

Belfast Child

Actress, producer, playwright & philanthropist Geraldine Hughes



IRISH AMERICAN
PARTNERSHIP

**Building Peace
Through Democracy**

The Fellowship Class of 2023

Impact Report

FALL/WINTER 2023



Making Music

The Royal Irish
Academy of Music
Moves Into the Future



School children playing at Scoil Cholmáin, Muighinis, Carna, Co. Galway

Dear Friends,

As requests for our funding increase, your continued commitment to the work of the Irish American Partnership is more valued than ever.



Over the next few pages, you will see the true impact you are having on young people, schools, and communities across Ireland, north and south. As you read these stories from some of the students, principals, and community leaders that have benefitted from your generosity, I hope you recognize the vital role you play in making the future brighter.

I am proud to share that this year, you have provided more than \$1.8 million to schools and communities in need across Ireland.

From university access scholarships and technical apprenticeships, to primary school libraries and outdoor learning resources, you are empowering students and young people at every stage of their educational journey.

Your connection to those places in Ireland which are meaningful to you has helped young people thrive and succeed, regardless of their financial circumstances.

Looking to the coming year, Ireland is faced with an evolving set of challenges and significant economic uncertainty. Your generosity continues to make a remarkable difference in the peace and prosperity of many communities, and I am confident that together, we can further support young people across the island to reach their full potential.

I know we can make 2024 another year of impact. Thank you for your commitment to these young people, and by doing so, investing in Ireland's future.

Michael T. Clune
Chairman, Irish American Partnership



RIAM Young Artist Program students

The Royal Irish Academy of Music (RIAM) is a national conservatory which teaches more than 2,000 students each year from its premises on Westland Row in Dublin. RIAM is also the national music assessment body which examines about 35,000 music students annually, making it the quality mark for music in Ireland.

Thanks to you, the Irish American Partnership has supported the much-needed re-development of this music school campus. RIAM recently completed a major redevelopment creating a state-of-the-art campus over 65,000 square feet, establishing the Academy as a world-leading center for Ireland’s music education.

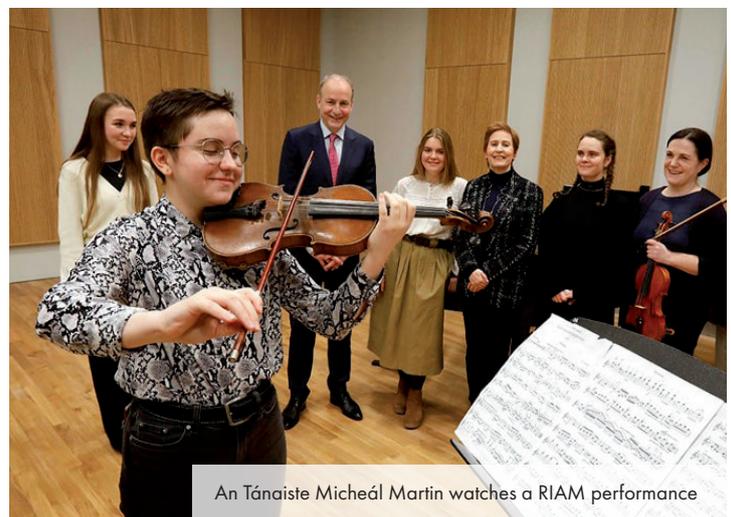
The development includes the concert hall, classrooms with adjustable acoustics, a music therapy center, an opera studio, and an advanced library. It will allow RIAM to double its undergraduate intake and grow school-aged students from 1,500 to 3,000.

“The campus will champion high-quality music education in Ireland and inspire generations of musicians. RIAM now has facilities matching the standard of its teaching and students. Thank you.”

said RIAM Director Deborah Kelleher, acknowledging members of the Partnership for supporting the Academy’s vision.

“Accessibility and digital infrastructure of the campus will broaden the reach and profile of RIAM students, to include those who have disabilities and those outside of Dublin. It’s especially heartening that the Music Discovery and Therapy Facilities will be able to provide tailor-made programs for a range of people, including those on the autism spectrum.”

— Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, Simon Harris TD



An Tánaiste Micheál Martin watches a RIAM performance



Belfast Child

Born in West Belfast, Geraldine Hughes is a critically-acclaimed actress, producer, playwright, and philanthropist. She's currently Lead Producer on the film *In The Land Of Saints And Sinners*, and an executive producer on *The Last Rifleman* starring Pierce Brosnan. We sat down with the Nollaig na mBan Honoree to talk about her journey and her drive to give back to her hometown.

From starring in 1984 television movie *Children In The Crossfire* at age 14, to graduating from UCLA, to touring her stage production of *Belfast Blues*, to playing Marie in *Rocky Balboa*—Geraldine Hughes has had a storied and illustrious career.

After being awarded an honorary doctorate from Queen's University, Hughes dedicated her play *Belfast Blues* to children living in conflict. Her diverse acting career has been an inspiration despite growing up during turbulent times in Northern Ireland.

Tell us about acting/drama as a way to leave Belfast at the height of the Troubles?

You know, in the 1980's it was a really terrible time in Belfast. By the time I was a teenager we had moved from the Divis Flats to the Peace Line (that had nothing to do with peace). In our instance, it was a giant corrugated iron separation between two communities that really caused more violence and encouraged the idea that the other was to be feared.

An American production company came to Belfast; they wanted four kids to star in this film [*Children In The Crossfire*]. And I ended up being one of those kids. I was plucked literally from that wall and that war zone, and taken to Los Angeles and put on a movie set.

I had this knowingness that I would get out of Belfast because that was the only option in the '80's, to leave, to get out, to escape. So I thought to myself: there's an opportunity, I could do that [acting]. When I act, I don't have to be me, and I don't have to be in this world.

It's clear you're very committed to philanthropy, and to giving back. You've made significant contributions to both the education and artistic fields.

I had angels all along the way in my life who helped me: the drama teachers at St. Louise's, Sr. Genevieve who was the headmistress. And there were various people who saw me and took interest in me and saw a child who had great hope and aspirations. A teacher just looking at me and saying, "I see you, and I believe in you," meant so much.

Just little acts of generosity and support. And then this huge act of generosity of of the *Children in the Crossfire* producers paying for my classes at UCLA which was life-changing. I knew that when I was in a position to give back and help, I would.

The legacy of the Troubles has left an enduring mark on disadvantaged communities with more than 30% of children significantly underachieving in primary school. The Goliath Trust works with targeted intervention in selected schools to improve these levels of educational attainment.

Yes, when my husband and I visited Belfast in September, Dr. Alasdair McDonnell [Former leader of the Social Democratic and Labor Party, and Goliath Trust Director] invited us to St. Clare's Primary School, one of the schools targeted by the Goliath Trust. They put on excerpts from *Joseph and the Technicolor Dreamcoat*, and the kids sang, and I was just in tears and singing along with them.

We all realize these children need help, and they need to be told that they're important and there's a place for them. For example, they have a reading program to help a child improve their reading age. It's a 6-week reading intensive summer program. They have a happiness program there. I realized it doesn't take much money to help these kids.



Sylvester Stallone with Geraldine Hughes in Rocky Balboa

And the thing that really appealed to me is that I was that kid. I will go to those primary schools and help in whatever way I can.

“I had angels all along the way in my life who helped me... little acts of generosity and support. I knew that when I was in a position to give back and help, I would.”

- Geraldine Hughes



Around 78,000 (31%) of children in Northern Ireland are underperforming academically at the primary school level, especially in disadvantaged areas where the legacy of the Troubles has had an indelible impact. Through focused support for chosen schools, the Goliath Trust aims to improve educational achievement.

Established in 2017, the Trust aims to tackle the ongoing issue of poor educational outcomes in Northern Ireland's most deprived areas. The Trust consults with schools, teachers, parents, religious leaders, and community representatives, to determine how to provide assistance to schools who would benefit.

Through mentorship and learning circles, the Goliath Digital Learning Hub allows schools to support each other. The "Gino the Dino" Learn-to-Earn program motivates learners by having them complete daily activities that promote wellbeing, reading, and other skills. The Goliath Trust champions their pupils' education through diverse learning approaches.

THE GOLIATH TRUST



Toughmonagh Primary School pupils participate in a reading skills workshop in Belfast.



Forth River Primary School students in Belfast receiving prizes for their 'Game Changer' essays.

