
MOHAWK VALLEY IRISH CULTURAL EVENTS NEWSLETTER

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“Great American Irish Festival 2006” Special Issue



The acts initially announced early this year for the 2006 Great American Irish Festival would have been enough for most festivals...but in case anyone hasn't noticed by now, the GAIF is not like most festivals. When the second wave of performers was announced in March, it raised the talent level of the July 28-29 GAIF to levels unheard of. "This lineup is as good as any festival anywhere and cements the Great American Irish Festival's position as one of the pre-eminent Irish festivals in the Northeast, if not the nation," promised Festival Director Matthew Sullivan.

With a lineup that includes the likes of Natalie MacMaster, Solas, Black 47, The Prodigals, The Fenians, Enter the Haggis, The Glengarry Bhoys, Young Dubliners, Old Blind Dogs, Cathie Ryan, Irish Descendants and Andy Cooney taking the stage at the Herkimer County Fairgrounds, the biggest problem facing festival goers may be which stage to watch. The festival will also feature such circuit favorites as Hair of the Dog, The Peelers, The McKrells, Greenwich Meantime, the Kerry Boys and Greg Anderson and Sara Milonovich. As if this wasn't enough, the festival also boasts the best Irish acts from throughout New York State, from western New York favorites Gerry Dixon and Seanache to the Southern Tier's Pat Kane and West o'Clare and Elmira's Donal O'Shaughnessy, as well as the area's favorite Celtic performers, The Blarney Rebel Band, Cliudan, Emish, Seisun, Tahtu, John Gilligan, the Syracuse Session, Rattlin' Bog and the legendary Vince Colgan.

This year's Great American Irish festival will also feature pipers, Irish dance and music demonstrations and workshops, Irish history and culture seminars, an open session, storytellers, rides and clowns, Irish merchandise and food vendors, a presentation on the Dog Breeds of Ireland, a Heavy Games exhibition, a hurling demonstration and an expanded Gaelic football tournament.

But it occurred to us that although we've been talking about the festival for several months, many of you – most, probably – don't know the origin of the festival. For a recap, we went to festival director Matt Sullivan, who responded with this letter:

“The Mohawk Valley is rich in the history of Irish immigrants. Exemplifying that is the fact that in 1900 there were 11 divisions of the Ancient Order of Hibernians throughout Oneida County. Sadly, by the 1960's, there were none. In 1991, the AOH saw its rebirth locally and has seen its membership growing steadily. In fact, in Oneida County alone, over 40,000 people claimed some Irish heritage during the last census. Adjoining counties have similar figures, but the Mohawk Valley does not have an Irish Community Center of any kind. When Charley Thomas was AOH president a couple years ago, he took the initiative of establishing a building fund to remedy this problem and asked me to chair the committee. We researched the ways that the necessary funding could be raised to accomplish this goal. Having personally witnessed the success and enthusiasm enjoyed by other communities with large-scale festivals, we decided to give it a go ourselves. Thus, the Great American Irish Festival was born.”

MEET THE HEADLINERS This year's lineup certainly stands up against that of any festival in the Northeast; with many of the top acts in the world having signed on. For a complete list of performers and their scheduled times/dates, visit www.greatamericanirishfestival.com. For now, let's "Meet the Headliners."



NATALIE MacMASTER Folk and Celtic fiddling virtuoso Natalie MacMaster brings her fiery fiddle and flashing feet to the Great American Irish Festival stage for a rousing night of entertainment. The Cape Breton prodigy has shared the stage with acts ranging from Carlos Santana to the Chieftains, Paul Simon to Luciano Pavarotti, Alison Krauss to Mark O'Connor and dozens of world-class symphony orchestras. Natalie MacMaster first picked up a fiddle at the age of nine and has not looked back. The niece of famed Cape Breton fiddler Buddy MacMaster, Natalie is now acknowledged as one of the finest fiddlers in the world, as well as a world-class dancer. While the recipient of numerous awards for her recordings, Natalie's live performances are a testament to her incandescent musicianship and boundless energy featuring foot-tapping rave-ups, heart rendering ballads and world-class step dancing.

