



ICP Named as St. Patrick's Parade Grand Marshalls!

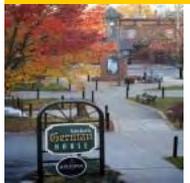
It's official!!! The Irish Children's Program has been named the **2014 Rochester St. Patrick's Day Parade Grand Marshalls!!** The announcement was made at the Parade Honoree and Sponsor recognition party at the Genesee Brew House on January 26. Present for the announcement were board members/officers Gina Michener, Bob Tucker, Jeff & Kathy Danzinger. Also present were Brendan and Vera Pressimone who were the founders of the program back in 1982! What a fantastic honor! The parade will be held on Saturday, March 15, and we'll be there to start it off!! Let's hope for a beautiful, warm day like we had two years ago and not the chill of last year! ;-)



Brendan & Vera Pressimone discuss the early beginnings of the ICP at the Parade Honoree Party (Bob Tucker, Jeff Danzinger, Gina Michener, Kathy Danzinger listen in)



Benefit Concert & Silent Auction! April 6 at German House



This year's Benefit Concert and Silent Auction will be held on Sunday April 6, 2014 at the historic German House, in their "Zeppa Auditorium", 315 Gregory Street (in the south wedge neighborhood of the City of Rochester). Be sure to check the ICP Website and Facebook page for further information on this upcoming fundraising event. Tick-

ets will be available on-line, as well as from Board Members and Host Families. You may also purchase them at the door the day of the event. While the all-volunteer ICP Board works this event, the bands and dance schools from Rochester and western New York that donate their time and talents make this a special event. The silent auction and raffles are included in the fun, and there will be items that inspire bidding by all ages, including chil-

dren. Our host families and board members provide all auction items which range from assorted gift baskets, jewelry, family fun items, music, apparel, gift certificates and so much more. We hope to continue to see the many familiar and new faces that help us celebrate the Irish heritage, continue touching the lives of many Rochester Area families, and benefit the cause of "Peace, One Child at a Time" for the children of Belfast, Northern Ireland.

"Peace Through Understanding"

Special points of interest:

- > President's Letter—Gina Michener—Rochester
- > Benefit Concert / Silent Auction
- > Parade News
- > Stories from 2013
Belfast
Chaperones
- > Some Connections
Grow Better with Time!
(One host family's story)
- > Rochester Youth Board

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Hosting an Irish Child Provides Lifelong Benefits (sometimes in unexpected ways...many years down the road!)

by Lorrie Mazza

My Dad instilled a love of Irish culture in all his children, though my family was then unable to afford a trip across the pond, so celebrating St. Paddy's Day on Tipperary Hill in Syracuse, and sporting a photo of its green-over-red traffic light in my kitchen had to suffice as my Irish connection—until I got involved with the Irish Children's Program.

I knew several families who hosted Irish children. Everyone raved about their experience, and when my husband and I moved to rural Livingston County with our three children, I thought becoming a host family for an Irish child would be a positive adventure for my family and a chance to make new connections with Ireland.

In 1991, my husband Nick and I applied to the Rochester Irish Children's Program to host an Irish child for six weeks that summer. The application process was thorough; board members toured our home and interviewed the whole family. We were happy to be accepted.

"I would urge anyone considering a hosting experience to open your hearts and homes to the Irish Children's Program"

We asked to host a girl close to our oldest daughter Nora's age, and we were matched with 10-year-old JoAnne McDonnell from Belfast. Her mom and dad sent her to the U.S. with gifts for Nick and me: a stone cutting board shaped like a map of Ireland and a set of Irish linen pillowcases. We still have them.

JoAnne acclimated quickly. Within just a day or two, she was speaking without a brogue and working hard to Americanize herself. Nora and JoAnne,

both the oldest in their families, needed some time to adjust, butting of heads was inevitable. I had Nora include JoAnne in activities with her friends, yet JoAnne did not always include Nora, and we had to deal with disappointment on occasion.

The program required that we participate in all planned group activities, as the idea was to bring Protestant and Catholic kids from Belfast together in a fun and positive way. We were busy: 4th of July fireworks and Redwings baseball games in Rochester, picnics and all kinds of hometown activities – swimming lessons, soccer league, playground, etc. We also brought JoAnne with us on family outings with my mom and two sisters' families, 15 cousins in all. As the six weeks rolled by, JoAnne ad-



Left to Right: Nora and Lorrie Mazza, JoAnne McDonnell, Nick Mazza (holding Jack). Peggy Mazza is above.

justed to having a 2-year-old little brother and a 4-year-old sister underfoot, and she and Nora came to terms with each other and became good friends.

