



Conway Mill Trust

Formerly “Doors of Hope”

P.O. Box 101529
Pittsburgh, PA 15237

March 2014

Dove House Launches the Well Fair Project

Over the summer, Dove House suffered a series of attacks on their facilities, attempted break-ins and threats to staff members. Despite these dangers, Dove House continues to provide help and support to the community it serves.

Bronach McMonagle, Dove House Project Manager, expressed her gratitude for the generosity of Conway Mill Trust donors. Bronach also provided an update on the valuable services provided by Dove House.



Dove House Youth Transition Project

Dove House is proud to announce that it will begin offering the Well Fair Project services to seniors in need in Derry City and Strabane. The Well Fair Project utilizes a holistic approach to addressing the needs experienced by the older population. It offers services and support including education programs, benefits assistance, befriending and direct help to seniors in accessing government programs. This program is funded with Lottery proceeds and will develop and deliver services to enable senior citizens to live safer, healthier and more independent lives. Utilizing fully trained Peer Group Volunteers, the Well Fair Project will offer seniors a much needed Listening Ear and Befriending service three days per week. This service will offer seniors a space to be heard, be it a safe place of their choice or in their own home, alleviating feelings of isolation and despair.

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Get Well Noelle!

Noelle Ryan of Springhill Community House is continuing her recovery from serious illness. Father Des Wilson wrote on her behalf to thank Conway Mill Trust for our prayers. We continue to wish Noelle well and will continue to keep her in our thoughts and prayers as she recovers.

Conway Education Centre is Buzzing!

Pauline Kersten continues to work hard to keep the Conway Education Centre thriving with a limited budget. Despite the many challenges faced as a result of limited funding, the CEC continues to meet the needs of the community it serves. Pauline sent the following update to Conway Mill Trust:



Belfast Lord Mayor and CEC staff

Conway Education Centre has been buzzing over the last couple of months. Since September 2013 the adult education

unit has delivered 27 courses, with another 15 courses to start in February. We are delighted to offer a new accredited course 'Accountancy and Book-keeping level 1'. Other courses include Irish history (Nationalism and Unionism), Gardening, Maths and English, IT, Irish and Spanish language, cake baking, healthy cooking on a budget, introduction to homeopathy and many others. We are delighted to be able to report that 40% of learners who participated in an unaccredited class last year, have moved on to an accredited IT, Maths, English or Business Administration class. Achieving accreditation in these subjects significantly improves the person's employability, confidence, and significantly increases their chances of being successful.

In December we hosted a visit from Belfast Lord Mayor who was impressed with the facilities and quality of teaching and learning at Conway Education Centre.

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Did You Know?

In 1780, while camped in Morristown, NJ, General George Washington, who commanded soldiers of Irish descent in the Continental Army, allowed his troops a holiday on 17 March "as an act of solidarity with the Irish in their fight for independence."

Irish Republican Museum: Seven Years and Going Strong!

Susan Hickey of the Irish Republican Museum sent the following letter to Conway Mill Trust. Susan sends her thanks and an update for our readers:

This year marks the seventh anniversary of the opening of the museum. Every year since the opening we have seen a large rise in the number of visitors. This year we were able to exhibit the flag that was draped over the coffin of Volunteer Joe McKelvey, who was executed on the 8th of December 1922. This was the first time since his death that the flag has been seen by the public.



Flag that draped the coffin of Vol. Joe McKelvey on display

The money donated to the museum has gone a long way towards buying new display cabinets in which to house our growing collection. With your money we were able to buy a set of news sheets dating from the 1920s which the owner had originally loaned to the museum but needed to sell.

In the past few months we have been given a very large collection of newspapers dating from the late 1960s. We would like to send them to a book binder to put together. Then they can be put in the museum library where they can be of help to students doing research.

We would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank your organisation, especially Dr. and Mrs Metress, Sheila Caulfield, Thomas McLoughlin, and the San Diego Chapter Irish Northern Aid for your donations through the year. Because of yours and others generosity we have been able to stay true to Eileen's wish not to take grants from any government organizations or political groups. This way we have remained independent so anyone visiting the museum feels very welcome and admission is still free of charge.

Lastly we would like to appeal to your readers if they have any artefacts they would like the museum to display, please get in touch with us here at the Museum by email: eileenhickeymuseum@yahoo.com or through our website: www.eileenhickeymuseum.com.

Electronic Newsletter Available

Would you like to receive our newsletter via email?

Send us your email address and you'll receive your newsletter faster, complete with color photos and without the expense of print. Send your email to:

trustees@conwaymilltrust.org

Altram is Facing Closure

All core funding for Northern Ireland Irish Language organizations is eliminated

Danny Cassidy, Director of Altram, informed us of a shocking setback to the progress of the promotion of the Irish Language in Northern Ireland.

