



Conway Mill Trust

Formerly "Doors of Hope"

P.O. Box 101529
Pittsburgh, PA 15237

December 2014

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Your Donations At Work!

Conway Mill Trust President Bob Kaniecki and his wife Jean (CMT Archives Director) travelled to Northern Ireland in September to deliver your donations to the organizations we support. This edition of our newsletter contains details on their trip and the grants delivered.

Please note that Conway Mill Trust donations are not used in any way to fund these trips. 100% of the costs are paid by the volunteers themselves.

CONWAY EDUCATION CENTRE

Your Donations are making a Difference!

The Conway Education Centre is moving forward with numerous programs to enrich lives.

Since its inception in 1982, the CEC has been an invaluable resource to the community, providing education and assistance to those in need. The CEC relies heavily on government funding, which has been rapidly declining in recent years. Donations from groups like the Conway Mill Trust are increasingly important in keeping the CEC up and running. A grant in the amount of £1000 (\$1737) was delivered to CEC Director Pauline Kersten.



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ALTRAM

Keeping the doors open despite massive cutbacks

As we reported previously, Altram is struggling to survive a massive Irish language restructuring plan. As a result, Altram has been almost entirely depleted of government funding. Currently, they are managing to survive with a part time staff.

Despite the difficulties they face, Danny Cassidy remains cautiously optimistic. He has applied for funding from the Lottery, but it is hard to overstate the seriousness of the situation. It is our hope that the Foras na Gaeilge will make the appropriate changes to their funding scheme to allow organizations like Altram to continue in their mission to keep the Irish language alive in Northern Ireland.

A grant in the amount of £200 (\$330) was presented.

STILL IMPRISONED PROJECT

The Still Imprisoned Project (SIP) was started to help people reintegrate into society after long-term imprisonment. A grant in the amount of £200 (\$347) was presented to P.J. Jones. We received a message of thanks from Joe Austin, one of the SIP founders, to our donors:



“Can I begin by thanking you for your kindness and generosity towards the Still Imprisoned Project. Our project began in 2008 against the background of a clear need to provide help and advice to those within our community who suffer from the effects of long term imprisonment.

Like many other conflicts around the world, the ending of hostilities is a source of celebration. Not only for those directly involved, but for their families, friends and the wider community. But unfortunately for a few, the effect of their experience leaves them physically or mentally scarred.

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MARY MANNION MERIT GRANT

The Mary Mannion Grant continues to help people enrich their lives by completing their education.

The GCSE is the U.S. equivalent of the G.E.D. The U.S. G.E.D. requires students to sit for a single exam to receive their diploma. In the U.K. students must take a series of courses in Math and English at their own expense to receive their diploma. These costs have prevented many people from completing their education. This is where the Mary Mannion Grant steps in. The grant covers the costs of the courses for students in need and allows them to complete their education.

Obtaining a diploma can have a lifelong impact on not only the student, but on their families and the community as a whole. It can open the doors to more and better employment opportunities and has been proven to increase earning power over a lifetime. Some people who complete their high school education later in life go on to complete their college education.

The student costs associated with each course are relatively small (£30) but with the rising costs of food and utilities, many cannot afford it.

This semester, the grant has enrolled 15 Math students and 12 English students who otherwise could not have afforded to attend. If you would like to donate, please write “Mary Mannion” in the memo of your check or money order, and 100% of your donation will go this program.

Electronic Newsletter Available

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trustees@conwaymilltrust.org

Still Imprisoned, from pg. 2

This symptom has been diagnosed as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. In the aftermath of the ceasefires, it became clear that some ex-POW's and republican ex-combatants had developed PTSD. Bewilderment, shame and guilt engulfed these people, and some sought respite in alcohol and drugs.

In response, a group of republicans organized a self-help program and the Still Imprisoned Project was born. The Project now has over 70 volunteers who can be called upon to offer advice, comfort and friendship.

The Still Imprisoned Project receives no government funding and relies entirely on volunteers and donations. So your generosity will ensure that we can keep the project going.

Once again, I would like to thank you for your generosity and kindness.

Yours,
Joe Austin

MUSEUM OF FREE DERRY UPDATE

Adrian Kerr of the Free Derry Museum reports that they are on track to open the new, expanded museum in 2016. Until then, they will operate from a temporary space and continue to conduct mini-tours and operate weekly tours for schools.

