

## Center exhibits in Boston State House

Representatives from the Irish Cultural Center gathered with almost fifty other Irish organizations at the Boston State House on March 13 to share in Irish Day of Culture. Coordinated by the Irish Cultural Centre of New England, Canton, the day showcased organizations that reflect the culture, social services and businesses of Ireland in the Commonwealth.

Board members, Kathy Gallivan, Ann Lowe, Jessie Wisniowski and Director Sister Judy Kappenman traveled together to Boston. Our display featured some of our events and programs.

Jessie, who sits on our board as a representative from the Sons of Erin had an exhibit from the Westfield organization. Carol Shea joined her with a display from the Cape Cod Sons of Erin. Other Western Massachusetts organizations included the John Boyle O'Reilly Club and The Holyoke St. Patrick's Parade Committee.

The official greeting took place in the House of Representatives Chamber with greetings by House Speaker Salvatore DiMasi and an address by



Representative Mike Rush, as well as an official proclamation establishing March 13, 2008 as Irish Day of Culture. Many legislators and State House workers, as well as visitors stopped by at the exhibits. Throughout the day, entertainment was provided by various groups and individuals of instrumentalists, singers and dancers.

At the evening reception President of the Massachusetts Senate Therese Murray, introduced the main speaker, Brian Lenihan, Ireland's Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform. Consul General David Barry also spoke.

On the ride home, we agreed that Boston should know that there is something beyond the city of Worcester, and we did our part to raise awareness.

Congratulations to lifetime member, John H. Davis who will receive an honorary degree from Elms College at commencement, Sunday May 18. He is Senior Trustee to the Irene E. and George A. Davis Foundation.



## Ireland—2009 visit

The 2009 Journey of the Soul Tour to Ireland will take us to the Southeast and Southwest coastlines of Ireland. On this exciting trip we will experience the beauty and magic of Ireland in the spring as we visit the medieval town of Kilkenny, the beautiful Wicklow Mountains (the The Garden of Ireland), Avoca (where Ballykissangel was filmed and tour Avoca Handweavers Mill, Ireland's oldest), Midleton (Jameson's Distillery), Glendalough (St. Kevin's sixth century monastic site), Kinsale (The Gourmet Capital of Ireland), Cobh (Queenstown where over 2.5 million immigrants departed and the last port of call for the Titanic), Bantry Bay House & Gardens, Blarney, the Dingle Peninsula (optional tour to the Great Blasket Island) and the majestic Cliffs of Moher. Special evenings with music, dance and song at Kate Kearney's Cottage in the Gap of Dunloe and the Medieval Banquet at Knappogue Castle, as well as a few other surprises!. Save the dates, April 19-29, 2009. Watch for further details.

Pictured above: Kathy Gallivan; to the right Marianne Bolger and David Barry from the Irish Consulate, Boston



Pictured left: R. Todd Felton addressing the audience on Ireland's Literary Revival on April 13. He also showed slides illustrating his talk and read excerpts from his book.



## An Ireland Adventure by Lynn Coakley

I missed winter in Massachusetts this year because I was lucky enough to spend two and a half months in Ireland during January, February and March. I am on sabbatical from my librarian job in a local college. Since I was little, I have dreamed about living in Ireland. While I had this opportunity, I thought I'd try it. I am fortunate to have some American friends who live in Howth, a suburb of Dublin. They offered me an 'en suite' room in their house for the duration. I gave them an embarrassingly small rent and tried to be a good guest. My friend Linda works for an agency called Age Action Ireland. If you have computer access you can find more information on their website: [www.ageaction.ie](http://www.ageaction.ie). Linda is the administrator of a grant program called Getting Started. The program teaches elders how to do basic computer tasks. I was hired as a volunteer. We taught people how to set up email, word documents with clip art inserted and to do some easy web searching. It was so much fun. I was there when one woman opened her email to find a note from her granddaughter in Australia. It was hard to keep the tears from my eyes. Another man whose daughter lives in Seattle was able to see her house using Google Earth. Awesome!

I became a temporary Dubliner. In order to get to work on time, I had to run to catch the DART. I got used to my route walking from the Connelly Street station to my work place on the north side of the Liffey. I started to know my way around the City Center without using my map all of the time. How cool!

Through the program, I came to know so many nice people, students and Age Action staff alike. I miss them all.

However, I did more than work. Almost every week, I took a train or a bus to see a different town. I went to Donegal Town where the rain and wind were so vicious that all I really saw was the inside of the shops. I spent three days in Galway City just poking around and at night hearing great music at a couple of music pubs. I spent a day in Kilkenny. It is such a beautiful town with a well preserved castle. Another day I visited Monaghan where I met a man who had lived through the warfare in the 1970s and had interesting tales to tell. Wexford has great shopping and Rosslare is beautiful. The Dublin suburbs of Dalkey, Malahaide and Dun Laoghaire are all beautiful.

