



# Conway Mill Trust

Formerly "Doors of Hope"

P.O. Box 101529  
Pittsburgh, PA 15237

July 2013

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## Conway Education Centre Turns 30!

*Conway Mill Trustees on Hand to Celebrate*

The Conway Education Centre celebrated its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary in March. CMT Trustees Sandra Haas and Ed McManus were on hand for the celebration.

Ed and Sandy were invited to speak about the work of the Doors of Hope, (which evolved into the Conway Mill Trust) and the role it played in helping to keep the doors open in its formative years.



Ed and Sandy were able to meet with several former students who went on to university and/or successfully entered the workforce with the help of the Education Centre programs.

The formal program included a power point presentation highlighting the milestones in the Centre's history. Several former adult students testified to the impact the Centre had on them educationally, socially and economically. Throughout the evening, it was clear that the community deeply appreciates the asset they have in the Centre and the Mill.

### Museum of Free Derry Expansion Project

All the news coming from Adrian Kerr, Director of the Museum of Free Derry was positive! The Phase II Capital Expansion Project funding is in place and the project is operating on schedule. The museum will be temporarily relocated to Chamberlain Street during construction at the current site. The move to the temporary facility is scheduled for November, after the City of Culture activities are concluded. The expansion project will take 9 months to one year. If the project stays on schedule, a grand opening will be held on Bloody Sunday weekend 2015.

A grant in the amount of £334 was presented to Adrian. He was very appreciative and conveys his thanks to our donors.

## Developments at Conway Education Centre (CEC)

*Pauline Kersten, Director of the Conway Education Centre, was presented with a grant in the amount of £1002. Pauline expressed her heartfelt thanks to the CMT donors, and assured us that the funds are needed and will be well spent. Pauline wrote the following report detailing the progress of the Centre:*



“At the end of a successful year we can report that the numbers of our learners, since 2011, have gone up nearly 20%. Over 520 people (524 to be precise) were enrolled in adult education courses at CEC this year.

This is partly due to the increased range of courses we have been able to provide, but also because of the increased number of people made redundant from their job, or unable to get a job and looking to improve skills and confidence to have a better chance at gaining employment.

With government austerity measures hitting the most vulnerable people in our society the hardest, CEC are doing it's very best to respond to community need.

The new courses CEC organised last semester included: Horticulture/gardening, Business administration level 1 and level 2, Social history, Crafts and Baking. Of these six new courses, four are unaccredited (no assessments or exams). Our existing accredited courses such as GCSE Maths, GCSE English, Essentials Skills, Computer courses, Irish language and Homeopathy, were all fully subscribed.

Government agencies questioned the value of unaccredited courses and have stopped funding them. However, for many of our learners, especially those who have had a negative experience with education when they were younger or for those who left school without any qualifications, these courses are vital to build up confidence. The unaccredited courses appeal to people who have not engaged with education for a very long time, who might have been unemployed for a long time or who have been made redundant and whose confidence is very low.

Unaccredited courses in CEC, such as Social History, Craft or Baking, entice people back to education; they ensure that people have a positive experience in the class room. Participants meet other people, discuss issues of the course in the class room, and improve their confidence and communication skills. They also see what other courses are available, such as English and Maths courses, Business administration, computer courses etc. On average 64% of people who enroll in an unaccredited course at CEC would progress to an accredited course.

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## Irish Republican Museum Receives CMT Grant

A grant in the amount of £1872 was presented to Johnny Haddock and was received with thanks and gratitude to our donors. The museum receives no funding from the British government and relies on donations to continue operating.



Susan Hickey, CMT Trustee Sandra Haas and Johnny Haddock

Johnny reported that there has been an increase in the number of school and tourists groups visiting. The museum is currently displaying a model of the H-Blocks and Huts of Long Kesh. At present, there are no new major projects planned, but the exhibitions are always being refreshed and changed.

If you are planning a visit to Belfast, be sure to include the museum on your itinerary!

## Tar Anall – Still Imprisoned Project

In 2008, a small group of Republican ex-prisoners collaborated to form the Still Imprisoned Project (“Tar Anall”). Tar Anall provides support to former prisoners and their families in coping with the after effects of the conflict, including alcoholism, drug dependency, depression and financial problems. Tar Anall operates a 24-hour help line to provide personal support. They have volunteer physiotherapists, counselors, AA-trained 12-steppers, befrienders, Gamblers Anonymous counselors, drug addiction volunteers and welfare-rights advisers. This program is run entirely by Republicans with a total commitment of confidentiality and respect for their comrades.

Conway Mill Trust is currently considering adding Tar Anall to the list of organizations that we support. If you are interested in donating to this worthy organization, please write “Tar Anall” in the memo of your check or money order. If there is sufficient interest from our donors, we will raise funds for them on an ongoing basis.

