

# Commodore John Barry Arts and Cultural Center

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May 1, 2021

Dear Friend,

## **WE MADE IT THROUGH 2020!!**

As a supporter of the Commodore John Barry Arts & Cultural Center (the “Irish Center”), you are aware that the mission of the Irish Center is to teach, celebrate and promote Irish art, culture and heritage.

As President of the Irish Center, I am committed, along with the Board of Directors, to communicate directly to you, our donors, on an annual basis to share news about the Irish Center. Communication is vitally important now more than ever as the world and the Irish Center rebounds and recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Through your generosity, the Irish Center has survived and is ready to live our mission to the fullest again – albeit slowly, always in compliance with the City of Philadelphia’s guidance, and with your safety as our top priority.

The Irish Center shut down on March 13, 2020. In June, the Board came to you asking for your help – although we had built up a cash reserve for the first time ever, it was not going to last very long. You answered the call for help and raised \$40,000 to cover basic bills during this time. The Board and I were overwhelmed with the response. We have to admit – there are some days when volunteering for a non-profit is hard, even when you love it like we do. Receiving such a positive response from the Irish Center’s supporters breathed new life and energy into the Board of the Irish Center and we thank you for that vote of confidence.

With that renewed energy, the Irish Center has accomplished so much since March 13, 2020. Here are some of the highlights:

- Creating an art gallery in the lobby – showcasing the art of Irish artist Patrick Gallagher and his portraits of Irish Inspirational Women
- Running a children’s art contest asking them to depict “What being Irish means to them” – we were so excited by the intergenerational response to the art contest
- Hosting and promoting a film about Monsignor Michael Doyle, an extraordinary County Longford native, dedicating his life to the people of Camden
- Hosting and promoting Irish Author, Ruari McKiernan’s “Hitching for Hope: A Journey into the Heart and Soul of Ireland”
- Promoting Irish History Courses (online)
- Becoming a blood donor program partner with the American Red Cross
- Running a Christmas collection collecting socks, underwear and undershirts for men, women and children in the community in need
- Collecting food for distribution for those immediately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic

In addition, we used this time to improve the building itself and we can’t wait to show off the beautiful Irish Center to each and every one of you. With the help of numerous volunteers, including the painter’s union, plasterer’s union, carpenter’s union and electrician’s union, and many business partners,

contractors and dedicated individuals, we were able to complete roof repairs after 20 years, upgrade the entire electrical system in the Irish Center (wiring from the 1930s), install an energy-efficient HVAC system in the Fireside room, upgrade our WIFI service, lay new carpet, and paint the walls and refinish the floors in the Fireside room and Ballroom. These improvements will reduce our operating utility costs long into the future. Volunteers have been working, and continue to work, at the Irish Center every weekend with an energy so visibly positive it is incredibly encouraging. They know they are doing their part to keep the Irish traditions alive for another generation.

The Irish Center's library is being renovated with help from the painter's union, the carpenter's union and the Rosenbach Museum who has generously agreed to lend us some showcases so we can share with you books and articles from our collection from the 1800s. We cannot forget the help of our teenage members who carried books in and out of the library space so these renovations could be completed. It is heartwarming to see the next generation volunteering at the Irish Center.

Lastly, we would be remiss if we didn't mention our Mt. Airy neighbors. So many have become members of the Irish Center during 2020 in support of our mission and in support of our new dining experience, The Commodore. We can't wait to share all of the diverse cultures of Mt. Airy with each other as the Irish Center re-opens for cultural events.

There are so many people to thank for the tireless work that has happened since March 13, 2020. It is impossible to list everyone so please look for a thank you video coming to Facebook soon.

The Irish Center is slowly re-opening. Some of the Societies, as well as the GAA, have resumed their monthly in-person meetings. The pipers are coming back to practice again in the Ballroom. We will work with any group that wants to talk about the idea of in-person events – always mindful of the City of Philadelphia's regulations and safety. Please contact John Nolan at [irishcentermgmt@gmail.com](mailto:irishcentermgmt@gmail.com) to plan your event.

Although we are re-opening, it will take some time to get back to a full calendar of events and enough incoming cash to sustain the operations. We used your donations very wisely during the pandemic. We paid every bill that came due and stretched every dollar so that we could accomplish all that we highlighted in this letter, and even more behind the scenes. Our operating plan for 2021-2022 will focus on improvements to the exterior of the building including painting, lighting and new building signs reflecting The Commodore John Barry Arts & Cultural Center.

As we do every year, we are asking for your continued assistance in sustaining the Irish Center. This letter kick offs our 2021 fundraising efforts. Please consider making a generous tax deductible donation to the Irish Center either by mail at the above address ATTN: Carolyn Killion, Treasurer or through our [Paypal account on our website www.theirishcenter.org](https://www.paypal.com).

The Irish Center intends to have an Open House in September 2021 to show off our newly renovated facilities. Please watch Facebook for more details.

The Board is very grateful for your continued support. If you have any questions about anything at all, please do not hesitate to contact me or any of the Board members.

Very truly yours,

*s/Sean McMenamin*

Sean McMenamin, President

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