



Conway Mill Trust

Formerly "Doors of Hope"

P.O. Box 101529
Pittsburgh, PA 15237

March 2015

Drumcree Community Centre

Getting ready for another 25 years!

Work on completely refurbishing and extending Drumcree Community Centre is well underway and already a tremendous difference has been made to this well-used community-owned facility in Portadown's Garvaghy Road area.



Old view of the entrance to Drumcree Community Centre

When the present Drumcree Community Centre was originally built 23 years ago, it replaced a timber-framed building owned by Drumcree Community Trust which had been destroyed in a malicious arson attack shortly after it opened. Due to fears of a repeat attack, the replacement community centre was designed with small windows and heavy security doors and surrounded by steel palisade fencing to ensure the security of the building.

Yet despite those ugly but necessary features, the local community fully embraced the new building with its activities organised for all age groups.

Many of those from the US who visited Portadown during the intense conflict over contentious sectarian marches along the Garvaghy Road in the mid- and late 1990's can testify to the warm and homely welcome they received at the Drumcree Centre which kept its doors open 24 hours a day at

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Thank You, Sarah!

Conway Mill Trust board member Sarah McAuliffe-Bellin has recently resigned her position from the CMT board due to family obligations. We would like to thank Sarah for her contributions to the board. Sarah has been a skilled and tireless leader in Pittsburgh's Irish community for many years and will continue working hard to promote peace and justice for Northern Ireland.

Still Imprisoned Project (SIP)

Report highlights need among ex-prisoners

Since 2008, Still Imprisoned Project has provided a range of support to Republican ex-Prisoners and their families. Located behind Conway Mill, the project operates a crisis hotline that is serviced entirely by ex-prisoners. Still Imprisoned Project offers needs-based assistance in that they understand the experiences of their users and know the services that are most beneficial.

A recent report titled, *Political Ex-Prisoners 'An Unaddressed Legacy' Tar Isteach: A Survey of Conflict-Related Prisoners' Experiences*, written by Professor Peter Shirlow and Ciaran Hughes, affirms the need for services provided by SIP.

This report is based upon research that was undertaken with republican former prisoners in 2014. It included a survey of 51 persons, focus groups including men and women and follow-up interviews with survey respondents. Among the people surveyed:

- Just 12% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that the peace process has made it easier for former political prisoners to cope financially, emotionally and socially
- **Six in ten** (56.9%) stated that their physical health is poor. This compares to one in ten within the NI population who stated that their health was bad or very bad
- The majority of respondents (58.9%) stated that a personal cost of the conflict and imprisonment was linked to moderate or severe physical injury. **A higher share (66.7%) felt** that moderate or severe psychological harm was a personal cost of the conflict and imprisonment

This report calls much needed attention to the fact that ex-prisoners are experiencing physical and emotional problems at a significantly higher percentage than the rest of the population, and that is directly linked to the past. The report also confirms that groups like SIP are uniquely qualified to address those needs:

“Tar Isteach is an important part of the fabric of peace-building and conflict transformation in Belfast and beyond. Established as a support network for republicans who had been imprisoned during conflict it has evolved into many areas that support societal transition. As a service provider it has offered assistance regarding employability and welfare needs for prisoners and their families. They also provide counseling services that are reflective of extensive emotional and psychological needs that remain and at times are reproduced during the post-ceasefire period. In general terms they have supported the needs that arose not only post Good Friday Agreement but with issues that have stretched over many decades.”

Still Imprisoned Project accepts no funding from the government so they rely entirely on donations. You can help them continue providing these critical services by writing “SIP” in the memo of your check or money order and 100% of your donation will be included in their next grant.

Welcome Aboard!

Conway Mill Trust is pleased to announce the addition of two new members to our board.

Carmen DiGiacomo, a Pittsburgh native has been active in the local Irish community since 1998. He earned graduate and undergraduate degrees from Duquesne University. He has traveled to Ireland extensively since 1996. During the July 2000 marching season he was a Volunteer International Observer and was posted to Portadown. Since his retirement in 2002 he has been a volunteer in numerous community and veterans organizations. He is a member of the Pittsburgh Chapter of the Irish American Unity Conference.

