsburgh, PA 15237

December 2012

Grants Awarded to Community Organizations

Conway Mill Trust President Bob Kaniecki and his wife, Trustee Jean Kaniecki, travelled to Northern Ireland in September to present grants to the community groups supported by Conway Mill Trust donors. The following is their report from their trip:



Bob and Jean Kaniecki with Susan Hickey at the Irish Republican Museum

Upon our arrival in Belfast, we contacted Springhill Community House and spoke with Kiernan who advised us that we were expected for lunch of bangers, mash and beans. Upon our arrival, we were pleasantly surprised to see Elizabeth Logue and her son, Pat, who were with Fr. Des in Donegal. Seamus and Elizabeth Logue, along with Ed Brady and Gerry Coleman, founded Doors of Hope. When Elizabeth retired, Doors of Hope became the Conway Mill Trust. Elizabeth and Pat were attending the 40th anniversary celebrations in honor of Fr. Des and the inception of the Springhill Project, and the opening of "The People's School."

At lunch, we presented Fr. Des with a grant in the amount of £250 (\$434). Conway Mill Trust is proud to continue the fine work of Doors of Hope in supporting the Springhill Community House.

Later that evening, we attended the anniversary celebration at the Mill. Kiernan was in charge of the arrangements and did a splendid job with hundreds of photos and posters on the walls of the Education Centre. A program was held in the theatre with slides and presentations by various people who spoke of Father Des and how he encouraged and helped people through the years.

After the program, a reception was held with food, drinks and dessert, and cake for 40 years of service for Father Des. We met old friends like Moya Hinds and Stephen Wilson, Fr. Des' nephew who recently spent a year in Pittsburgh with the Ireland Institute.

Details of our various meetings are in the newsletter. As always, the grants we present on behalf of you, our donors, are received with thanks and gratitude.

SPRINGHILL COMMUNITY HOUSE TURNS 40!

Reflections on the 40th anniversary of the "People's School", by Father Des Wilson



Father Des (above) at the 40th Anniversary Celebration for Springhill House. Elizabeth Logue, (right) co-founder of Doors of Hope, was also on hand for the celebrations.

In our 40 years, we were bound to meet wonderful people and we did; people interested and interesting. People who did not just want to learn, but wanted to learn more and to share their learning. People who wrote poems and stories for their children, people who read Irish history, who had a passionate interest in language, or religion, or politics and so many other things. And friends who, when there was neither money nor official approval, taught classes without payment and sometimes under threat.

For many of us it is hard to imagine a real time when almost nobody had a telephone, when we could not imagine a science fiction time to come when nearly everybody, even children, would have one. A time when housing estates were built without providing road space or parking space for private cars because it was presumed the residents would not have one. Some areas were like that.

But some of us have a kind of divine dissatisfaction in our minds, and it shows itself in a determination to create a better quality of life for ourselves and even if not for ourselves certainly for our next generation. Springhill House is proud to have had the privilege of taking part in making change in its forty years. We are grateful to all of our colleagues and friends who have kept that vision alive.

As the Anniversary approached we realized again the variety and newness of much of what people did in the House through the years; experimenting with theater and film and new ways of stimulating discussion and education excitement in our own surroundings. Our Anniversary has to be a tribute to those who developed so many ways of sharing learning with others, including the young ones who wanted little part of schooling but deserved to learn nevertheless.

Our thanks to all who helped and enjoyed and who, sometimes most important of all, helped us to laugh when we might have felt least like doing it.

CONWAY MILL IS GROWING!

Conway Education Centre Grant Awarded

Pauline Kersten, Manager of Conway Mill Education Centre met with Bob and Jean to update them on the changes underway at Conway Mill and to accept a grant for the Education Centre in the amount of £1930 (\$3353 USD).



CEC students receiving their certificates

Pauline wrote the following message to donors:

“At CEC we have started a new academic year and our numbers of learners, especially older learners, continue to increase. At the moment we have 180 learners enrolled in a wide range of courses; from hobby courses such as Sugar Craft, Irish History and Social Media (IT) to accredited courses such as GCSE Maths, GCSE English, Computer courses, Essential Skills courses and Irish language courses.

CEC continues to respond to local need in our community and based on this we have started a Family Learning project. This project provides homework support to primary school children (7 to 12 years of age), but also involves educational but fun-based activities for both parents and children, such as putting together a family cook book (involves communication, writing/spelling, weighing, measuring, planning and budgeting skills) to encourage parents to become more involved in the education of their children and to demystify the school's curriculum. In this way CEC aims to improve children's educational attainment, raise aspirations and re-engage parents with education.

CEC, cont. on pg. 6

MARY MANNION MERIT GRANT FUND DRIVE

Your outstanding generosity has allowed the Mary Mannion Grant to continue changing lives. Many people who were unable to complete their high school education find themselves locked out of opportunities for jobs that allow them to support their families. Unlike the United States GED program where those who do not graduate from high school can take a single test to obtain their diploma, people in the U.K. must complete a series of courses at their own expense to obtain their degree. The Conway Mill Education Centre offers the GCSE classes, but cannot afford to underwrite the tuition costs for those who cannot afford it. The Mary Mannion Merit Grant was created to assist GCSE students to cover the cost of courses and complete their education.

