

Consulate General of Ireland

Newsletter for the U.S. Southeast

February 2019

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Donegal native Jim McGuinness, new head coach of the Charlotte Independence soccer team, presents Ambassador Dan Mulhall with his own team jersey.

A chairde,

I began 2019 in Dublin at the Global Ireland Conference, exploring with our Ministers and other Irish Ambassadors and Consuls General the strategies that will allow us to deliver a doubling of Ireland's global footprint by 2025.

My favourite conference session, "Culture As a Bridge", saw major Irish cultural figures provide us with advice. One of these, Gary Hynes, brought "Waiting to Godot" to Charleston in 2017. Another, Paul Young of Cartoon Saloon, will be with us in Miami next week as part of an Animation Ireland delegation. We hope to see a third at a University near you before the end of March.

I next joined Ambassador Dan Mulhall for his first visit to Charlotte, NC, where he headlined the Allegro Foundation Charity Ball, spoke at UNC Charlotte on "A virtuous circle: Ireland, the EU & the U.S.", launched a campaign for an Irish Arts & Community Center and met Charlotte Mayor Vi Lyles and senior executives from American and Irish firms. John Young, our exceptional Honorary Consul in Charlotte, made the programme happen.

Preparations are well underway for St. Patrick's Day celebrations, which you can read about in our events section. We are delighted that David Stanton T.D, our Minister for Equality, Immigration and Integration, who is from beautiful Midleton in County Cork, will visit and lead our programme.

Shane Stephens, Consul General, February 2019

Ambassador Mulhall delivers Ireland's key messages in North Carolina



L: Great briefings with the Charlotte Irish Connection & Charlotte GAA on their plans for an American Irish Cultural Center.

Below: a lovely evening of Irish poetry, music and song hosted by Honorary Consul John Young and Mary Pat Young at their home.

Below: the Ambassador speaks on the virtuous circle between Ireland, the EU and the US to students and staff at UNC Charlotte.

Below L: The Ambassador speaks live on NPR's [Charlotte Talks](#) with Michael Collins.



Below R: productive exchange with Charlotte Mayor Vi Lyles and Honorary Consul John Young



Inauguration season in the Southeast



L: Vice Consul Eilís O'Keeffe was honoured to attend the inauguration of **South Carolina** Governor Henry McMaster. Ties between Ireland and SC go back generations and continue to strengthen.

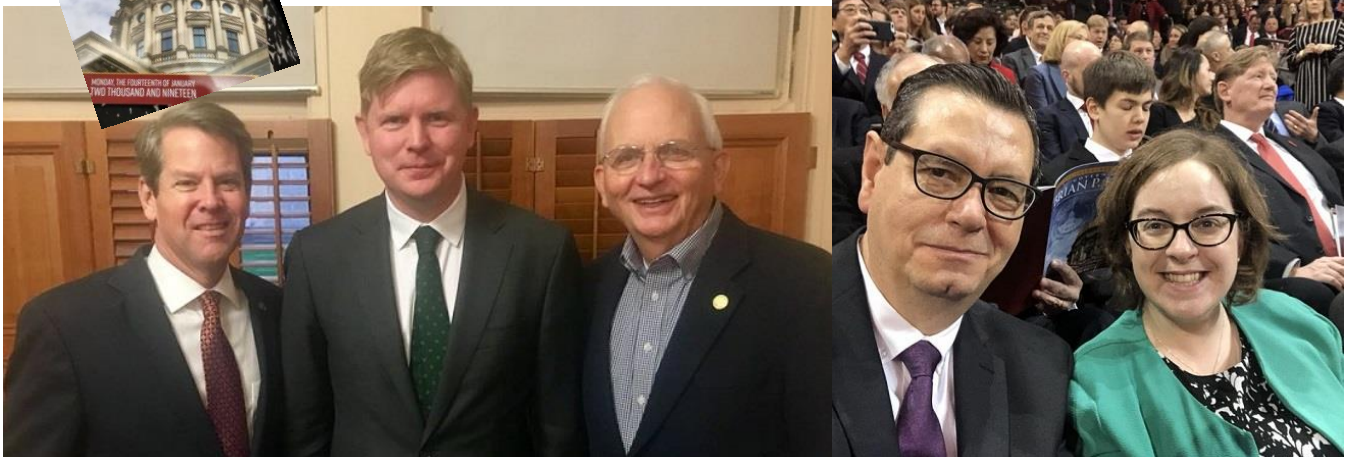
R: CG Stephens was delighted to congratulate Governor Bill Lee on his inauguration as **Tennessee's** 50th governor.