Edward McManus III is a Branch Manager for the second largest building products distributor in the United States. Ed has more than 32 years' experience in the building products industry. He is an active member in the AOH, Irish American Unity Conference and now Conway Mill Trust. He looks forward to getting involved in different charities that Conway Mill Trust supports. Ed has lived in the Pittsburgh area all his life and is humbled to be part of such a great organization.

We are certain that Carmen and Ed will make an invaluable contribution to our board and we look forward to working together.

A Message from CMT President Bob Kaniecki

On a very foggy afternoon in Nov. Jean and I were invited to attend a luncheon with the newly appointed Irish Consul General of N.Y. Ms. Barbara Jones. Ms. Jones was in Pittsburgh to confer with the Rooney family and our own Honorary Consul Jim Lamb.

Ms Jones has been involved with government services for many years starting with the Dept. of Foreign Service in 1983, Head of Humanitarian Aid Policy (1994-97), Consul General of San Francisco (1986-'90), Luxembourg (1991-'93) and Deputy Head of Embassy in London dealing with the Northern Ireland Peace Process. In 2012, she was appointed Joint Secretary at the British-Irish Intergovernmental Secretariat in Belfast. While in Belfast, she became acquainted with Conway Mill and was very impressed with the work done there, especially the "Still Imprisoned Project," noting how dedicated everyone is.

It is a privilege to witness the dedication and perseverance of the people who work to make their communities a better place to live. A desire to be a part of their work is what inspired the creation of Doors of Hope and then Conway Mill Trust. As a donor, you are working alongside us, and them, to make a real difference.

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the height of that conflict.

In recent years, Drumcree Community Trust recognized that the community centre needed to undergo a major physical transformation in order to cope with the increasing demand on its many services into the local community.



New porches over old entrance and new hall entrance going up.

After several years of persistence, Drumcree Community Trust finally secured the funding required to undertake an ambitious renovation project. The actual physical works, which include a complete reconfiguration and refurbishment of the community centre along with the building of a new extension to provide a truly multi-purpose building, began in early September last year. The cost of the actual building work is estimated at £372,000 (approximately \$567,000).



Under-floor insulation being laid in extended hall. New windows and the second new entrance door to hall through gable wall all being installed.

Work has progressed well, even though there have been a few unforeseen delays, including discovering an 11K volt underground electrical cable running through the area where the extension was planned. That delayed work on the extension for at least a month until the power company eventually moved it. Thankfully, the contractors were able to work away on the original building.

Hopefully, it now looks as though work is again on track to complete in March of this year, with Drumcree Community Trust being able to move back into the renovated and extended facility by early April.

While work continues on the community centre, many of the activities and groups located there have been temporarily moved to alternative premises within the area. Drumcree College has made its former music block available; Mayfair Business Centre also provides space for some of the activities which would normally have been held in the community centre; and Drumcree House of Health has also played its part.

This co-operation has meant that almost all the activities and various programmes which would normally be based in Drumcree Community Centre have been able to continue without any major interruption. Those include the programmes for young children, teenagers and young adults, as well as the various health and wellbeing programmes for adults, along with the various

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mother and toddlers groups, women's groups, educational courses and keep-fit sessions.

These major improvement works to the community centre are taking place at a time when Drumcree Community Trust, originally established in 1991, is preparing to celebrate its 25th anniversary in early 2016. The completion of the building works will eventually

provide an enhanced, improved and extended community centre capable of meeting many of the local needs for at least another 25 years.

Since last year, Drumcree Community Trust has also embarked upon a further fund-raising drive to raise money for new equipment, furniture, etc, to kit out the community centre. This has been estimated to cost up to another £30-40,000 (\$45-\$60,000). And this is in addition to its ongoing efforts to raise funds to cover basic operational and running costs for the community centre.

If you would like to contribute towards new equipment, etc, for Drumcree Community Centre or ongoing running costs, see **“Want to Make A Difference?”** below.