A grant in the amount of £900 (\$1,563) was presented and accepted with gratitude.

IRISH REPUBLICAN MUSEUM

A grant in the amount of £1,500 (\$2605) was presented to Johnny and Susan at the museum. In addition, 3 copies of Dr. Seamus Metress' book, "The Spirit of Resistance" were donated to the museum's library.

The museum is thriving and may soon need more space. We will keep you updated on any future expansion projects. Until then, if you are planning a trip to Ireland be sure to include a stop at the Irish Republican Museum!

NOELLE RYAN MEMORIAL

During their recent visit, Bob and Jean Kaniecki met with Fr. Des Wilson. Fr. Des was happy to report that a memorial booklet was being created to memorialize Noelle Ryan. They are receiving many stories from people who were impacted by the work of Noelle. The booklet is scheduled for release by the first anniversary of her death.

A grant in the amount of £600 (\$1042) was presented to Fr. Des for Springhill House.

DOVE HOUSE

A grant in the amount of £200 (\$347) was awarded to Dove House.

Dove House administers a variety of programs and services to individuals and families. They provide services to youth in areas such as alcohol and drug abuse, teenage pregnancy, poor academic achievement and poor relationships at home and in the community.

CEC, from page 1

The Family Learning Project is one of the programs offered by the CEC. The project was designed to motivate parents to continue their education which in turn helps children. Everyone benefits when parents become more involved in their child's education. The project meets twice a month and has been a resounding success.

Pauline also announced the addition of Bach Flower Therapy to the Alternative Therapies program. The therapy is designed to help those suffering from various mental and emotional issues including depression and stress. Aroma Therapy has proven a very popular Alternative Therapy, but since it, as well as courses like gardening and cooking, etc., provide no direct economic benefit they are not eligible for government funding. As a result, these programs rely on volunteer workers and donations from groups like the Conway Mill Trust to keep them going.

Like many community groups in Northern Ireland, every dollar they receive is needed and put to good use. You can rest assured that your donation is always appreciated by Pauline, the CEC staff and the community who rely on their services.

If you would like to help the CEC in their mission to enrich the lives of their community, you can designate your donation by writing "CEC" in the memo of your check or money order and 100% of your donation will go directly to the Centre.

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.

Irish Christmas Traditions

Ireland, like most countries, has a number of Christmas traditions that are all of its own. Many of these customs have their root in the time when the Gaelic culture and religion of the country were being suppressed and it is perhaps because of that they have survived into modern times.

THE CANDLE IN THE WINDOW

The placing of a lighted candle in the window of a house on Christmas Eve is still practiced today. It has a number of purposes but primarily it was a symbol of welcome to Mary and Joseph as they travelled looking for shelter. The candle also indicated a safe place for priests to perform mass as during Penal Times this was not allowed. A further element of the tradition is that the candle should be lit by the youngest member of the household and only be extinguished by a girl bearing the name 'Mary'.

THE LADEN TABLE

After evening meal on Christmas eve the kitchen table was again set and on it were placed a loaf of bread filled with caraway seeds and raisins, a pitcher of milk and a large lit candle. The door to the house was left unlatched so that Mary and Joseph, or any wandering traveler, could avail of the welcome.

THE WREN BOY PROCESSION

During Penal Times there was once a plot in a village against the local soldiers. They were surrounded and were about to be ambushed when a group of wrens pecked on their drums and awakened the soldiers. The plot failed and the wren became known as 'The Devil's bird'.

On St. Stephens's day a procession takes place where a pole with a holly bush is carried from house to house and families dress up in old clothes and with blackened faces. In olden times an actual wren would be killed and placed on top of the pole. This custom has to a large degree disappeared, but the tradition of visiting from house to house on St. Stephen's Day has survived and is very much a part of Christmas.

DECORATIONS

The placing of a ring of Holly on doors originated in Ireland as Holly was one of the main plants that flourished at Christmas time and which gave the poor ample means with which to decorate their dwellings. All decorations are traditionally taken down on Little Christmas (January 6th), and it is considered to be bad luck to take them down beforehand.

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'Nollaig Shona Duit'



Happy Christmas