Below: CG Stephens with then Georgia Governor-elect Brian Kemp and Georgia Agriculture Commissioner Gary Black for a discussion on Georgia-Ireland ties and cooperation on agriculture, commerce and education.



R: Vice Consul O'Keeffe with Mexican Deputy Consul General, Rafael Bernal, await the inauguration of **Georgia** Governor Brian Kemp

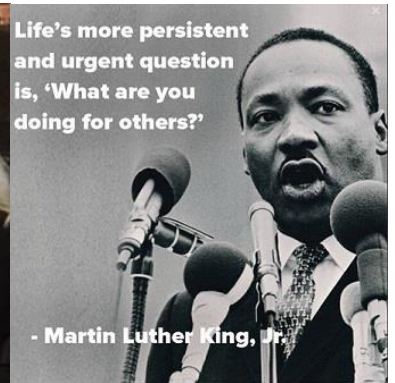


Representing Ireland: the varied work of the Consulate



Above: Vice Consul O'Keeffe joined a visiting EU delegation in Atlanta for a wide ranging discussion on the EU investment climate and economic outlook.

R: Vice Consul O'Keeffe hosted the first meeting of EU consular and administration officers in Atlanta to kick off Ireland's six month period as EU local chair.



Atlanta's Consular Corps at the start of The King Center's annual observance of Dr. Martin Luther King Day at Atlanta's beautiful and historic Ebenezer Baptist Church.



L: Vice Consul O'Keeffe was honoured to hear Marion Blumenthal Lazan's moving story of her childhood experience in Bergen Belsen concentration camp. We remember the horrors of the Holocaust so we #neverforget

Below: CG Stephens introduced the University of Georgia Willson Center's [screening of Black '47](#), including a discussion on how Ireland's historical memory of the Famine underpins our candidacy for the UN Security Council 2021-2022. Pictured with Willson Center Director Dr. Nicholas Allen (Center) and UGA professor Dr. Peter O'Neill (L; who hails from Derry).



Below: Vice Consul O'Keeffe with Elizabeth Pierce, President Applegreen US South East in Columbia, SC. This Irish company operates gas stations in South Carolina and the Florida Panhandle, employing 1000.



R: A pleasure to welcome Lt. David Fallon of the Irish Air Corps to the Consulate. He was in town on a training mission.



Irish News

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade Simon Coveney T.D. delivered [his State of the Union Address](#) to the Institute of International and European Affairs in Dublin.

As part of Ireland's Brexit Contingency Action Plan, the Government published the next phase of its [Brexit "No Deal" legislative planning](#) in the event the UK fails to agree to a deal for their March 29 EU departure.

President Higgins delivered the [keynote address at the Holocaust Memorial Day](#) commemoration. During the service, candles were lit for the Jewish victims of the Holocaust, and the names of Irish people who died in the genocide were read out.

On January 21st 100 years ago, [the First Dáil](#) addressed the international community and took Ireland's first steps on the international stage with the 'Message to the Free Nations of the World'.

Tánaiste Coveney announced the Government's [2019 St. Patrick's Day Programme](#) of international events, which will see the Taoiseach, Tánaiste, Ministers, Attorney General, Ceann Comhairle and Cathaoirleach promote Ireland and Irish interests around the world over the St Patrick's Day period.

The Tánaiste outlined the Government's '[Global Ireland' 2019 plans](#), the 'all-of-Government' programme launched in June 2018 which aims to double Ireland's impact in the world by 2025.

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Josepha Madigan T.D. opened the [inaugural Culture Ireland Global Ireland 2025 Conference](#) in Dublin Castle, bringing arts stakeholders together to engage on advancing Ireland's global reputation for creativity.

Minister for Agriculture, Food & the Marine, Michael Creed, announced Ireland's [Clean Oceans Initiative](#) which calls for all Irish trawlers to participate in a coordinated initiative to recover plastic and other marine waste from the oceans on every trip by December 2019.

The Government approved proposals for changes to the [Ireland / United States Preclearance Agreement](#) to allow for enhanced services at Dublin and Shannon Airports.

