

IRELAND NEWS

Consulate of Ireland Newsletter for U.S. Southwest

FÁILTE

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the first Irish Consulate newsletter of 2017 as St. Patrick's Day fast approaches. We are delighted to include reports on some of the events that the Consulate has been involved with during a busy January and February, and to update you on recent developments in Ireland.

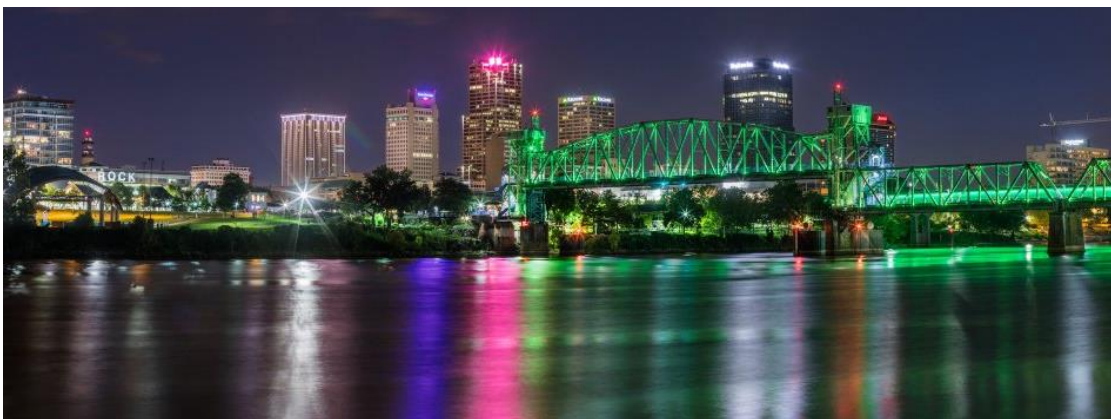
I am delighted to hear about the great St. Patrick's Day events happening across the region; we've included information about many of these events in this newsletter. Please let us know about any other events that we may have missed and we will try to ensure that this information is displayed on our website in time for St. Patrick's week.

Don't forget to send us photos of St. Patrick's events and 'greenings' in your area for inclusion in our next newsletter.

Have a wonderful St. Patrick's week!

Adrian Farrell

Consul General of Ireland, Austin



Junction Bridge in downtown Little Rock was 'greened' in 2016

RECENT EVENTS HIGHLIGHTS



Arkansas Governor proclaims “Irish Heritage Month”

Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson met with Jim Doyle from the Irish Cultural Society of Arkansas to proclaim March 2017 “Irish Heritage Month” for the state.



Consulate hosts Dr. Tom Staley

On January 12, the Consulate hosted Dr. Tom Staley, internationally renowned expert on James Joyce, founder of the Joyce Quarterly and former director of the Harry Ransom Centre at The University of Texas. Dr. Staley gave a lecture on his fascinating experiences studying Joyce and his key role in securing and preserving Joyce archives.



Harp & Shamrock Annual Awards Dinner

After a busy and fun year celebrating the Society’s 50th birthday, the San Antonio Harp & Shamrock Society started their 51st year with an Awards Dinner on February 18. Congratulations to the Cusack awardees JT Norris and John Smith, as well as Irish Person of the Year Carolyn Dowd.



Consulate welcomes Texas State Legislators

On February 7, the Consulate hosted members of the Texas State Legislature for a reception to coincide with the start of the 85th Legislative session.



Cedar Park Visit

On February 8, Consul General Farrell visited Cedar Park and met with Mayor Matt Powell, City Manager Brenda Eivens, and Chief of Police Sean Mannix. He also spoke to the Cedar Park Chamber of Commerce and was accompanied by two students from a nearby high school who joined the Consulate that week for a job-shadowing programme.



Dallas Irish-American Society Luncheon

Consul General Farrell was delighted to attend the Dallas Irish-American Society's annual awards luncheon. Congratulations to 2017 Dallas Irish Person of the Year Sheila Balagna!



Fulbright Association Event in San Antonio

On Saturday February 11, Consul General Farrell participated in a panel discussing Fulbright and State Department initiatives as well as Ireland-United States diplomatic experiences.



AOH Austin Stew Cook-Off

On Saturday February 25, the Austin chapter of the Ancient Order of Hibernians hosted their annual Irish Stew Charity Cook-Off at BD Riley's Irish Pub in downtown Austin.