At different times during my stay, friends came to visit. On one visit, we flew to Farranfore and then drove out to Dingle which was experiencing vicious, nasty



weather in January. But Dingle is always fun. We heard good music at An Droichead Beag and drove around Sleah Head. Many Cairde know Fran Ryan, Mazz O'Flaherty and Maidhc Dainin Ó Sé. We saw them all.

Another friend came at the end of my stay and we rented a car in Dublin and drove to Dingle. We were in Dingle for Paddy's Day and saw the Dingle parade. Holyoke it's not, but it was cute. We had thought it was over and went into a café for some coffee. Well, all of a sudden everyone rushed back out to the street. The parade walks down to the harbor, turns around and comes back! We spotted Mazz on a float playing her guitar with a couple of other musicians. Fran Ryan invited us to a birthday party at Currans for one Timmy Kelliher who was turning 82 that day. Currans has the absolute best Guinness I've ever had. All of a sudden, we heard a powerful voice singing. It was Timmy himself. When he finished,

other men sang songs one after the other for a couple of hours. Fran explained that these men were giving Timmy birthday presents of the songs they were singing. It was an amazing experience. After spending a couple of days in Dingle, we drove to the Beara Peninsula and on into West Cork. We stayed for four days in Clonakilty, the origination spot of my ancestors. We called our stay in West Cork the 'Ohmigod tour'. At every rise in the road that opened a vista to the sea or a cliff or a sweeping view of meadows and stone walls, we both would gasp "ohmigod". I thought the Dingle Peninsula was gorgeous. West Cork can give Dingle a run for its money. We ended our trip in Doolin for two days. More fun music and the Burren was beautiful at that time. I had the experience of a lifetime, but missed everyone here. I'm glad to be home, but I'll always treasure my Ireland adventure.

## Marshal award accepted by Thomas Moriarty

Tom was honored at the Chicopee Colleen Ball and delivered the above address on March 15.

Thank you, Brian, for your kind introduction and congratulations to the lovely contestants for title of Chicopee Colleen.

Thanks also to the St. Patrick's Parade Committee for honoring me as Marshal. More importantly, thanks to the Committee for recognizing the importance of Irish culture, for understanding its richness and significance and the need to keep it alive and pass it on to generations which will follow our own. In honoring me, you are honoring the work in which I have been involved for many years

Contemporary Ireland, the Ireland of the Celtic Tiger, is profoundly different from the Ireland from which our ancestors came. Even the Ireland of my own Irish-born mother has radically changed. Developments which have raised the standard of living and stemmed the flood of emigration from Ireland are, of course, welcome. However, many are concerned that Ireland today is becoming unduly materialistic – even hedonistic – in its values; that its spiritual strengths are being sapped. Whether true or not, we Irish of the Diaspora can play (and indeed are playing) a crucial role in fostering an appreciation of Irish culture in its best sense: literature, history, language, music, art and religion. So, in honoring me for my involvement in Irish studies you are participating in this important work of the Irish abroad.

May I take this opportunity to thank my family – my immediate family and the family in which I grew up in Holyoke? My wife, Bonnie, and my children have been pretty tolerant in allowing me to pursue my seemingly



**Tom Moriarty leads the Chicopee contingent in the St. Patrick's Parade with wife Bonnie by his side.**

all-consuming interest in things Irish: books, journals and newspapers read, films seen, conferences attended, Irish language immersion weekends (and even a week in the Kerry Gaeltacht last summer). They may have been tempted at time to raise their eyes and even mutter, "Not again," but they've been very supportive.

I grew up in a very Irish family in Holyoke. My mother was from the Killarney area in County Kerry. She kept close contact with her mother and other relatives. We were very close to my cousin Noreen Moriarty's family; both of her parents were Kerry-born. Then, there was my father's mother, Catherine Hurley, an Irish speaker from the Dingle Gaeltacht, who once told me that she always dreamed in Irish and from whom I learned my first phrases in that language.

A seminal event in my immersion in things Irish was a five week visit to Ireland in the late 1950s when I met my maternal grandmother and numerous aunts, uncles and cousins and when my own mother was reunited with her mother for the first time in thirty-four years.

Thanks to Elms College with which I've been associated for thirty-nine years. When I came to the college I had graduated from Holy Cross, done graduate work at Notre Dame with a dissertation in guess what – Irish history, and had taught in New York.

I've had an opportunity to teach Irish history at the Elms, and in recent years, I've taught the Irish language as well. Through the years, the College has been generous in allowing me to sponsor numerous Irish-connected performances, musical events, conferences.

