



Conway Mill Trust

Formerly "Doors of Hope"

P.O. Box 101529
Pittsburgh, PA 15237

December 2015

Lending a Helping Hand

Grants Delivered

Conway Mill Trust President Bob Kaniecki and his wife, Jean travelled to Northern Ireland to deliver your donations to the groups we support. As always, CMT board members assume 100% of their own expenses for these trips.

Thanks to your generosity, Bob and Jean were able to deliver a total of \$13,762 (£8300) in grants. This edition of the newsletter will detail those grants.

Conway Education Centre

Helping people to help themselves

A grant in the amount of £1500 (\$2487 USD) was presented to Pauline Kersten, Conway Education Centre Manager. The grant was awarded to cover the cost of purchasing and upgrading computer equipment. There are 16 computer classes scheduled and there is a waiting list for future classes.



CEC staff

One of the IT classes is designed for parents. Often, a lack of computer literacy prevents parents from helping their children with school. Also, many schools now communicate with parents via the internet. Increasing their ability to fully participate in their child's school life helps both parents and kids. In addition to the Conway Mill Trust grant, Pauline reached out to Dell and Microsoft for assistance. Microsoft donated 12 computers with upgrades from a 2 to 4 gig memory.

cont. pg. 6

Dove House

Bob and Jean Kaniecki met with Bronach McMonagle, Manager of Dove House in Derry, to get a report on the financial situation at Dove House, and to present a grant in the amount of £700 (\$1161 USD).

Dove House has not been immune from the harsh cuts in funding by the British government. One of the vital programs impacted is the Divert Project, a drug and alcohol abuse prevention program targeting young people.

The community served by Dove House suffers from disproportionate levels of economic depression and substance abuse. Teens can purchase drugs at the store called “Legal Highs” and combine them with alcohol to enhance the effects. When they “come down” they become very depressed and sometimes suicidal. Intervention services like those provided by Divert were successful at providing an alternative for troubled teens. It is difficult to measure the effect of their loss on the community.

Despite these cuts, Dove House is working hard to serve the community. Bronach provided the following update for our donors:

“The Youth Transition Project for the first time ran Feel Good Fortnight (FGF) across Derry City to encourage the young people aged 11 – 25 and their families to celebrate all that is good and positive in their communities and to challenge them to take the 5 steps to emotional wellbeing Connect, Be Active, Keep Learning, Take Notice and Give.

The main aim was to highlight all the positive activities that are going on in our city and once our team started contacting partner organisations we were so surprised just how much was going on in Derry during the FGF which is ran from Monday 7th September – Sunday 20th September 2015. There were so many opportunities for young people and their families to get their 5 steps to well being, and we at YTP were there every step of the way to share the experience. We issued a 14 day challenge and gave ideas to make it easier for young people to take at least one of their 5 steps every day for 14 days and see how good they felt, and we encouraged them to share this on our Facebook page.

Our main flagship event – the Feel Good Fortnight 5k Walk/run was very successful, it was well attended with over 240 young people and their families taking part, we had young people from the Cedar Foundation, Pilots Row youth club, St Marys youth club and the Off the Street projects there on the night and the overall feedback was very positive as was the feeling on the night, with young people giving out positive quotes and affirmations to runners, walkers and spectators.

There were many smaller events which were well received by young people and encouraged them to connect and learn a new skill, with the most successful being the music lessons which were very well attended, The #DERRYHAPPY mural campaign which promoted emotional well being

cont. pg. 4



Altram

Working hard to keep the Irish language alive

Altram's core funding was devastated when the entire Irish language sector was reorganized island-wide in Ireland. If not for the effort and dedication of people like Danny Cassidy, its doors would have closed months ago. Instead, they are charting a path forward.

Bob and Jean met with Danny to present him with a grant in the amount of £600 (\$995 USD). As always, it was accepted with thanks and gratitude to our donors.



Lt. to Rt. – Aine Andrews, Chairperson of Altram; Gerry Conway, Gemma Allen, Kerry Duddy, Paula McCartney, Mairead Abraham, Theresa Brady.