### 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](http://www.conwaymilltrust.org) and click the DONATE button to donate securely online through PayPal using your checking account or credit card.

**CEC Update, from pg. 2**

Our new family learning project is going very well. The hard working new project workers have introduced a number of ‘clubs’ to provide family learning activities in addition to the homework support. These clubs include the science club (making bridges, designing roller coasters from K’nex building sets), the gardening club (growing your own vegetables) and the cooking club (making a family cook book, cooking healthy meals and eating together). Twenty children and some of their parents/carers have enrolled and we are looking to build on this next year.

Our day school for ‘at risk’ young people (between 14 and 16 years of age) introduced a new curriculum project last September which proved to be very popular; it’s a combination of outdoor pursuits (such as canoeing, hillwalking) and practical skills development (catering, patisserie, furniture restoration). The project has improved the young people’s attendance at the school which in turn improved their academic achievement in English, Maths and IT.

Due to severe cutbacks in government funding to CEC, we are struggling to make ends meet and your support is vitally important.

Your support allows us to put on unaccredited courses to re-engage people with education and give them more control over their lives and a chance to improve their skills.

Your support allows us to buy equipment for the Family learning clubs so parents/carers and their children can do educational projects together and parents/carers become more able to support their children’s education.

Your support allows us to support students who need it to get that all-important qualification of English and Maths so they have a better chance of a getting a job.

Your support throughout the 30 years that Conway Education Centre has been operating has sustained our work and has helped hundreds of students. Your support is deeply appreciated.”

Warm regards, Pauline Kersten, Manager

**MARY MANNION MERIT GRANT FUND DRIVE**

Your outstanding generosity has allowed the Mary Mannion Grant to continue changing lives. 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 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 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.

## Altram and Naiscoil na Rinne

A grant in the amount of £333 was presented to Danny Cassidy, and was received with thanks and gratitude.

Danny reports that the Irish Medium Certificate Program is going well, and that 24 workers have graduated from the program to date.

Altram is planning to sponsor a two-day celebration of bilingualism in September as part of Derry's City of Culture celebrations. Danny is bringing in bilingual education experts from various countries to speak on the first day. The second day of the celebration will feature workshops for the Northern Ireland naiscoil staff members.

Altram continues to support 48 naiscoils and workers are stretched. Aside from the continuing need for additional equipment, they could use 2-3 more workers to meet the increasing needs of the naiscoils.

If you wish to donate to Altram, you can be assured that your dollars will have a real impact on their operations.

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## Major Renovations Planned for Drumcree Community Centre

A major renovation project is planned for the Drumcree Community Centre. When it is completed, the Centre will have a new reception area, a remodeled kitchen and new



classrooms. The outdoor area will be fenced in and a new play area constructed. The total cost of the planned refurbishment project is £350-£400 thousand and is expected to take 3-4 months to complete. During the renovations, the clubs and programs that currently operate at the Centre will relocate to the Mayfair Business Centre.

Breandan MacCionnaith, Trust Chair, reports that all of the Centre's programs are operating smoothly. The youth programs are very busy, with approximately 250 children utilizing the programs on a weekly basis. Although Breandan expects to obtain the funding to support the programs, any donations to Drumcree Community Centre are appreciated and used to directly benefit the Centre.

## Conway Education Program Welcomes the DigiHub Project!

Amongst all of the exciting changes occurring at the Education Centre, one of the most promising is the DigiHub Project. DigiHub is a three-year fully government funded and accredited program that is designed to fill skills gaps in the current IT industry. Participants are provided with formal training, mentoring and work placement in video gaming, software development and IT security programming.

This program is running successfully in the Republic of Ireland, with 65% of those completing the accredited certificate program gaining employment in their field. One of the keys to its success is that representatives from the largest IT companies in Ireland sit on the board. These board members provide invaluable direction to the program and have direct access to employment opportunities.

Twelve state-of-the-art computers, two laptops, a tablet computer, data projector and broadband equipment has been furnished to the program, and when the three-year program concludes, the Education Centre will keep the equipment and continue to offer the program.

Aside from the direct benefits of DigiHub, the program provides the Education Centre with another accredited course. In addition, it is expected to draw younger people into the Centre.

### Additional Grants Awarded

In addition to the grants mentioned in the newsletter, two additional grants were awarded to Springhill Community House and Dove House. Each grant was in the amount of £333 (approx. \$545 USD).

Springhill House is continuing to offer its Life Coaching program. The Life Coaching program was developed at Springhill and works in cooperation with area schools to provide guidance to young people ages 16 and older. The Life Coaching program is just one of many programs offered at Springhill to improve the quality of life for area residents and families.

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