SOLAS Throughout its tenure and personnel changes, Solas has been widely heralded for its virtuosity and its fresh approach to Irish folk music. It maintains deep traditional roots while exploring new ideas and pushing the boundaries. Solas (Gaelic for "light") showcases Seamus Egan's skills on a variety of instruments. He is an All-Ireland champion on flute, tin whistle, mandolin, and tenor banjo and also demonstrates his virtuosity on low whistle, guitar, bodhrán, and uilleann pipes. Solas also features All-Ireland fiddler Winifred Horan, who, in addition to being a former member of Cherish the Ladies, is a nine-time Irish step-dancing champion. Button accordionist Mick McAuley, vocalist Deirdre Scanlon, and multi-instrumentalist Eamon McElholm round out the all-star Solas line-up. Festival-goers will understand immediately why Solas had been acclaimed by many as the most exciting Irish traditional group in the world.



ENTER THE HAGGIS From the minute they take the stage, the non-stop infectious energy of Enter the Haggis makes it impossible for anyone to stay seated. Enter the Haggis has built an international touring and recording career based on its unique approach to Celtic-based music and high-energy performances. The group is no stranger to the stage; a look at ETH's past and present tour schedule makes it clear that they've become a big draw at U.S. and Canadian Celtic and folk festivals. After the success of the band's 2002 recording "Enter the Haggis -Live!", the

group teamed up with JUNO nominated producer Joao Carvalho to record its fourth album, "Casualties of Retail" in 2004. The result features the catchy bluegrass-fusion singles "Another Round" and "Gasoline" as well as driving Celtic-rock instrumentals that showcase the group's arranging and performance talent. The music is primarily a fusion of Celtic, bluegrass and rock, however, elements of Latin, blues and funk can be heard throughout. In addition to their recordings, Enter the Haggis has also recently become stars of the small screen. A television special on the group titled "Live at Lanigan's Ball" began airing on PBS affiliates throughout the U.S. and Canada beginning in June of 2004 and the band was recently featured on A&E's twice Emmy nominated "Breakfast With The Arts" program.



BLACK 47 Black 47 (a name deriving from the year 1847, the blackest year of the Irish potato famine) is a New York-based band made up of Irish expatriates and led by songwriter/playwright Larry Kirwan. Black 47 is an irreverent band, a political band (hence their name), a band with a feisty, militant attitude, and a band that has been influenced by a broad variety of sources, including rock, classical Irish and Celtic music, rap, reggae, hip-hop, African and Latin roots. Black 47 espouses an unblinkingly political and thoroughly Irish form of rock 'n' roll, with songs covering topics from the

Northern Ireland conflict to civil rights and urban unrest in contemporary New York. The band has produced nine albums to date.

THE PRODIGALS The Prodigals are one of the most successful bands to emerge from the East-Coast Irish scene. The band combines brilliant original lyrics and melody with a genuine passion for the traditional music of Ireland and a funky energy that is pure New York. The roots of the music are unmistakably traditional Irish; the branches that shoot off delve into rock, worldbeat, jazz and punk, and the result has been called “the best Irish trad-rock band” by no less a source than the Village Voice. Dubbed “the kings of jig-punk,” the Prodigals have played throughout the United States, headlining the world’s largest Irish festivals, and recently received the #1 ranking by readers of the largest circulation Irish-American newspaper, the Irish Echo, beating out acts such as U2, the Saw Doctors, Black 47 and Van Morrison.