Altram is currently renting office space at the rate of £5 per year in an older building that was purchased many years ago. The building is currently being refurbished to provide tutoring services. Danny was happy to share with our donors the following update:

“Altram, the regional training and support group for Irish-medium Early Years Care and Education, launched a new resource for parents at the Rathmore Centre in Derry the 9 November. Altram, with the support of Childcare Partnerships, produced 9 readers for parents to use with children in the home. The readers cover basic phrases that parents need when interacting with their child. Each set of booklets includes a CD on which all the phrases are read.

The booklets were launched by Gerry Conway, Commissioning Lead – Children & Family Services HSCB. Áine Andrews, the Chairperson of Altram spoke of the important role parents play in their child's early years education and the critical need for continued development of resources for parents and children in the Irish-medium early years sector. She acknowledged the support of the Childcare Partnerships, in particular that of Gerry Conway and Mairead Abraham whom Altram has worked with over the years.

You can help Altram continue its mission to support Irish language education in Ireland. Write “Altram” in the memo of your check or money order and 100% of your donation will be added to their next grant.



very well attended, The #DERRYHAPPY mural campaign which promoted emotional wellbeing through the medium of street art, as well as a science fair, and taster sessions with a digital design company.

We had great support from other organisations who put on their own events throughout Feel Good Fortnight in particular, Pilots Row, Dove House, the Play Trail, Off the Streets Project and Youth First. We also took advantage of events that coincided with our dates the biggest of which was Culture tech but also included the Lilliput play, the Aware Defeat Depression Mood Walk and Hurt's Walk a Mile in my shoes event.

In all the initiative was a huge success and plans are already underway for next year, this will be an annual event and is set to be even bigger and far reaching.”

Dove House had to cut staffing to 4 full time workers and 20 volunteers. They are working hard to meet the needs of the most vulnerable in the community but without proper funding it is an uphill battle at best. Your donations to Dove House are always received with gratitude and put to good use.

Museum of Free Derry

The Museum of Free Derry continues to operate from its temporary space while the new facility is built. The old site has been completely razed and is awaiting construction to begin. An opening date has not yet been determined, but they hope it will be some time in 2016.

A grant in the amount of £600 (\$995 USD) was presented and accepted with gratitude.

Still Imprisoned Project

A grant in the amount of £800 (\$1326 USD) was presented to Joe Austin and Loretta McKee of the Still Imprisoned Project.

Still Imprisoned provides support to ex-prisoners and their families who are experiencing problems reintegrating and functioning in their communities. They help people to address issues such as substance abuse, PTSD, finding employment and overcoming depression. Often, simply talking with others who have similar experiences is a lifeline.

Still Imprisoned also hosts a weekly meeting for women ex-prisoners. The meeting provides a safe place for them to talk about the unique issues facing women ex-prisoners. The meetings have a flexible structure allowing the women to decide the evening's activities while enjoying the company of others with similar issues.

Still Imprisoned is a volunteer organization staffed by ex-prisoners. Due to the effects of the British austerity cuts on their personal family finances, some of the volunteers have been forced to curtail or give up their work as counselors. Funds are always needed to cover the cost of producing and placing promotional materials to inform those in need that help is available. Also, funding is needed to cover the travel expenses of volunteers.

Since they accept no government funding, they rely 100% on private donations. The grant from Conway Mill Trust will keep their doors open for the rest of 2015.

Springhill House

Bob and Jean met with Fr. Des Wilson over lunch at Culturlann on the Falls Road to present Springhill with a grant of £1200 (\$1989 USD).

Fr. Des discussed his concerns about the impact of funding cuts on community groups. In an effort to cut spending the British government looks first to public sector jobs. In Northern Ireland, a larger than average number of citizens are employed in the public sector. When these jobs are lost families often must turn to community organizations to provide assistance with their healthcare, education and other daily living essentials. Concurrent with the loss in jobs, funding is cut for the groups these families turn to for help.