Building Peace Through Democracy

Since 2014, the Belfast-based Centre for Democracy & Peace Building (CDPB) has worked to remove fear from divided communities and create a society with a shared sense of responsibility, opportunity, community, and above all, humanity.



2023 Graduates from the Fellowship Program at a seminar at Oxford University

The CDPB's annual Fellowship Program - proudly supported by the Irish American Partnership - aims to ensure that leaders in Northern Ireland are best placed to usher in the next decade and build a peaceful and just society.

This year's Fellowship Program took 24 mid-career leaders from across political, business, and civic society in Northern Ireland through this independent and non-partisan executive program.

With the end goals of supporting the peace process and strengthening democracy, these Fellows gain the knowledge, skills, and confidence to deliver outcomes that matter to the people they serve, to advance the public interest, and to build a culture of integrity in their sectors.

Delivered with educational institutions including Oxford University and the Royal Irish Academy, the six-month program is comprised of workshops, seminars, and training in Belfast, Derry/Londonderry, and Dublin, and covers a diverse set of topics including climate change, sustainability, conflict resolution, and negotiation tactics.

The Fellows graduation ceremony brought together business and political figures from the island of Ireland and the United Kingdom to commemorate the achievement of this year's program, as Northern Ireland marked the 25th anniversary of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement.

Best summarized by a 2023 Fellowship Program graduate: "A leadership programme like no other. As a 2023 graduate, I will be eternally grateful for the growth, insight, and personal development in leadership this provided & equally importantly the friendship of the Fellows who joined me on this journey."

" In the absence of a functioning government in Northern Ireland, this vital program encourages leaders to have difficult conversations and overcome obstacles together. Thank you for investing in the game-changing potential of our leaders - the Fellowship is a purposeful way of doing just that. "

- John Healy, Chair, Fellowship Advisory Board



CENTRE FOR DEMOCRACY
AND PEACE BUILDING

THE CHANGING FACE of Ireland

As it has done for almost 40 years, the Irish American Partnership continues to address the ever changing needs of Ireland, investing in Ireland's future. Earlier this year, Ireland's Central Statistics Office published the results of their Census of Population 2022, which detailed the population changes in the six years since the previous census (2016).

These results provide valuable insights into Ireland's changing population as well as detail into the nation's age, education, health, and more.

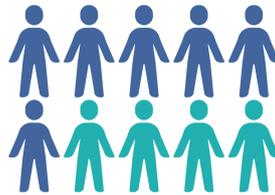
INTERESTING STATS

- For the first time in 171 years Ireland's population exceeded the five million threshold.
- Almost 80% of households had a broadband internet connection in 2022, up from 71% in 2016.
- 6% increase in the number of people who speak Irish to 1,873,997.
- The number of retired people increased 21% to nearly 658,000.
- The proportion of the population who identified Roman Catholic as their religion fell from 79% in 2016 to 69%.

Population

5,149,139

Up 8%



38.8 years

Average Age

8 OUT OF 10

Households now have a broadband connection

GENDER DIFFERENTIAL

97.7%

2,544,549 males and 2,604,590 females



The number of children aged under 10 declined compared with 2016

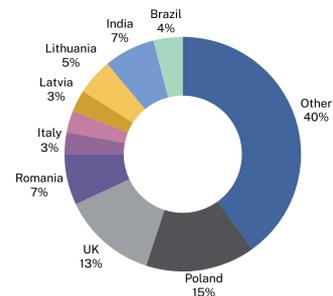


52% of homes built are owner occupied with a mortgage or a loan

MULTICULTURAL IRELAND

12%

Number of non-Irish citizens increased in 2022



VOLUNTEERISM

Labour force participation rate remained at 61% in 2022.



711,379 regularly engaged in helping or voluntary work without pay



Finished full-time education after completing a degree or higher increased to 34%



Principal Róisín Ní Chualáin leads pupils to the playground during break at Scoil Cholmáin, Muighinis, Carna, Co Galway

Scoil Cholmáin, a primary school in Muighinis, Connemara in the heart of the Gaeltacht, feared for its long-term future. The island's school dates back more than a century but it has stood in its current location since 1950.

At one point the school housed just nine pupils and was in danger of becoming a single-teacher school. However, a recent influx of nine Ukrainian students has doubled the school's population, putting both the school, and the local community on a path for growth.