THE FENIANS The Fenians are an electrifying Irish musical quintet based out of Orange County, CA. The lads offer a mix of their original creations, and contemporary and traditional songs. Their foundation is decidedly Celtic, but there is no mistaking the complimentary influences of Rock, Folk, Bluegrass, Jazz, and World music. The Fenians – Terry Casey on lead vocals and mandolin; Kenny Cosca on bass and vocals; Dave Burnett on whistles, sax, and flute; Chris Pierce on drums and vocals; and Rob Williams on vocals and guitar – present through their instruments and voices music that captures the entire human experience, sweet and sorrowful; brave and beautiful; angry and amused. Since 1990, The Fenians have garnered an impressive list of accomplishments and honors, headlining theaters and festivals across the U. S. and Ireland, including: the House of Blues (Hollywood), The Galaxy, and the Coach House (Orange County), The Milwaukee Irish Fest, Chicago Irish Fest (Gaelic Park), the Stonehill Irish Festival (Boston), and The Quays (Galway), one of Ireland's premiere live music venues, to name but a few. In 1999, The Fenians were inducted into the Guinness Wall of Fame.



YOUNG DUBLINERS Building a fervent fan base comparable to that of jam band rockers like Phish and Dave Matthews Band, The Young Dubliners have become notorious for the whirling "jig pits" that erupt at their live shows. In fact, the group's origins can be traced back to Los Angeles' vibrant pub scene in which Dublin natives Keith Roberts (vocals, guitar) and Paul O'Toole first met. Roberts was composing some Irish ballads at the time and thought a band might be in the offing. Assembling a rag-tag team of Irish transplants and like-minded American rockers, The Young Dubliners grew into a pugnacious music machine resulting in the hefty rock sound that made them a club favorite. Since their inception, they have toured the world, both as headliners and as openers for acts such as Jethro Tull, John Hiatt, Robert Cray, Johnny Lang, Collective Soul, and Great Big Sea. The Young Dubliners also revved up the crowd at the 2002 Olympics in Salt Lake City.



GLENGARRY BHOYS The Glengarry Bhoys began some six years and five albums ago and have established themselves through a devoted work ethic of touring and recording as one of the top draws on the Irish festival and club circuit. The Bhoys have their roots in Glengarry, Ontario and their music draws on the unique blend of the French and Scottish musical heritage indigenous to the area. Their blend of traditional music, fused with the multicultural sounds of modern and contemporary Celtic music, has brought them international acclaim. Fiery guitar and bass, intense percussion and fiddle, teamed with pipes and vocals, make for a memorable performance.



CATHIE RYAN *The New York Daily News* recently stated that Cathie Ryan is "firmly in the upper echelons of Irish music singers." For the fans who have been following Cathie since her early days with Cherish the Ladies, this is proof of what they have known for years: that she is a major artistic talent, equally at home amid the deepest strains of the Irish tradition or the cutting edge of the contemporary songwriter movement. The original lead vocalist for Cherish the Ladies, Cathie has been hailed as one of the leading voices in Celtic Music by the Los Angeles Times and was named Irish Female Vocalist of the Decade by the Irish American News.

HAIR OF THE DOG Over the past decade Hair Of The Dog has entertained thousands of fans of all ages with their unique blend of Celtic, rock, folk and bluegrass music. Their high energy sound, smooth four-part harmonies and tight instrumental attack has made them America's number one Irish folk band, and an international success as well. The band has sold thousands of their CDs, pitching them from stages shared with The Clancy Brothers, Seven Nations, Black 47, The Wolfe Tones, The Young Dubliners, Solas, The Paperboys, The Prodigals, Off-Kilter and the like. They tour Ireland annually, they've been to the Caribbean and they've appeared in concert at pubs and festivals across the US, including The Chicago Gaelic Park Festival, The Bethlehem Pennsylvania Celtic Classic, The Cleveland Summer Fest, The Hunter Mountain Irish Festival, The Coney Island Great Irish Fair, Irish 2000 Music And Arts Festival, The Capital District Scottish Games and the East Durham Irish Festival.