Dr. Seamus Dillon of the Waterford Institute of Technology is creating a repository of memories and experiences with, of and about spoken Irish in America that will be preserved for future generations and research. Dr. Dillon is interested in your stories – contact him [here](#).

Congratulations to the University of North Carolina Tar Heels' [Irish sports team](#) which defeated Montana to claim 3rd place in their first National Hurling Championship.

Save the date! The 49th [Oireachtas Rince Na Cruinne 2019](#) – the World Irish Dancing Championships – will be held in Greensboro, North Carolina April 14-21. We hope to see you there!

Upcoming Events in the Southeast

Knoxville Irish Society (KIS) invites you to their monthly [social gathering](#) on February 9th, 3:00 - 5:00pm, at 3131 Morris Ave, with traditional Irish tea, music, snacks & camaraderie. Contact: info@knoxvilleirish.com.

February 10th is the deadline to apply for one of Irish Traditions Atlanta annual financial scholarships to students of Irish music and song. Up to 4 scholarships of \$500 each may be awarded. Eligibility requirements and more information available [here](#).

Vice Consul Eilís O’Keeffe encourages you to join her for Savannah’s kick-off to the St. Patrick’s Day period at the [Savannah Irish Festival](#), February 16 and 17, featuring four stages of live Irish music, Irish dancing, vendors, food prepared by local Irish societies and activities for children. The long-time organizers, the Irish Festival Committee, received a grant from the Irish Government’s [Emigrant Support Programme](#) to support this event.

The [King O’Sullivan Winter Feis](#) and [Feis na Tara](#) step dancing competitions will share the weekend of Feb 16-17 at the Atlanta Evergreen Marriott Conference Resort at Stone Mountain. Register at [ifeis.net](#).

[Atlanta Clan na nGael](#) is pleased to announce the launch of the Atlanta Co-Ed Gaelic Sports league, starting on February 22nd. Experienced and interested novice hurling & camogie players are encouraged to [sign up](#).

March 1 is the deadline for submissions to the 2019 [Annual Essay Contest](#) for Georgia High School Students, on “What St. Patrick’s Day Means to Me.” The winner receives \$1,000 check and will be an honored guest at several St. Patrick’s Day events in Atlanta.

[Celtic Woman](#) will bring their [Ancient Land Tour](#) to several southeastern cities in March including Nashville, TN; Huntsville, AL; Augusta and Atlanta, GA; North Charleston, SC and multiple cities in Florida.



Countdown to Saint Patrick’s Day 2019 – Save the Dates!

Florida

- March 9 Coral Gables: 40th annual [St. Patrick’s Day Festival](#) sponsored by the South Florida Emerald Society
- March 9-10 Fort Pierce: a civic ceremony (Mar 9) and St. Patrick’s Day Party with Irish music, dancing and sports demonstration (Mar 10) to celebrate and further linkages between Cork and Fort Pierce, to be attended by Cork City’s Lord Mayor, CEO and other Cork officials, local dignitaries and the [ForttoFort-Ireland-Florida Association](#). Click [here](#) to request information.
- March 15-16 Davie: Production of [The Weir](#) by Irish playwright Conor McPherson, Davie Pine Island Multi-Purpose Center 8pm
- March 16 Tampa: Mayor’s [River O’Green Fest](#), 11:00a.m
Tampa (Ybor City): [Rough Riders St. Patrick’s Day Parade](#) 7pm
- March 16 Fort Lauderdale: [St Patrick’s Day Parade and Festival](#)

Georgia

Atlanta:

- March 9 Hibernian Benevolent Society of Atlanta and Irish Network Atlanta [Black Tie Ball](#). Sponsorships are available and tickets selling fast so don’t miss out!
- March 14 [St. Patrick’s Day Mass](#), Christ the King 10:00a.m.
[Celtic Woman at the Fox Theatre](#), discount code IRISH