We treated JoAnne as one of the children. I remember scolding her one day when she took off on her own, on a bike and returned more than an hour late. I sent her to her room with stern admonishment: "If you didn't return, how could I ever explain that horrendous event to your parents?" She got the message.

When it was time for JoAnne to leave, it was sad, yet I did not feel like any deep, lasting bond had developed; the program had been a hectic six weeks for me and my family, and I felt rather underappreciated. At the airport, our farewell seemed a final goodbye to the program and JoAnne.

Nick and I finally made it to Ireland for the first time in 2002. Since we had not heard from JoAnne in the 10 years since her visit, we chose not to contact her, not wanting to push ourselves into her life. But in 2011, while we were planning a second trip with a larger family group, Nick received an email from a JoAnne McMahon, who was trying to contact the American family she had stayed with in 1991. Were we that family? She explained that she had recently had a little girl and was thinking back to her own childhood. She wanted to re-connect with us.

(Cont'd. on next page)

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WEBSITE: [http://
www.irishchildrensprogram.com](http://www.irishchildrensprogram.com)**

Hosting Provides Lifelong Benefits (cont'd. from Page 2)

Nick and I were amazed, and I was also skeptical at first. It also brought back memories of a time I had with my older daughter, who had died unexpectedly at age 22; my emotions ran the gamut. My husband said, "Lorrie, what do you always say? 'The kids will never appreciate what we have done until they have kids of their own.' JoAnne is at that time in her life now." So we called her, and it turned out to be one of the best calls I've ever made.

We arranged to take a train from Dublin to Belfast during our family trip to see JoAnne and meet her family. JoAnne greeted daughter Peggy, Nick and I at the train station, and the 10-year-old we remembered had become a woman of 30. I saw the child of long ago in her face and recognized her immediately.

The grownup JoAnne was warm, friendly and funny. She took us to her house to meet her husband Sean and beautiful 18-month-old daughter Hannah. Soon her mom, dad, sister, nephew and grandparents came over to meet her American family.

We dined on a huge Irish breakfast before JoAnne treated us to a bus trip tour of Belfast, proudly showing us her neighborhood and lamenting the recent vandalism of her local church. Later, her dad took us on a pub-



JoAnne's Mom, JoAnne, Nick and Peggy

crawl of their neighborhood, the Short Strand, scene of many of the troubles. After dinner at one of the pubs, JoAnne walked us back to the train station. This time our goodbye included promises to stay in touch and visit

again. There were even tears.

While our experience with the Irish Children's Program was not one of immediate rewards, in part a result of my own selfishness in expecting instant gratification for things I do, in the long term it proved deeply gratifying. At the time, I wanted to enrich the lives of my own three children and plant a seed in them about traveling to Ireland in the future. I remember telling 10-year-old JoAnne that since we couldn't go to Ireland, I brought Ireland to us.



JoAnne's Mom, Lorrie, and JoAnne

Now the 30-year-old JoAnne is doing that for me. She is a wonderful young woman, mom, sister and daughter. She sends me best wishes on Mother's Day and holidays, flowers when my mother died and pictures of wee Hannah at Halloween and first day of school. She asks me how I managed with four children (herself included) when she has her hands full with one. I am honored to know her and have her in my life.

I would urge anyone considering a hosting experience to open your hearts and homes to the Irish Children's Program. Your family's lives and the life of an Irish child will be touched and enriched, now and in the future. Slainte!



Message from David Robinson, Belfast Chaperone, 2013



It is hard to believe that it has been six months since our summer adventure in Rochester. It only feels like yesterday that I was grabbing thrills at Seabreeze, dodging the turtles at the Creative Themes camp and viewing the Falls from the deck of the Maid of the Mist in a drenched blue poncho!

I would like to thank all members of the American board for their kindness, help, and patience in allowing the Belfast children and chaperones to visit this past year. It was a thoroughly enjoyable month full of new sights, sounds and tastes (hot wings are amazing!) The children had a ball, from visiting theme parks to learning the American lingo. I feel I can speak for them all when I say it was the best time of their lives! Whilst a few had some minor culture shock in the beginning, this was quickly overridden through the love shown to them by their host families. As this was my first year chaperoning, I was a tad nervous to say the least. Taking 13 children across the other side of the world is a daunting task on paper, however in reality it was a fantastic challenge for me personally which, with a little blood sweat and tears, I definitely enjoyed! Of course I did not do this alone and I thank Leah, Gary and Leticia for all their support.

As far as the host families this year are concerned, you guys did an amazing job! The positive influence that you have had on your Belfast child/children will stay with them for the rest of their lives! Even last week I was stopped in the corridor by Connor reminiscing about Darien Lake. (Of course we were both exactly on time for our next class!) I hope that

you all gained as much as the children and I did from our adventure!