During the presidency of Sister Kathleen Keating (who is here this evening) the Irish Cultural Center at Elms College came into being with me as director. The importance of the Center in my life is reflected in several of the persons who have joined members of my family at my table this evening: Sister Kathleen Keating, several present and former members of the board of the Center and the present director of the Center, Sister Judy Kappenman.

Chicopee's ethnically diverse population is clearly represented in the faces and names of our contestants this evening. So many nationalities make up the fabric of Chicopee: French, Canadian, Polish, Portuguese, Greek, Hispanic and African American. Obviously, the city has experienced lots of mixed marriages through the years.

However, this evening we're celebrating the Irish heritage and Irish culture. The Irish-American piece of Chicopee history has long interested me. Perhaps this is an opportunity to remember and pay tribute to the early Irish community of Chicopee.

**Part two will be printed in the next newsletter.**

## Lecture series begins a celebratory year

The Irish Cultural Center anticipates its tenth anniversary in October 2009 with a year of celebration. We begin with a lecture series in the fall titled: The Ubiquity of Religion in Irish Studies. We will feature three Irish Studies professors, one in each month. In the spring we will announce several other lectures with the same theme.

On September 28, 2008, 2:00 p.m. Dr. Thomas Moriarty, Elms History Professor Emeritus will address the topic: *Pope, Patrick and Monk: How Christianity Took Root in Ireland.*

On October 26, 2008, 2:00 p.m. we welcome Peggy O'Brien, English Professor, University of Massachusetts Amherst, whose topic is *Poets on Pilgrimage: Lough Derg as an icon of Catholicism and Nationalism.*

On November 23, 2008, 2:00 p.m. Dr. Damien Murray, Elms history Professor will address the topic: *Either Ireland is right or Bolshevism is right: The Catholic Church and Irish American Nationalism after World War I.*

The Elms College hosted a documentary on the Blasket Islanders on March 14, 1997. The North American premiere of *Blasket Roots: American Dreams* filled Veritas Auditorium on an icy evening.

After the showing a group of interested people, including the then Elms President, Sr. Kathleen Keating, history professor Tom Moriarty and Sean Cahillane, whose mother was born on the Blasket, began meeting to explore the idea of creating a center at the college dedicated to passing on and sharing the many different aspects

of Irish culture to Americans of all backgrounds.

The formal opening of the Irish Cultural Center took place at the Elms on October 1-3, 1999 with the main address by Dr. Margaret MacCurtain, O.P., from the University of College Dublin on the role of the Irish abroad in helping to preserve Irish Culture. Also, in collaboration with Westfield State College, John Hume, Nobel Peace Prize Winner gave a lecture in Westfield.

Since then we have offered events from the social to the spiritual to the educational. The group formulated our Mission and By-laws. With a grant from the Davis Foundation the original library in Berchmans Hall was reconfigured, decorated and equipped. Local interested people were invited to become Cairde (Irish for friends) to support the programs. At the first appeal over 100 paid dues of \$25 to support the programs. Many of those charter members have remained faithful and continue to renew membership yearly. At present we number over 300 who have paid 2008 dues.

During the tenure of three directors: Tom Moriarty, Anne-Gerard Flynn and Judith Kappenman, SSJ, the number of members have grown as we have hosted hundreds of events where thousands have joined us at the Elms College. We have also offered bus trips to New York, Boston and Amherst to attend Irish plays and concerts. We have offered lectures, music events, films and art exhibits, even establishing several yearly events, including Celtic Adventures for Kids, Christmas with an Irish Touch, and a film series.

## Early Center events

Below are listed the early events offered by the Irish Cultural Center, including those offered before its official opening in its quarters in the original Elms College Library. In each subsequent issue we will list some of the events we have sponsored over the years.

The early programs promised the direction that the organization would take. In September 1998 we hosted the North American film premiere of *The Voice of Generations: The Story of Peig Sayers 1873-1958.*

In 1999 we hosted several events on a March weekend. Father Liam Lawton presented An Evening of Contemporary Irish Liturgical Music in conjunction with the Religious Studies Department. Fr. Tomas O'Caoimh, the parish priest of Ballyferriter, Dingle, County Kerry, Ireland led a workshop on early Irish Christianity *Through the Years with Celtic Saints.*

In April Walter Stock conducted an Irish Language Seminar on two Saturdays. He also presented An Evening of Irish Story Telling on a Friday evening. In June we hosted a Cairde Member Meeting and reception with Congressman Richard Neal giving an update on the Good Friday Agreement.

From the beginning and ongoing throughout the years, we have offered Irish Language Study both as a non-credit course through the Elms, and also through independent groups meeting throughout the year.

The other constant we have had is the services of a volunteer genealogist. From the beginning until his death in January 2007, George Kennedy offered his considerable expertise in helping people. At present Ed Callahan volunteers to help those who are researching their ancestors.