From Dublin to Galway and every county in between, educators and students alike have opened their hearts to the plight of Ukrainian children and their families. It has become abundantly clear that these new arrivals to Ireland need our support.

Principal Ní Chualáin pre-empted the additional challenge learning the Irish language might present to the incoming students and created a 6-week summer camp to help the new Ukrainian students. The camp also offered opportunities for the local students to meet their new classmates.

Ní Chualáin says at Scoil Cholmáin they prioritise wellbeing as much as the Irish language, and she would

also like to see therapeutic supports in place for the young Ukrainian students, who are affected by what they've seen and what they've had to come through to get where they are today.

“ It's great the school has stayed open because of the new kids. They are brilliant young children and that age can absorb anything. They are thriving. ”

The Irish American Partnership continues to provide grants to Irish schools welcoming Ukrainian children into their classrooms. It is our hope to ease this difficult transition for them, and it is thanks to your support, as part of our flagship O'Neill School Grants program, which makes this possible.

IN NUMBERS

17,501

Total number of Ukrainian pupils in Irish schools

10,655

Ukrainian pupils in primary schools

6,846

Ukrainian pupils in second level schools

Source: Department of Education - September 2023



Activating Social Empathy student advocates at the post-primary school module launch

The Partnership has supported the important work of the *Activating Social Empathy* (ASE) program, an interactive, student-focused, social and emotional learning discourse developed by Dr. Ciara Boylan and Professor Pat Dolan at the University of Galway in 2017 as a resource tool for post-primary schools.

A major focus of this work is the role of empathy in the development of social understanding and its potential to enable young people to foster better social responsibility, civic behaviour and critically – action. Empathy, says Dolan, is key to preventing bullying behaviour, tackling racism, promoting understanding and improving social connectedness.

In 2021, the Partnership found an opportunity to support this critical and innovative program and has been advocating for its expansion since then. ASE has been piloted and evaluated and offered to teachers in Irish secondary schools on a voluntary basis in 2022/23.

Four compulsory empathy sessions have been integrated into the Social, Personal and Health Education program as part of the Junior Cycle revised curriculum for 2023-24.

As a resource tool for teachers, the ASE program is comprised of four sessions: Understanding Empathy, Developing Empathy Skills, Responding with Empathy, and Addressing Barriers to Empathy – with UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre Patron and critically-acclaimed

actor Cillian Murphy narrating an audio endorsement for teachers.

“We are on the cusp of the development of empathy as a core part of education systems which will benefit not just youth but civic society as a whole,” said Professor Dolan. He went on to add:



“ *In developing **Activating Social Empathy** for schools, a key part of the strategy has been for the program to be mainstreamed in Irish schools and in time, for international adaption. Key support from the Irish American Partnership has enabled us to sustain a program of piloting, testing and implementing an evidence-based model.* ”



Joseph F. Leary, Jr.

1933 - 2023

Joseph F. Leary, Jr. was a founding pillar of the Irish American Partnership, assuming the role of President and CEO and faithfully serving in this capacity for 28 years until his retirement.

A passionate advocate for a peaceful and prosperous Ireland, Joe tirelessly worked to connect Americans to their Irish roots by championing economic and educational initiatives across the island. Throughout his tenure, the Partnership allocated more than \$25 million to educational and community programs, benefitting schools and initiatives across Ireland, north and south.

A true Irish American, Joe traced his family heritage to Inchigeela in West Cork where his great grandparents met in 1863, subsequently moving to South Boston in 1870. Joe was an active member in Boston Irish circles, graduating

from Boston College in 1959, and writing a monthly opinion column for the Boston Irish Reporter for many years.

Said Chief Executive Mary Sugrue, “Thirty-five years ago, I arrived in Joe’s office fresh off a flight from Shannon to interview for a job with the Partnership. In the decades that followed, Joe became my mentor, a cherished colleague, and a close friend. He was a great Irish American, and a lively character!”



Joe’s influence and guidance have left an everlasting imprint on the Partnership and the wider Irish American community. He will be truly missed and fondly remembered.

“

We mourn the loss of a bastion of the Irish American community and my close friend and mentor, Joe. This dedicated and passionate ambassador for Ireland was an irreplaceable member of the Boston Irish community. It is hard to believe he is gone, but his dry sense of humor, quick wit, and unending love of Ireland will live on in our fond memories.