IRISH DESCENDANTS Since forming from two local Newfoundland bands in 1990 who decided there was more of a future in music than in fishing, the Irish Descendants have had a wide impact on audiences and music lovers all around the world. The Juno and East Coast Music Award-winning Descendants have produced ten critically acclaimed CDs, and enchanted world-wide audiences with their distinctive blend of wit, traditional and contemporary songs, powerful vocals and outstanding musicianship. The Irish Descendants consist of Con O'Brien – lead vocals, guitar; Glenn Hiscock– fiddle, bouzouki, concertina, harp, tin whistle, piano accordion, mandolin, vocals; Paul "Boomer" Stamp – drums, percussion, vocals; Bob Pike– bass guitar, vocals; Mike Hanrahan – banjo, bouzouki, mandolin, vocals

ANDY COONEY Christened by The New York Times as "Irish America's Favorite Son," Andy Cooney has taken the Irish-American music scene by storm. His outstanding voice and dynamic stage presence have made him a favorite with audiences throughout the world as he renders songs ranging from all-time favorites like "Galway Bay" and "Danny Boy" to his hit records "The Irish Wedding Song," "Boston Rose" and "Shannon River." Andy toured as vocalist with well-known bandleader Paddy Noonan for several years while gaining national exposure for his talent and winning a place in the hearts of all those who heard him from coast to coast. Andy presents a high-energy show that showcases the finest in Irish music, comedy and dance. Andy, who recently had his own special, "Andy Cooney – An Evening of Irish Classics" broadcast on PBS affiliates around the country, is no stranger to Central New York, having brought his Christmas show here the past two years and having headlined at the inaugural Great American Irish festival.

OLD BLIND DOGS One of the original cutting edge folk outfits out of Scotland, Old Blind Dogs have evolved and grown into one of Scotland's favorite folk bands by applying original arrangements to traditional forms to create an infectious and irresistible energy. Founding member Jonny Hardie (fiddle, mandolin, guitar) is joined by Jim Malcom (guitar, harmonica, lead vocals); Aaron Jones (bass, bouzouki, backing vocals); Rory Campbell (border (reel) pipes, whistles and backing vocals); and Fraser Stone, (drums and percussion). While utilizing modern grooves and combing elements from other musical cultures, the Old Blind Dogs repertoire is set very firmly in their native Scotland. The band continues to tour extensively and have been rewarded for their efforts with the "Band of the Year" Award at the Scots Trad Music Awards in the Queen's Hall, Edinburgh.

THE MCKRELLS The McKrells' musical blend defies efforts to put a label on it, melding Bluegrass with Celtic roots, tossing in the heartfelt fervor of folk and putting it all out there with the energy of rock. Winners of the prestigious Winterhawk Bluegrass New Band Competition, The McKrells have received standing ovations as special guests of Irish legends Mary Black, Dolores Keane, Solas, and The Fureys. Featuring an all-star lineup of award-winning singer-songwriter Kevin McKrell, banjo champion Chris Leske, nationally renowned flatpick guitarist Craig Vance, legendary world music percussionist Brian Melick and fiddler and vocalist Doug Moody, The McKrells have been voted Acoustic Band of the Year three years running by Metroland magazine as well as Bluegrass Band of the Year in 2000 and 2001 by the Northeast Country Music Association. The McKrells have been given their own day by their home city of Saratoga Springs, and have been honored with the Spirit of Saratoga award for contributing to the growth of the arts and to the quality of life in Saratoga Springs, as well as being inducted into the Capital District Music Hall of Fame.

GREENWICH MEANTIME Greenwich Meantime was brought together when Shelley Downing, James Libbey and Steph McAlear, then members of the Glengarry Bhoys, felt a need to follow their own musical ambitions. This sparked the interest of Nigel Gibson, also formerly of the Bhoys. Nigel signed on and former "Haggis" frontman Nick Matthew completed the quintet. Based out of Cornwall, Ontario, Canada, GMT grew up in traditional Celtic and French Canadian music country, and that influence is evident in the music they write and perform. The band has set their sights on staying true to their Celtic roots, while making use of all their creative resources. As a result of that dedication, Greenwich Meantime has become one of the fastest rising acts on the Celtic music scene.