To future families thinking of hosting, in the famous words of Nike, JUST DO IT! You won't regret it and the summer of memories you will collect will be priceless!

I must say a massive thanks to my host families; Angela and Larry, thanks for all the late night (and breakfast) pizza! Bob, thanks for the Hazelnut milk and business advice; and Gary and Suzanne, thanks for introducing me to river cycling and Plum Garden! You guys were the best support network I could have wished for! It truly was a summer to remember filled with new friends and great craic, thank you all for such an amazing experience and I hope to see you all again!

A Word from Leah Goodall, co-chaperone

Summer 2013 in Rochester with the ICP was an amazing experience for me and all of the Belfast children involved in the program. The people we met and the activities we shared will stay with us forever. The children experienced a different way of life for those five weeks, mixing and interacting with those they may never have had the chance to back home. The program gives children opportunities to do many fun things, but most importantly, it builds life long friendships and bonds .



David Robinson, Gary Roscoe (last year's ICP President) and Leah Goodall

INTERESTED IN HOSTING NEXT SUMMER? VISIT OUR WEBSITE AND CLICK ON THE EMAIL LINK ON OUR MAIN PAGE. <http://www.irishchildrensprogram.com>

Meet the New ICP Rochester Youth Board!

Our new ICP Youth Board is anxious to make their mark on the future of the ICP. They are full of ideas for our American host kids, Belfast guests, and all that goes into building a lasting bond between them.

At our first meeting, held Sunday, January 26, they discussed what worked well in 2013 and gave suggestions for ways to improve the program in 2014.

They've already begun to take an active part in raising funds to bring the Belfast kids here to Rochester with an ongoing can and bottle drive. In March they will help sell carnations in the malls and in April, put together a gift basket to be auctioned off at our annual Benefit Concert and Silent Auction, April 6 at the German House.

One fund-raising project they'd like to take off with on their own is a candy bar

sale. Be on the look-out for more details. The baton is being passed! Thank you Youth Board!



Pictured (L to R): Meghan Guzda, Lizzie Hanna, Ciara Hanna, Victoria Donahue, Valerie Lane



Jenna & Amy Condoluci

President's News -- Gina Michener



Over the past fourteen years my family has had the privilege of hosting seven children from Belfast, both Protestant and Catholic, through the Irish Children's Program. As a member of the ICP board of directors, I've worked with amazing families who have opened their homes with "Love, Room and Board."

At first, I'd hoped to make a difference in the life of a child there, but in fact, they made a difference in ours. My children became aware that not all children grow up feeling secure. They learned tolerance, how to take a step back and allow another child to be first and best, as they shared their rooms, belongings, friends and parents. We have a Belfast "daughter" who spent five summers with my family. Now a college graduate, this accomplished young woman is a productive citizen who, through the Irish Children's Program, learned to work cooperatively with persons of different religious beliefs.

To our delight, several children who came through the program are now ICP leaders in Belfast, and have traveled to America as chaperones. There is a special quality in the Rochester families who commit to host a child from Belfast for five weeks of summer, just as there is a special quality about the families in Belfast who send their "babies" to America, to see what tolerance looks like. They send their children across the Atlantic Ocean where they interact with other Belfast children of another religion, because in their homeland, Protestant and Catholic children have little or no interaction, perpetuating longstanding disagreements.

Because of rising airfare, there is an urgent need for successful fundraising. Our all-volunteer board works tirelessly to coordinate the green carnation sale, silent auction and benefit concert. We spend our own money to travel to Belfast and assist with bringing the children here. Our wonderful host families, who have also worked tirelessly in all fundraising efforts, continue giving of their time and resources as they introduce their young guests to our beautiful region and involve them in community events.

We all hope to see you at the Parade (where we will proudly march as Grand Marshalls!) and at the Benefit Concert / Silent Auction!

**We have the
honor of
serving as
Grand
Marshalls of
the St. Patrick's
Day Parade!**

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and on Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/irishchildrensprogram>



LOOK FOR US IN GREECE RIDGE AND EASTVIEW MALLS IN MARCH! PLEASE SUPPORT THE ICP BY BUYING GREEN CARNATIONS!



ICP Rochester Board Members—Seated: Gary Roscoe, Gina Michener, Bob Tucker. Middle Row: Cindy Storace, Elaine Hart, Kathy Salvati, Kathy Danzinger, Suzanne Donahue, Paul Donahue. Back Row: Kathy Mashewske, Angela Zale, Jeff Danzinger, Sue Flanagan, Dave Mashewske, Stephanie Cassidy. Missing: Tim Cassidy and Tom Hanna



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of Rochester

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