”

Charles Francis Feeney

1931 - 2023

Partnership supporters joined the international community in mourning the loss of Charles “Chuck” Feeney, Irish American businessman and philanthropist who gave all, and inspired so many to do the same. Chuck Feeney’s philanthropic organization, The Atlantic Philanthropies, made grants totaling more than \$8 billion, much of it anonymously, to causes across five continents.

Chuck’s particular interest in Ireland was spent developing education, civil society, and peace initiatives on the island. The Irish American Partnership benefited greatly from his altruism, when in 1986 a newspaper article caught his eye, about the formation in Dublin of a body called the Irish American Partnership, inspired by Paddy Harte, a member of the Dail. Paddy Harte sought to harness the tremendous goodwill toward Ireland among successful Irish Americans



to stimulate business and philanthropy. Chuck Feeney provided seed funding of \$250,000 which covered multi-year operating expenses for the Partnership.

“We have long been inspired by Chuck’s example and largesse, focusing the might of our efforts investing in Ireland’s future through the educational institutions that inspire our youth. We are truly standing on the shoulders of giants,” said Partnership Chairman Michael Clune.

Chuck Feeney’s support of the Partnership has been transformative in setting our organization up for success, and impacting the young people of Ireland. We are forever grateful to him, and to his visionary Atlantic Philanthropies.

Liam Connellan

1936 - 2023

Director Emeritus of the Partnership, Liam Connellan, who served faithfully on our Board from 1986 until 2019, passed on earlier this fall.

A passionate advocate for the power of education and the importance of economic development in creating a peaceful and prosperous Ireland, Liam was also a member of the Board of the Kylemore Abbey Trust, President of the Royal Dublin Society from 1995-2011, and the first Chairman of the National Roads Authority from 1994-2001.

He was conferred with the Knight Commanders Cross of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1998, and became a Chevalier of the Order of Merit of the Republic of France in 2007.

A Chartered Engineer and former President of the Institution of Engineers of Ireland as well as former President of the Irish Academy of Engineering, he was conferred with a Doctor of Science, honoris causa at University College



Dublin, where Professor Gerry Byrne said:

“Liam Connellan is no ordinary engineer, Liam Connellan is no ordinary business innovator. He is a passionate man, he is an inspirational engineer who puts genuine value on knowledge creation - on education, on research - on careful analysis. Liam Connellan’s place at the pinnacle of Irish Engineering and Business is secure – he is a national figurehead.”

Liam was a true visionary who steered the Partnership’s efforts in Ireland over the past three decades.

Join Us In 2024

JANUARY 5	Nollaig na mBan Women's Leadership Breakfast Boston Harbor Hotel
JANUARY 9	Nollaig na mBan Women's Leadership Breakfast Cosmos Club, Washington DC
JANUARY 11	Nollaig na mBan Women's Leadership Breakfast University Club of Chicago
MARCH 5	Young Partners Spring Social Boston
MARCH 14	St. Patrick's Day Breakfast Celebration Intercontinental Hotel Boston
MARCH 15	St. Patrick's Day Breakfast Celebration Union League Club of Chicago
APRIL 15	2024 Boston Marathon - Young Partners team Boston
APRIL 18	New York Business Leaders Breakfast Union League Club of New York
APRIL 18	Young Partners Spring Social New York
MAY 29	Newport Golf Invitational Newport Country Club
JUNE 3	Albany Golf Tournament Schuyler Meadows Golf Club
JUNE TBC	Chicago Golf Tournament Beverly Country Club
SEPT 29-OCT 1	2024 Leadership Mission Dublin Belfast
OCT 10	Young Partners Speaker Series New York



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Invest in Ireland's Future

Thank you for being a part of the Irish American Partnership community. Our work would not be possible without the dedication of friends like you.

Honor your heritage in a way that works best for you. We encourage you to select a school or organization that is meaningful to you and your family. Your gift makes you a partner in their success. Whether a deferred gift, a one-time transformative gift, or a recurring gift, your generosity has life-changing impact at the grassroots level in Ireland.

Ask us about **the Irish Legacy Society**, a special community of forward-thinking supporters who have invested in the future of the Partnership's transformative mission through a planned gift or provision in their estate plans. Create a lasting legacy for Ireland with a gift that will benefit generations to come.