PAT KANE AND WEST O'CLARE West o'Clare is the band Pat Kane formed in 1995, named for his family's home county in Ireland. The band represents the Irish musical tradition of the region they were raised in, here in America. That region centers near Elmira NY, roughly the area around the Finger Lakes and Twin Tiers. West o'Clare are known for their fine vocals and harmonies. Their instrumentation is varied: fiddle, flute, whistles, accordions, concertinas, guitars, bodhrans and bones. At present, the band consists of Pat Kane, Brian Hyland, and Bryan Kane, Pat's nephew. The band is often joined by friends from home, like Terry Kane, Kevin Riley, or Brian Murphy. The band has been active with concerts, festivals, parties, schools, colleges & clubs, ceili & square dances, radio, television, wakes & weddings, and every fancy ball!

DONAL O'SHAUGHNESSY Donal O'Shaughnessy is a multi-talented performer, playing guitar, fiddle, keyboards, pipe organ, bodhran and mandolin. Donal is probably best known for his live performances. His quick wit and spontaneity with his audience keeps people in their seats until the very end of the night. He is also known for his work ethic as he rarely takes a break. On St. Patrick's Day 1997 he played 12 straight hours only repeating a song if it was requested. Donal's versatility with musical instruments and singing style makes every occasion special. Donal was the winner of the 1996 Fleadh Cheoil Mid Atlantic Regional Irish Singing Contest and placed seventh in the fiddle contest at the same event.

SEANACHE Seanache, the Gaelic term for Storyteller, originated in a little town called Kilrush. This small town is located at the mouth of the river Shannon, in County Clare at the southwestern end of Ireland. It was here that the founder of the band, Gerry Dixon, honed his craft; singing and playing traditional Irish music and telling stories of his culture. Gerry was greatly influenced by his family and renowned artists, such as Christy Moore and Finbar Furey. Like many others from Ireland he not only sings, but also plays a myriad of instruments; including the guitar, tin whistle, and bodhran. During his travels, Gerry met other musicians who shared a fondness for traditional Irish and folk music. Enter Joe Ernst, native of western New York, to complete the band, accompanying Gerry with singing, guitar, banjo, mandolin and bodhran. Together, through their music, they take you on a memorable trip to the Emerald Isle.

KERRY BOYS The Kerry Boys are Mark James, originally from the county Kerry, Ireland, now a Cheshire, CT resident, and Pierce Campbell from Prospect, CT. These two dynamic and popular Connecticut Irish balladeers have been performing together for over 14 years, dazzling fans of all ages from Maine to New York. Their humorous, high-energy show will have you clapping and singing along in no time, engaging you from start to finish with their wide collection of traditional and original songs. The Kerry Boys have released two CD's, Live in the Studio, in August of '03 and their first self-titled recording in March of 1997. The Kerry Boys, who are on the Musician Roster of the Connecticut Commission on the Arts, feature pristine harmonies, backing them up with powerful and expressive mandolin and guitar.

VINCE COLGAN The term is often too easily and inappropriately applied, but Vince Colgan is a true legend in central New York Irish Music circles and beyond. A master storyteller as well as a consummate balladeer, Vince has entertained generations of Central New Yorkers and is now working on the next generation. The Great American Irish Festival is honored to welcome him to its stages.