New windows in children's room. Originally, there were only two small windows, each of which was approximately the size of one pane in the new windows.

Want to Make A Difference?

Your donations can help projects like the refurbishment of Drumcree Community Centre to succeed.

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.

Dove House

Helping young people to help themselves!

Dove House in Derry continues to offer a wide range of services and programs for all members of the community. One of their programs, Youth First, offers a comprehensive range of programs designed to address the needs of all young people, including “at risk” youth.

Youth First seeks at all times to provide an environment, services and programs which are conducive in positively enhancing the personal, social, educational development of children and young people in the Bogside and Brandywell area through innovative youth provision.



Youth First at Work!



Valentine's Day Dance!

One of the unique aspects of Youth First is the active participation of youth in the design and implementation of the programs. Young people are not simply participating in activities, but are active in their direction and management by working in committees. This provides the opportunity to develop invaluable skills in teamwork and the sense of accomplishment that goes with it, all while helping their peers cope with the many challenges they face.

Helping young people overcome issues such as substance abuse, antisocial behavior and poor academic performance benefits the entire community. By addressing their problems before they reach adulthood, Youth First enables young people to turn their lives in a positive direction.

Like many community organizations, Dove House struggles to raise the funds needed to support these invaluable programs. If you would like to help, simply write “Dove House” in the memo of your check or money order and 100% of your donation will be included in their next grant.

Did You Know?

According to legend, Saint Patrick drove the snakes out of Ireland. But according to Philip Freeman, author of *St. Patrick of Ireland: A Biography*, while it's true no snakes exist on the island today--they never did! Ireland, after all, is surrounded by icy waters—much too cold to allow snakes to migrate from Britain or anywhere else.

Since snakes often represent evil in literature, "when Patrick drives the snakes out of Ireland, it is symbolically saying he drove the old, evil, pagan ways out of Ireland [and] brought in a new age," Freeman said. The snake myth was likely spread by well-meaning monks centuries after St. Patrick's death, Freeman said.

Conway Education Centre

We recently received both an update and an appeal from Pauline Kersten, Manager of the Conway Education Centre:



“Conway Education Centre is still going strong with a dedicated team of volunteers, staff and management committee members.

Over 560 children, young people and adult learners attend Conway for courses and workshops to develop their skills, get support with their education and improve their confidence. More than 200 adult learners achieve qualifications in Maths, English, IT, Business Administration and other subjects.

Thanks also to the support of our friends in America, we were able to keep our Family Learning Project open when government funding stopped in October 2013. We are delighted to let you know we have now been awarded funding from the organisation ‘Children in Need’ which will keep the project going until June 2016.

In contrast to the positive atmosphere in Conway Education Centre are the dark clouds of government funding budget cuts. Last week we were informed that the community sector in West Belfast will be cut severely, with some organisations losing up to 40% of their funding. The project we would like to request your help for is a practical one:

Some of the tools in our wood workshop, essential for the furniture restoration training of our young people, are worn out and need to be replaced.

In addition, repairs are needed on our Pillar Drill and Circular Saw because both switches are still “tripping”. The purchase of new equipment and the needed repairs are costly and we would respectfully ask your help in this. The total amount we need to raise is £1800 (\$3,100). Could you help? If you would like to assist, simply write wood workshop in the memo of your check or money order and 100% of your donation will be included in their next grant.

With warm regards and many thanks for your continuing support,

Pauline Kersten

Go raibh maith agaibh!

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, most dedicated and compassionate people of Northern Ireland. Through the generosity of our donors over the past seven years, we have awarded over \$86 thousand dollars in grants to these deserving groups.

We would like to take this opportunity to recognize you, our 2014 donors, and thank you for your continuing kindness.

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AOH St. Patrick Division 4
San Diego Irish Northern Aid
Kevin Barry
Barbara J. Bogdan
Philip P. and Joan M. Brady
Edward J. Briody
Cecilia and Michael Byrne
John Cahill
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Timothy M. Carney
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Cecil & Stephanie Riley
Andrew Somers
Maureen Sullivan
Mary Szulborski

Happy Saint Patrick's Day!