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John Cullinane

Software Industry Pioneer on his
Love For Ireland



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PARTNERSHIP

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The Play's The Thing

The Druid Theatre Galway's
Young Artist Program

Impact Report

SPRING 2024



President Mary Robinson at 80

Ireland's First
Presidential Library To
Inspire Future Leaders

“The Irish American Partnership does such
wonderful work in the area of education.”

FROM BALLYNAHINCH TO The Big Apple



Assumption Grammar School students performing in New York City

A group of talented pupils from Assumption Grammar School in Ballynahinch, County Down flew to New York City in March to perform in the prestigious 2024 St. Patrick's Day Parade after the pandemic delayed their previous visit in 2020.

"We had organised to go to New York City four years ago, but the trip was cancelled five days before departure because of Covid... we were devastated as we had spent months organising the trip," said Mrs. Marcelle Orsi, teacher and Vice Principal.

Disappointment turned to joy when the opportunity arose to participate in the 2024 parade instead.

"The music staff have been preparing the girls for months to make sure they showcase the talent of our students who have been rehearsing the music, their songs, and their dances for this amazing opportunity. Some of our girls have never been on a plane before, so for this to be their first experience of travelling outside Ireland is incredible."

"Music should be a leveller that anyone can enjoy, and we wanted to make sure no one was disadvantaged," said Vice Principal Orsi.

The school collaborated with St. Vincent Ferrer High School in New York to host a concert in their chapel and were honored by an invitation from Cardinal Dolan to perform at the morning Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral on St. Patrick's Day.

Final year student Aoife Kane has been Irish dancing since she was five years old, and she expressed her excitement to see New York:

"Having been heartbroken over missing the trip the first time, I am incredibly excited to see New York. This being my final year in school, it is very special to experience this once-in-a-lifetime trip."

The Partnership is delighted to support the visit of the students from Ballynahinch to the United States, to showcase their talents and join in the celebration of Ireland's global holiday.



President Robinson

Mary Robinson has been a trailblazer breaking boundaries since she became Trinity College Dublin's youngest lecturer at 25. Now, 55 years later, Ireland's first female President turns 80.



Today, Mrs. Robinson serves as Chair of The Elders, a independent group of global leaders who advocate for social change, peace, and justice in our world. Back at home, through the Mary Robinson Centre, Mrs. Robinson is working with the Centre and its partners Mayo County Council and the University of Galway to pass on her legacy to future generations. Her vast archive, gathered over almost 60 years, is being made accessible in her childhood home in Ballina, where the Centre is taking shape.

“ Across the river in Ballina is my family home which is becoming the Mary Robinson Centre and which the Irish American Partnership has kindly already supported, and thankfully will support again. ”

- President Mary Robinson

Looking to youth in particular, the Centre's role in education supports the development of young leaders, partnering with local secondary schools in a range of events. The Partnership is proud to support the Mary Robinson Center and encourages you to visit in Ballina, County Mayo.



Students from St. Murdoch's College in Ballina



President Mary Robinson with Senator George Mitchell in Ballina



John & Diddy Cullinane

Software Pioneer John Cullinane on Creating Opportunity in Ireland

John Cullinane’s illustrious career in the software industry is known far beyond the Massachusetts technology sphere. Having graduated from Northeastern University, he went on to create the Cullinane Corporation, later Cullinet, which was among the first software companies to go public in 1977. When Cullinet was sold in 1989, its founder turned his attention to a new challenge: providing mentorship and support to emerging talent in Northern Ireland.

A child of Irish immigrants and native Irish speakers, John’s mother Margaret arrived in the United States from Dunmore East in Waterford in 1929. Sixty years later, John was asked to mentor and support Irish technology entrepreneurs while promoting business ties and job creation between Northern Ireland and the U.S.

“I come out of an entrepreneurial background and I’m used to creating jobs so when I first went to Belfast, I looked around and recognized that there is a very talented group of people in Northern Ireland. Belfast, the most powerful industrial city at one time, could compete with global capacity once again if they started investing in things like high tech.”

John helped attract much-needed U.S. investment through the creation of the *Friends of Belfast* to promote partnerships, strategic alliances, and entrepreneurship as the way forward for Northern Ireland. This outreach and networking helped secure jobs that would lead to prosperity and bolster peace in the region.

“I did everything in my power to help create jobs in Northern Ireland to make it possible for people from both Protestant and Catholic traditions to become involved. And they did.”



Friends of Belfast meeting in Belfast, Northern Ireland: City Councillor Alasdair McDonnell, Dr. Frank Costello, Belfast Lord Mayor Hugh Smyth, Mayor of Boston Thomas Menino, John Cullinane and John Cullinane Jr.

“My major focus in the last couple of years is *Onwards and Upwards*, which is a program created to help kids that have dropped out of the educational process in Northern Ireland.”