THE BLARNEY REBEL BAND The Blarney Rebel Band is group of musicians from the Celtic hotbed of Central New York performing all types of traditional Irish music, from rollicking pub songs to traditional folk fare, from rousing sea songs to moving ballads, from stirring rebel songs to hand-clapping jigs and reels. It's all on display by a group of talented musicians boasting virtuoso musicianship and perfectly blended harmonies, sure to please old and young alike. The Blarney Rebel Band is always ready to help raise a pint, whether at a festival, party or a night at the local pub! The Blarney Rebel Band, which consists of Mark Sisti - banjo, mandolin, mandola, pennywhistle, concertina, flute, vocals; Al Sisti - bass guitar, vocals; Dan Sisti - guitar, vocals; Jessica Voce - bodhran, tambourine, percussion, has recently recorded their first CD, "Live at Piggy Pat's."

CLIUDAN A young and energetic group blending traditional Irish, Scottish and Cape Breton tunes with pub classics, rebel tunes and originals, Cliudan is "Bound and determined to get you on your feet! Cliudan has become known for their creative and energetic mix of progressive Celtic and fiery traditional, blending the two in an unpredictable but always sincere and appreciative way. The nucleus of the Cliudan sound is a tribute to their Irish and Scottish roots, their rural upbringing, and their varied musical backgrounds. Cliudan has played extensively though the Northeast from Buffalo to Boston, Manhattan to Ottawa, Canada and many great places in between, bringing their music to small pubs, large clubs, huge festivals, private parties and fundraisers. Cliudan features Paddy Blush- Bodhran, Conga, Jaw Harp, Spoons; Noah Brown- Guitar, Vocals; and Andrew Gracey- Lead Vocals, Flute, Whistles and Mandolin. They are currently in the studio working on their new CD to follow-up their most recent effort, "Whiskey on a Sunday."

RATTLIN' BOG Long-time veterans of the local Irish Music scene, Rattlin' Bog is made up of tenor Rick Kincaid and baritone Joe Rowlands applying their tight vocal harmonies to Irish folk music and accompanying themselves on various acoustic instruments, including six and 12 string guitars, banjo, accordion, melodica, penny whistles and harmonicas. Hailing from the Utica area, Rattlin' Bog encourages audience participation with its catchy musical performance and its irreverent good humor.

JOHN GILLIGAN John Gilligan is a central New York based solo performer with an upbeat Irish Republican rebel sound. Gilligan performs a variety of favorites from Irish Republican ballads to rebel songs along with a few contemporary Irish songs thrown in for good measure. John Gilligan delivers a striking live sound that wins over audiences wherever he goes. John has performed in Ireland and has also played extensively throughout New York and Pennsylvania. His venues range from intimate pubs & clubs to festivals and outdoor functions. John, who has just released his first recording, "Green Plastic Derby," works in close association with the Irish community and its various member groups --such as the Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH), and the Irish Political Prisoners Children's Holiday (IPPCH) -- and contributes time, talent, and resources in their various fundraising efforts.

...and, as they say, Many more. As you can imagine, choosing the entertainment for this year's festival was not an easy task. Besides the artists listed above, the committee has heard from hundreds of other acts, and communicated with dozens of the world's greatest artists. In summary, there simply wasn't enough room this year to accommodate all the acts that wanted in. But there's always next year, and the committee is already hard at work trying to nail down some of the acts that they weren't able to get this year.

OTHER GAIF NEWS:

'06 GAIF To Feature Open Sessions Have you always wanted to play at the Great American Irish Festival? Well, here's your chance. No, you won't be taking the stage with Solas, but you can share a playing area with some of Central New York's most respected musicians. The 2006 Great American Irish festival will present, for the first time, an open session, where musicians of all skill levels are invited to join and play traditional jigs and reels of Ireland. Festivalgoers are invited to bring whatever instruments they play (although drum kits and electric guitars will probably not be welcomed with open arms) and join in with members from the well-established Syracuse session, which meets on (at least) a weekly basis at venues throughout Syracuse. The sessions will be geared to beginners as well as advanced musicians. All that is required is a basic knowledge of some of the tunes traditionally played at sessions. Times will be posted as the schedules are finalized.