Upcoming St. Patrick's Day Parades/Events Around the Region

Little Rock, Arkansas	http://www.irisharkansas.org/parade	March 11
Topeka, Kansas	http://topekastpats.com/	March 11
Austin, Texas	http://stpatricksdayaustin.com/	March 11
Denver, Colorado	http://www.denverstpatricksdayparade.com/	March 11
Houston, Texas	http://www.hsppc.org/	March 11
Dallas, Texas	http://www.dallasstpatricksparade.com/	March 11
Albuquerque, New Mexico	http://albuquerque.about.com/od/attractions/a/PatricksDay.htm	March 12
Hot Springs, Arkansas	http://www.shortteststpats.com/	March 17
Kansas City, Kansas	http://www.kcirishparade.com/	March 17
Lawrence, Kansas	http://lawrencestpatricksdayparade.com/paradeinfo.html	March 17
San Antonio, Texas	https://www.thesanantonioriverwalk.com/events/murphys-st.-patricks-day-river-parade-festival	March 17 & 18
Corpus Christi, Texas	https://www.everfest.com/e/st-patrick-s-day-block-festival-at-cassidy-s-irish-pub-corpus-christi-tx	March 17-18
Baton Rouge, Louisiana	http://st-patricks-day.com/baton-rouge-st-patricks-day-parade-2017/	March 18
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma	http://www.ocityparade.com/	March 18
New Orleans, Louisiana	http://www.stpatricksdayneworleans.com/	Block parties March 11 & 17 Parades 11, 17, 18, 19, & 1st

News from Ireland

Mr Charlie Flanagan, T.D., Ireland's Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, completed a packed [three day programme](#) of high level political meetings, engagements with the Irish community and business meetings supported by the Embassy of Ireland in Washington. His discussions dealt with issues including ongoing US support for the Peace Process; Ireland's approach to Brexit; the prospects for immigration reform, as well as concerns with regard to recent immigration related measures announced by the US; and economic links between Ireland and the US. His [op-ed](#) in the Independent.ie explores Ireland's unique relationship with the U.S. which, he noted, "runs deeper than politics."

Taoiseach Enda Kenny welcomed Prime Minister Theresa May to Ireland on 30 January for a Summit meeting to exchange views on issues including developments in Northern Ireland, the UK/Ireland Joint Work Programme and key bilateral interests in the context of Brexit. Following PM May's January 17 speech, the Government issued a [statement on Brexit](#).

In an [address to EU Ambassadors](#), Minister Flanagan underlined the importance of the British market for Irish companies and concluded "The UK will remain our closest neighbour, and the European Union will remain our political and economic home."

Elections for the Northern Ireland Assembly took place on March 2 and Michelle O'Neill has replaced Martin McGuinness as the leader of Sinn Féin in the Northern Ireland Assembly. Minister Flanagan made a full statement on these and related developments before our Seanad on January 26.

On January 29, the Tánaiste and Minister Flanagan attended the national Holocaust Memorial Commemoration. Minister Flanagan read from the Declaration of the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust.

Ireland maintained its impressive position as the best country in the Eurozone for doing business in the Forbes magazine rankings in 2016, coming in [4th in the world](#). Our GDP is forecast to grow by 3.5% in 2017 following strong growth of 4.2% in 2016. The unemployment rate in December 2016 was 7.2%, down from a peak of 15% in 2012 and well below the Eurozone average.

Ireland's capacities as an international financial service hub were highlighted during the European Financial Forum held in Dublin on January 24. At the session, the Taoiseach announced that Ireland's financial services sector is "Brexit-ready".

Enterprise Ireland, the Government agency responsible for developing Irish business globally, exceeded its 3-year (2014-2016) [job creation target](#) with 45,000 new jobs and aims for 60,000 in its 2017-2020 Strategy.

[Passport Service customer service enhancements](#), including an enhanced on-line application tracking service as well as a web-chat social media service to facilitate real-time communication between the Passport Service and passport applicants have been announced.

Many congratulations to this year's Irish Oscar nominees: Ruth Negga in the category of Best Actress in a Leading Role for *Loving*, Consolata Boyle for Best Costume Design for *Florence Foster Jenkins*, and the Irish Film Board supported film, *The Lobster*, for Best Original Screenplay.

Irish author Sebastian Barry also made headlines, winning the 2016 *Costa Book of the Year* award for his novel *Days Without End*.

The Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, Heather Humphreys launched the [Creative Ireland Programme](#) / Clár Éire Ildánach at the Irish Consulate in New York. In addition, she unveiled details of Culture Ireland's US programme for 2017 which, in total, will provide €1m to Irish artists to showcase their work in the United States throughout 2017. These include performances in the Southeast by The Outside Track (details below), McPeake and Mairtin O'Connor Trio (tour schedules forthcoming).

STAY IN TOUCH WITH US

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