One of the programs feeling the effects of these cuts is the Alternative Therapies program. This program provides classes in areas such as Aromatherapy and reflexology to help people suffering from various physical and psychological problems. These programs are very effective and popular. Unfortunately, groups like Springhill are finding it increasingly difficult to meet the demand.

Donations from groups like Conway Mill Trust are vital in keeping these programs functioning. Your donation, whatever the size, can make a real difference.

Pauline has been an excellent steward of the centre's resources. She continually finds ways to maximize the impact of every dollar they receive. She has grown the amount of space leased to outside organizations from 4 to 11%, an increase of nearly 200%! Her resourcefulness and dedication to the Education Centre is inspiring. However, the Education Centre has not been immune from the government cutbacks. They no longer receive government assistance for non-credit courses, energy, publicity, maintenance and health. This has added to their reliance on donations from organizations such as Conway Mill Trust. As a donor, you can rest assured that every dollar you donate will be put to good use.

MARY MANNION MERIT GRANT

In addition to the Conway Education Centre grant, an additional grant in the amount of £1200 (\$1989 USD) was awarded from the Mary Mannion Merit Grant fund. This grant allows students who otherwise cannot afford to complete the coursework needed to obtain their GCSE – the equivalent of the GED.

We received the following message from Pauline:

“Many thanks for the visit and the very generous donation, the money makes such a difference and your support for and belief in CEC's work is invaluable.

The Mary Mannion Grant goes towards subsidising the GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics courses. These qualifications are essential to enhance the chance of a job and are quite expensive to do out of school.



CEC English Class

In 2014-2015 CEC had 11 GCSE English and 14 GCSE Mathematics students. Eight students passed the GCSE English exam and five students passed the GCSE Maths exam. This academic year we have introduced volunteer mentors (retired teachers, graduates, trainee teachers) to support those GCSE students who need some extra support in order to pass the exams and gain the qualification.

Many thanks again and warmest wishes to all our supporters in Conway Trust USA.”

Pauline

If you would like to donate to either the Conway Education Centre or the Mary Mannion Merit Grant, just write the name of the fund you wish to support in the memo of your check or money order and 100% of your donation will be included in our next grant.



Drumcree Community Centre

As we reported in our last newsletter, the renovation of the Drumcree Community Centre is largely completed. Bob and Jean Kaniecki travelled to Portadown to see the new center and to present a grant in the amount of £1000 (\$1658 USD).

They met with Breandan MacCionnaith and Michael Bingham and were given a tour of the new facilities. Both Bob and Jean were very impressed with the results.

To generate additional revenue, the centre's main hall is rented out for all types of occasions like weddings, baptisms and confirmations. On that day, a group of immigrants from a small African country were there to celebrate their country's Independence Day.

They are still awaiting funds to launch their program for young special needs children. Also, the dance area needs to have lighting installed. Our donation can help put the finishing touches on the centre.

IRISH REPUBLICAN MUSEUM

Johnny Haddock and Susan Hickey are hard at work making the Republican Museum an amazing and lasting tribute to the history of the Republican movement. Bob and Jean Kaniecki presented a grant in the amount of £600 (\$995 USD) to help the museum fulfill its mission.

During their meeting Johnny shared that someone donated a flintlock pistol used in the 1798 Rising in Armagh City and seven bandoliers used in the 1916 Rising. While these items are often donated, occasionally people will sell them to the museum. Johnny and Susan have done an excellent job making decisions on procuring the pieces of history needed to tell the full story of the Republican movement.

The museum is also in need of lighting and cases for the uniforms that are currently being made and mannequins to display them. Johnny and Susan continue to grow the museum and place a lot of careful thought into the exhibitions.

If you would like to help continue their work, write "Republican Museum" in the memo of your check or money order and 100% of your donation will be included in their next grant.

SEASONS GREETINGS!

On behalf of the board of the Conway Mill Trust, we would like to take this opportunity to wish you and your family a joyous holiday season and a blessed new year.



Nollaig Shona Duit!