Local Author To Speak At Festival A conversation with Jim O'Looney could lead you to believe that you found the quiet man of the Mohawk Valley, but he is far from being unheard. As a traditional Irish musician, and now an author, O'Looney, a retired college instructor, originally penned his autobiography to help his children and grandchildren understand his life in Ireland and his immigration to Upstate New York. Born in Co. Kerry, shortly after the birth of the Irish Republic, life for O'Looney was far different from the Ireland we know today. He emigrated to the U.S. with his American-born wife, Diana, to a world which, at that time, was as modern and foreign to him in the 1950's as is the Ireland of today, compared to its third world status before 1972. O'Looney, The author of "A Time To Reflect" will detail his childhood in Ireland at a workshop at the Great American Irish Festival in the Irish Culture Building, on July 29th, at 4:30 p.m.

Volunteers Needed Director Matt Sullivan says that volunteers are still needed, in a variety of categories... but don't expect to just walk up and volunteer, or to phone one of the committee members. Instead, he advises that all those wishing to volunteer please do so via the GAIF web site. Says Matt, "With 400 volunteers, it's essential we track and maintain names, roles and contact numbers on the web, so that we can collect them into a comprehensive database."

Do You Have the Luck of the Irish? Well, you'll wish you did. Again this year, the festival will be offering chances at the very popular "Basket of Craic" and the 50/50 raffle. The "Basket of Craic" is chock-full of many items of Irish and Celtic interest, with a value in the hundreds of dollars. Also, if you were one of the many people vying for free weekend tickets (via the "green cards" given out at the parade and several other venues), winners will be drawn soon...so if the phone rings, you might want to answer it!

GAIF Merchandise Spending mavens Beth Loftis and Mary Beth Dowling have outdone themselves this year, lining up an impressive batch of collectible and wearable GAIF merchandise. Besides the widely popular GAIF beer glasses, they have picked up a nice line of long-sleeved denim shirts, long sleeve natural colored shirts, short-sleeve ladies denim shirts, baseball caps of all colors, black Irish caps, tote bags, kids tees, ladies v-neck tees and window stickers. Remember, many of these items sold out early last year! Don't be left out... shop early and shop often.

Finally, as you enjoy yourself at this year's festival, please make a special point to give a tip 'o the derby to anyone wearing a Festival Committee shirt and lanyard. They'll be easy to spot; they'll be the ones with the broad grins and crossed fingers. They've literally been working their butts off since the close of 2005's festival to make whatever changes needed to be made – including listening to your entertainment suggestions – that really have made this year's event one of the preeminent festivals in the United States

RANDOM RAMBLINGS

The Catskill Hills are Alive with Irish Music in July Every July the Irish American hamlet of East Durham, New York becomes the Mecca of traditional Irish Music and Dance in North America for the **Catskills Irish Arts Week**. In its 12th year, the prestigious summer school, which runs from July 10-14 and features over 60 classes in traditional music, song, dance and Celtic crafts, has become the premier event this side of the Atlantic; attracting students from all around the United States and Canada. The largest school of its kind in North America invites the finest teachers from Ireland and the United States, who will be giving workshops and demonstrations in fiddle, concertina, accordion, flute, harp, Irish singing, set dance and step dance, and much, much more. Admission is just \$10 for the evening concerts and dances.

The Catskills Irish Arts Week is organized by the Michael J. Quill Irish Cultural & Sports Centre, a not for Profit organization dedicated to Keeping the Tradition Alive in East Durham. More information about the program can be obtained by calling 1-800-434-3378 or 518-634-2286 or on the web at www.east-durham.org.

IPPCH and Project Children Happenings – Frank Kealy is pleased to announce that this year's group of Irish children has safely arrived; 13 children and their chaperones are currently settled in their summer homes. The group will be marching in Whitesboro's 4th of July Parade at 1 PM, at the invitation of the Mayor of Whitesboro. If you don't meet them at the parade, you will no doubt have many chances during their month-long stay. The Irish Political Prisoners Children's Holiday is an organization that raises money to bring children from embattled Northern Ireland to vacation for a month with families in the United States. The IPPCH has no political or religious affiliation.