Danny writes:

“all the core funded Irish language groups in the North of Ireland have been informed that they will be losing their funding at the end of June 2014 and the lead organisations will be based in Dublin. As you can appreciate this was a shock for the organisations involved as it will mean that we will have to close our facilities, lose our jobs and stop providing vital services to our sector! Currently, there is a great deal of anger from the Irish speaking community as to how we are being treated and we will be mounting a campaign against this ruling!”

In effect, this decision will close Altram’s doors. All of their collective expertise, innovation and commitment to the development of the Irish language will be lost. There are currently seven core-funded Irish Language organizations in Northern Ireland. Under this reorganization, all seven will be eliminated.

Altram, together with POBAL and the ULTACH Trust - two other organizations that promote the Irish language in Northern Ireland – prepared and presented a brief to the CAL Committee on February 13, 2014. The brief highlights the chief implications of the decision to withdraw core funding from all Northern Irish-language core funded organization.

In the brief, it is emphasized that under the new organization plan there is no guaranteed representation from any of the Northern Ireland Irish Language organizations. With the shift of resources away from Northern Ireland, the needs and priorities of the North may be marginalized and will become increasingly subordinate to a southern-based agenda.

The brief also included recommendations to preserve northern representation on the new organization. If the reorganization cannot be changed at this point, it was recommended that some staff from the northern organizations be included to ensure the unique needs of the Northern Ireland sector is represented.

The funding is scheduled to be withdrawn by June 2014. The next Conway Mill Trust newsletter will not be published until July 2014. We will do our best to keep you informed of any developments from Altram on our website blog page: www.conwaymilltrust.org.

Dove House is also continuing the Divert Project to provide children, young people and families with much needed education and support when dealing with addiction in the family.

The Advice Service provides information and guidance to over 1200 people on issues including benefits and debt management.

The Youth First program continues to help young people remain resilient against the myriad of social challenges arising from living in an area of deprivation.



Music Therapy at Dove House

The Youth Transition project focuses on health issues. The program employs four workers to deliver programs in Music Therapy, Suicide Awareness and Mental Health. The program aims to provide a safe haven for young people ages 11-25 to access education, advice and support services without fear of prejudice, judgment or exploitation.

If you would like to help Dove House keep its doors open and continue to provide these invaluable services to the community, just write “Dove House” in the memo of your check, money order or PayPal.

Want to Make A Difference?

Your donations can be the deciding factor in whether or not programs like the Family Learning Project can survive.

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.

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Although the Family Learning Project is not out of its funding crisis yet, with help of the West Belfast Partnership Board we have just about managed to keep the project going on a shoestring budget. The children of the Family Learning project put on a fantastic Christmas show which was well attended by parents, family and friends.



Family Learning Project Christmas Pageant

Currently there are 20 children registered with our Family Learning Project and nine parents participate in the Gardening, Cooking and Science club. These activities engage parents and children in learning together in a fun way. It also shows parents what is included in the school curriculum and demystifies homework tasks, enabling parents to help their children with their school homework. Although it takes time to build up a relationship of trust with the parents, it is well worth the investment. Parental engagement with their children's education has proven to improve educational attainment and achievement, improves school attendance and raises aspirations. These are essential building blocks to enable a child to make their way in life, especially if they are from a disadvantaged background. To keep this valuable project going, we are urgently seeking your help.

Many, many thanks for your continuing support.

Pauline Kersten

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.

Still Imprisoned Project is Changing Lives

Earlier this year, Conway Mill Trust added Tar Anall Still Imprisoned Project to the list of organizations that we support. The Still Imprisoned Project was organized by a group of Republican ex-prisoners to provide support to former prisoners and their families. They provide help in dealing with the after effects of the conflict including alcoholism, drug dependency, depression and financial problems.



Sinn Fein President Gerry Adams showing support for the Still Imprisoned Project

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.

The staff at Tar Anall has shared with us a letter of thanks received from a client:

Dear Still in Prison Project. (SIPS)

I am writing this long overdue letter to you I an attempt to express the love, thanks and gratitude I feel for the fantastic support, help, advice and guidance I received through the intervention of your project in my life.

I was referred to S.I.P's by a family friend at a very low point in my life; a time when I truly believed that my life was not worth living. I was drinking heavily, causing hurt, emotional pain and stress to my family and friends. Thankfully you (SIPS) understood and introduced me to a wonderful befriender, who was able to show me a way out by introducing me to AA and subsequently to a programme of recovery. I am now 2 years Sober and a regular attender of AA meetings. My life has completely turned around, I have a wonderful relationship with my family, I am in fulltime employment and thanks to God, S.I.P's and AA I am healthy, happy and sober.

Thank you from the bottom of my heart

You can help Tar Anall continue offering much needed support services to former prisoners and their families. Write "Tar Anall" in the memo of your check, money order or PayPal payment and 100% of your donation will support this program.



Happy Saint Patrick's Day



Throughout the year, we are privileged to share with you the amazing work done by the community groups we support. The people who operate these groups are among the hardest working, dedicated and compassionate people of Northern Ireland.

It is only through the generosity of our donors that we are able to continue our work. We would like to take this time to thank you for your continuing kindness.