In Belfast, where rates of generational unemployment remain high, the *Onwards and Upwards* program is designed to put young people on a track to secure a job by helping them earn recognized certification in coding and digital science, with training placements in technology sector companies. Personal mentoring expands their network and increases their self-esteem.

Under the direction of program co-founder Dr. Frank Costello, the guided focus on the future can be lifechanging. The aim is to enable these young people to play a part in Belfast’s success in the modern global economy.



Onwards and Upwards program participants



John Cullinane mentors young people in Belfast at a skills training class

“*The only true lasting satisfaction in life comes from helping others.*”
- John Cullinane

“That’s how to get young people back onto the road to confidence: providing enough education and opening doors to help them get a job. That’s my whole personal experience... and that’s what we’re trying to duplicate in Northern Ireland.”

With the help of the Irish American Partnership, John and Diddy’s support for the *Onwards and Upwards* program has been vital to its success.

The Irish Legacy Society

Honor your heritage in a way that works best for you.

Estate and gift planning through the Irish American Partnership is an excellent way to establish your charitable legacy. 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.

Legacy gifts of any size are very important to the Partnership, strengthening our ability to respond to evolving needs and priorities as we work towards our long-term vision. Your generosity has a life-changing impact at the grassroots level in Ireland, North and South.

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OF EDUCATION



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Secondary School Students attend the Mick Lally Theatre, Galway

IRELAND'S TOURING Theater Company

The theater deepens engagement with communities by visiting primary and secondary schools to foster a love of creativity and drama in younger audiences.

The Partnership proudly supports Druid's Community & Education program, specifically its 'FUEL' young artist residency program based in Galway. Open to playwrights, directors, and theater-makers based in the West of Ireland, FUEL supports the development of new young voices in Irish theater, encouraging the next generation of Irish artists.

Founded in 1975, Druid is a touring theater company anchored in the cultural fabric of Galway in the West of Ireland, with its eyes on the global stage.

It began as a bold idea: to create Ireland's first professional theater company outside of Dublin. There were few resources with which to build a touring theater company in the West, but through sheer dedication and the support of the Galway community, founders Garry Hynes, Marie Mullen, and Mick Lally made the idea a reality. That reality has since become an international success story of extraordinary dimensions.

Druid is a writers theater, exploring ambitious projects and reimagining the classics while premiering new work annually. The company believes that audiences have the right to see first class professional theater in their own communities.



2024 FUEL Participants Raphaël Adams, Áine Ní Laoghaire, Emily White, and Dylan McGloin

Developed to address the problem of educational underachievement, the Early Learning Initiative (ELI) at the National College of Ireland works in the areas of greatest need, providing world-class parent and child learning support programs.

By just three years of age, differences in language and math development are evident between children from advantaged and disadvantaged backgrounds. ELI is addressing this disparity before children start preschool in the hope of narrowing this gap.

“ *The Partnership is ensuring that thousands of at-risk children will have the language, literacy and numeracy skills needed for success in education, career, and life. Thank you.* ”

- Josephine Bleach, Director, Early Learning Initiative

Focusing on the community’s most vulnerable families with children aged between 3.5 and 7 years old, ELI provides each family with an average of 26 home visits each year. The home visitor program supports parents in building vital parenting skills and confidence in supporting the child’s development and education. Families receive thoughtful guidance and educational resources.

The initiative has grown from 400 participants a year to over 14,000 and moved beyond its initial Dublin Docklands catchment area to now support other communities across the country.

Thanks to your generosity, the Irish American Partnership continues to support the essential and innovative work of the Early Learning Initiative.



Parents and children participate at the Early Learning Initiative program



Robotics All-Ireland Champions Take On Texas

Ms. Roche and Mr. Flannelly's 5th class have qualified for the VEX IQ World Championship Robotics Competition in Dallas, Texas

Representing County Mayo and Ireland, the robotics club at St. Joseph's Primary School in Ballinrobe flew to Dallas to compete in the VEX IQ Robotics World Championship this spring.

Having achieved a remarkable goal by winning the Robotics All-Ireland Championship held at Munster Technological University, Cork, the 5th class robotics team represented Ireland at the prestigious World Championships in early May.

This is the second year St. Joseph's has taken part in the VEX IQ Robotics competition, which provides primary school pupils with an exciting engineering challenge presented in the form of a game, where students build innovative robots and compete year round.

In addition to learning valuable engineering skills, students gain life skills such as teamwork, perseverance, communication, collaboration, project management, and critical thinking.

The VEX Robotics competition prepares students to become future innovators, with 95% of participants reporting an increased interest in STEM subject areas and pursuing STEM related careers.

“We never ever thought that a team from this West of Ireland rural community could qualify and get to this international event in Dallas. The Irish American Partnership has helped make dreams come true for the children and staff.”

- Frances Burke, Chairperson
St. Joseph's Primary School Board

The school's fundraising included huge support from the local community – individuals, organizations, and businesses – and the Partnership was proud to join this group who came together to support a local school on the world stage.