For those of you who may not be aware, last October, Frank went to the national IPPCH convention in Philadelphia, and at that conference, representatives from Belfast let it be known that they'd like 2006 to be the last year of the IPPCH program, since, for all of the kids in the age range being serviced by the organization, there's been relative peace in their lifetime. While that assertion may be a bone of contention with some, what is not being debated is the desire to continue to bring children from Northern Ireland over to the States for a month during the summer. That activity will now -- seamlessly -- be part of Project Children of the Mohawk Valley. Project Children, established in 1975, is an American-Northern Ireland partnership dedicated to "...showing Protestant and Catholic kids that they have nothing to fear from each other and much to gain." We plan to have a more detailed piece in the next issue of MVICE, but it's never too early to begin the fundraising activities to defer the costs of bringing the kids over this year under the IPPCH umbrella... and starting next year, through Project Children... and so we are pleased to announce...

...**The First Annual Hooley for Project Children of the Mohawk Valley** Mark your calendars for Sunday, July 16th, as Piggy Pat's Bar B-Q hosts the First Annual Hooley for Project Children of the Mohawk Valley. From 2 to 6 PM, you can meet this year's IPPCH children and their host families, enjoy Head Hog Pat McCann's out-of-this-world barbecue fare, and be entertained by the Blarney Rebel Band, Vince Colgan, John Gilligan, Comholtas and dance presentations by the Butler School of Irish Dance. Donations of \$5 are appreciated.

Celtic Club Calendar Finally, as promised, here's a look at some upcoming Irish Musical and Cultural events for July, suitable for posting:

July 1	Donal O'Shaughnessy	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	9:00 PM	Free
July 7	Cliudan	Piggy Pat's Pickled Pig Pub	Washington Mills	5-8:30 PM	Free
July 7	Neil Emberg	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	9:00 PM	Free
July 8	Neil Emberg	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	9:00 PM	Free
July 14	Blarney Rebel Band	Piggy Pat's Pickled Pig Pub	Washington Mills	5-8:00 PM	Free
July 14-16	Catskill Irish Arts Week	Michael J. Quill Irish Cultural & Sports Centre	East Durham	Varies	Check site for tuition; \$10 evening concerts/dances
July 14	Jeff Phillips	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	9:00 PM	Free
July 15	Jeff Phillips	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	9:00 PM	Free
July 16	1 st Hooley for Project Children	Piggy Pat's Pickled Pig Pub	Washington Mills	2 - 6 PM	\$5 Donation
July 16	Celtic Woman	Saratoga Performing Arts Center	Saratoga Springs	8 PM	\$40-60 (in), \$15 (lawn)
July 21	Blarney Rebel Band	Piggy Pat's Pickled Pig Pub	Washington Mills	5-8:30 PM	Free
July 21	The Prodigals	Belleayre Music Festival	Highmount	8 PM	\$20
July 21	Emish	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	9:00 PM	Free
July 22	Cassidy and McCale	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	9:00 PM	Free
July 28-9	Great American Irish Festival	Herkimer County Fairgrounds	Frankfort	5 PM - mid Fri 11AM - mid Sat	\$10 Fri, \$15 Sat, \$20 Both, adv
July 29	Kerry Boys	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	9:00 PM	Free

That wraps it up for this month. If you have anything you want to add, or if you want your email address dropped from the list, or – especially – if you have additional addressees you'd like us to include PLEASE feel free to contact us at sistia@rl.af.mil, bloftis@adelphia.net or marksisti@adelphia.net. Better yet, find us at the Great American Irish Festival on July 28th and 29th!

Have a safe and happy Independence Day. And as you enjoy your freedom, remember: America is "...one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all." So too should Ireland be!