If you would like to donate to this fund, write “Mary Mannion” in the memo of your check or money order and 100% of your donation will go toward helping a deserving student.



DRUMCREE COMMUNITY CENTRE

Bob and Jean visited the Drumcree Community Centre to meet with Breandan MacCionnaith and present him with a grant in the amount of £200 (\$348). Breandan expressed his appreciation to our donors.

During their visit, Bob and Jean had the opportunity to observe a “Drop In” play class for young children, led by Linda O’Neill. A parent or guardian must accompany the child to class, providing parents the opportunity to spend time together and become more involved in the community centre. The center provides 150-170 children of all ages the chance to get involved with activities including a talent show, art activities, cooking classes and messy play!



“Drop In” Play Class at Drumcree Community Centre

Thankfully, this past summer was relatively free of violence and the summer programs were very successful. Antisocial behavior is below average as compared to other areas and the suicide rate is substantially below that of other communities. Key to the success of these programs is getting children and their parents involved together.

The summer programs for children were very successful and included field trips to a number of different venues. However, despite the success of the programs, over 22% of the youth in the area are unemployed. The center has applied to the National Lottery to obtain funding for expansion of the facility. Engineers are developing plans to expand the recreation room by 7500 sq. ft. and to make improvements to the surrounding land and parking areas.

It is nothing short of inspiring to witness the resilience and determination of communities like Portadown to continue moving in a positive direction. Like other community organizations, they rely on donations from groups like Conway Mill Trust to continue their good work.

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IRISH REPUBLICAN MUSEUM

During the celebration for Father Des at Springhill Community House, Bob and Jean met Johnny Haddock of the Irish Republican Museum. They arranged a meeting to discuss the progress and future plans for the museum with Johnny and his late wife Eileen's sisters, Susan and Margaret.



Johnny Haddock with Margaret Hickey and CMT Trustee Jean Kaniecki

Improvements have been made to the facility at the entrance, and they have received more

memorabilia. Johnny stated that there has been an increase in the number of visitors, including student groups. With the increase in the number of items displayed they are in need of additional storage space, similar to the Museum of Free Derry.

Thanks to the continuing generosity of Conway Mill Trust donors, Bob and Jean were able to present a grant in the amount of £850 (\$1,481 USD) to the museum. Since the museum offers free admission and receives no government funding, it relies solely on donations to keep its doors open

ALTRAM and NASCOIL na RINNE

A meeting with Danny Cassidy, Director of Altram was held to discuss both organizations. Altram is continuing its support of 46 nascoils and has expanded use of “Spraul Sport”, the physical education program for children in the Irish Medium Early Years sector. It combines music, games, song and dance to assist in the delivery of Early Years Curriculum in the medium of Irish. This program is funded by the Lottery.

Two grants were presented to Danny, one for Altram in the amount of £150 (\$261 USD) and one for Nascoil na Rinne in the amount of £300 (\$522 USD). Danny expressed his thanks to the Conway Mill Trust donors for their continuing generosity.

DOVE HOUSE

A grant in the amount of £150 (\$261 USD) was presented to Eugene Bradley of Dove House. Dove House provides many vital services and support to the people of the Bogside, Brandywell, Creggan and the wider Derry City Council area.

CEC from pg.3

Our adult learning project was faced with severe funding cuts this year, which took away any funding to pay for tutor costs of hobby courses. These courses are extremely important to engage people who have very low confidence, perhaps had a negative experience with education when they were young, feel isolated or have mental health problems. Often people who have followed a hobby course build up their self-confidence and then progress to enroll in an accredited course.



A lesson about wildlife

One of the women who completed our Sugar Craft course in 2010 (after spending years in her house with severe depression), went on to do an accredited course in Sugar Craft/Cake decorating in the local college and now has set up her own business and is doing well. Hobby courses are also very important for older people who want to get out of the house, meet new people, stay part of the community and maintain good mental health or develop new skills and keep their brain active. Unfortunately the government doesn't see services for this group as a priority.



A student receiving a certificate of completion

As the demand for these hobby courses is high in our community, CEC is actively sourcing other funding. We are trying to raise income through renting out rooms and our IT suite to other organisations and we try to lower our expenditure through 'better housekeeping' and making more effective use of our resources.

In the long term, we realize that funding to provide courses and services, especially for our target group of people with low confidence, low skill base and very low income; will get harder to come by. Your support and generosity will become even more important than it already is.

Over the years your active encouragement and support for the work of CEC has meant more than I can put in words. Many times your support meant that individuals were able to better themselves, gain a qualification that helped them get employment; it meant that CEC was able to pay the gas and electricity bill to keep the place warm and open. Your support also encouraged our staff and volunteers to keep going. You believe in them and the work that is done in CEC and that has meant so much.”

Pauline Kersten, Manager
Conway Education Centre

Tell Us What You Think!

Our quarterly newsletter allows us to keep you up to date on the programs we support with your donations. We also try to share with you the impact your donations have on the lives of the people served by these programs.

We'd love to hear any and all suggestions or feedback you have to offer. Feel free to send us an email or write us a letter!

Thank you for your continuing support.

Address: **Conway Mill Trust**
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Want to Make A Difference?

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.

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.

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

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.

May you, your family and your friends have a peaceful and blessed Christmas and a healthy and prosperous New Year.



Nollaig shona duit!