- March 15 Irish Chamber of Atlanta Breakfast, Capital City Club, 7:30a.m.
[Father O'Reilly Wreath Laying](#) (City Hall) and Mass (Shrine of the Immaculate Conception), beginning 10:00a.m.
- March 16 [Atlanta Saint Patrick's Day Parade](#)
- March 17 [Gateway Performance](#) Productions presents *St. Patrick Saves the Day*, family friendly Irish comedy and culture at The Mask Center 2pm. Contact gatewaypp@masktheatre.org.
- Savannah:
- Mar 15-16 [Saint Patrick's Day Festival](#)
- March 16 [Saint Patrick's Day Parade](#)
- Mississippi
- Mar 29-30 [CelticFest Mississippi](#), Jackson
- North Carolina
- March 16 [Charlotte Saint Patrick's Day Parade and Festival](#). Charlotte Irish Connection's President Peter Byrne will be Grand Marshal.
- South Carolina
- March 4 [Return to the Green Irish Cultural Festival](#) and GAA Tournament, Greenville
- March 9 [Charleston's LowCountry Irish Fest](#) – a musical and cultural festival celebrating all things Irish in the South Carolina Lowcountry, headlined by Derek Warfield and the Young Wolfe Tones
- March 16 [Charleston Saint Patrick's Day Parade](#)
- Tennessee
- March 17 [Music City Irish Fest](#), Nashville, including The Willis Clan, Chloë Agnew, Shane Hennessy, Nashville Pipe & Drum, Triona and Colm Kirwan.

To include your event in our Newsletter, send a short description before month's end to carol.jordan@dfa.ie.

Our Diaspora Heritage Series follows. To submit your story, contact [Kevin Conboy](#).

Diaspora Heritage Series

Irish Couple Build Life in Atlanta, Raise Funds For Pediatric Cancer Research

The Leonards were a family of small business owners. Karen's grandparents, Christy and Catherine founded their farm supply, hardware and drapery shops along with a pub in Trim. Her father, Christum, opened Chris Leonard Hardware in the early 1950's also in Trim. Christum's siblings' businesses still dot the town, including a drapery, a pub, and a furniture store. Christum married Dubliner Norah McDowell in 1964.

Karen's father, Christum left a rich legacy of philanthropy, being involved in community charitable initiatives in Trim, from the Vintage and Veteran car show to the Meath Hospice Homecare movement. Hospice Homecare aimed to provide dignified home hospice experience for Meath residents, no matter location or finances and raised money and awareness to support the cause. Christum got involved after Norah's tragic diagnosis of breast cancer at age 38.

Karen earned a Bachelor's of European Studies at the University of Limerick and a Diploma in Human Resource Management from the Institute of Personnel Development.

A short drive away in North County Dublin, Jack Fleming and his wife Joy Kelly were settling down on their cattle farm. Jack grew up in Dublin City and Killarney, Co. Kerry. Jack's father was a cattle exporter. Before their marriage, Joy, from Ballycastle, Co. Antrim, had worked as a teacher, followed by a career at The Royal Bank. Joy's parents, William and Annie, taught in a small schoolhouse outside Ballycastle.

Donal studied Engineering at Dublin Institute of Technology and moved to Trim to work at NEC Semiconductors. Karen and Donal met while working at NEC Semiconductors in Ballivor, Co. Meath. Shortly after their marriage in 1994, they emigrated to Atlanta, and had their first child, Ciara (your author!). Rory came shortly after. Meanwhile Donal earned a Master of Engineering degree from North Carolina State University.



On a family trip to Ireland in 2001, they had to visit several physicians, seeking a diagnosis for the strange symptoms their daughter had been experiencing. During a stay at Temple Street Children's University Hospital, the doctors found a polyp, and they received a diagnosis of rhabdomyosarcoma, a rare form of childhood cancer after flying home to Atlanta. Ciara started treatment at the Aflac Cancer Center at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, going through surgery and 48 weeks of chemo. Ciara was enrolled in a very successful clinical trial, which allowed her to finish her treatment cancer-free and with no late effects, both excellent outcomes. Ciara is currently a freshman at the University of Georgia, and Rory is a junior at Chamblee Charter High School.

Karen and Donal, wanted to help other families faced with a childhood cancer diagnosis and became involved with The St. Baldrick's Foundation. St. Baldrick's Volunteers called "Shavees" have their heads shaved in solidarity with children who lose theirs during harsh chemotherapy. Family, friends, and colleagues sponsor the sacrifice. Donal has shaved his head 16 times!

Funds raised go toward financing promising childhood cancers research. Over the years, events organized by Donal and Karen have raised 1.35 million dollars. Volunteers at their events have gone on to organize their own events in Atlanta, Tennessee and South Carolina.

Donal and Karen will spend their 25th Anniversary weekend in March organizing head shaving events in Fado in Buckhead and **ON** Peachtree St, before the 2019 Atlanta St. Patrick's parade steps off.