



Muskegon Irish American Society

# NEWS



SPRING 2014

## Annual Spring Dinner on May 14

Spring has arrived at last, and it is time for our annual educational dinner dedicated to inform us about our Irish culture and heritage.

In 2012 David O'Connor and other Detroit area Irish Americans founded the Michigan Irish American Chamber of Commerce. Its mission states that it is "an organization of individuals and business people, and other community members working together to advance the business, culture, education, and civic welfare of the citizens of Michigan who are of Irish descent." One of the early supporters of the Chamber is Judge Dan Ryan of Wayne County. The organization is growing and establishing a presence outside of the Detroit area.

Coming to tell us the story behind the Chamber and its future is David O'Connor and Judge Ryan. This will be an interesting program, and please come to hear these Irish American leaders from across our state!

For our dinner we return to the beautiful Century Club Ballroom. Our entertainment will once again be provided by Roy and Britta Portenga with their special live guitar and fiddle music. Our full course dinner will be prepared by Mike McGovern, and this year's menu will be a choice of roast pork loin or chicken breast. The dinner cost remains the same, \$20 per person, tax and tip included.

**PLEASE NOTE:** This is a bring your own beverage event. If you wish to have wine or spirits, you must bring your own.

Please call for Reservations: Kathleen Marek 231-759-7344 by Friday May 9 and let her know your choice of entrée selection of pork or chicken Don't miss this memorable event! See you there!



*Guest speakers: The Michigan Irish American Chamber of Commerce Members David O'Connor (left) and Judge Dan Ryan*

**WHAT:** Annual Spring Dinner

**WHERE:** Century Club Ballroom  
356 W Western Ave, Muskegon

**WHEN:** Wednesday, May 14, 2014  
5:30 p.m. Social Time  
6:30 p.m. Dinner by McGovern

**Please call for Reservations:**  
Kathleen Marek 231-759-7344  
by Friday May 9 and let her know  
your choice of entrée selection of  
pork or chicken

**PLEASE NOTE:** THIS IS A BRING YOUR OWN BEVERAGE EVENT. IF YOU WISH TO HAVE WINE OR SPIRITS, YOU MUST BRING YOUR OWN.





# R.I.P Gene Kendra

On March 27 our club lost one of our historic leaders when Gene Kendra passed away at age 84. For many years Gene and his wife of 60 years, Mary Therese (O'Toole) Kendra, were pillars of our group, always ready to volunteer to serve in whatever capacity was needed. Gene was both a past Treasurer and past President of our club, and he served in both offices for several years. In 2006 Gene was named our Irish Person of the Year. In addition to our club, Gene was active in St. Francis Parish, Catholic War Vets,



Gene Kendra

Knights of Columbus, MSU Alumni Association, AMBUCS, Serra Club, and National Association of Life Underwriters. His work career spanned fifty years as a financial advisor and manager at Prudential Financial. But above all, Gene was committed to Mary Therese and

their eight children, twenty-four grandchildren, and eight great-grandchildren. In recent years Gene's health declined and he was unable to attend our functions, but we will always remember his warm inspiration and service for us. And here's a secret – Gene was not Irish! He always said he was Irish by adoption thanks to Mary Therese! May he rest in peace - Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam.

## Last Events

On Saturday, March 15, our community held our annual St. Patrick's Day Parade. The parade keeps growing, and this year there were more units marching in the parade than ever before. Our club marched, but we need better representation from our members! The parade ended at Hennessy's, where a full day of entertainment kept the celebration going throughout the afternoon and evening. Congratulations to the Muskegon Jaycee's, to Hennessy's, and to all the other sponsors of this year's parade!

On Monday, March 17, on St. Patrick's Day itself, our club observed the Great Day with the 41st annual raising of the Irish flag in downtown Muskegon. We had a fine turnout, and during the ceremony we heard musical selections from our own David McIntire and bagpiper John Tyler. We had surprise honored guests of Ambassador John Beyrle, with his sister, Julie Schugars, and brother, Joseph Beyrle, II. Their parents were great friends to many of us and their mother's birthday was on St. Patrick's Day. Thank you to Hennessy's and to all who participated! See you next year!

## Waterford Vase Raffle

At our pub party at Hennessy's in January we announced that our club is going to hold a special raffle for a stunning Waterford vase. Tickets will be sold throughout the year, and the drawing will be held at our pub party next January. The vase is on display in the china cabinet at Hennessy's and tickets will be sold there until the drawing. Our raffle license will be received in the near future, and the raffle will begin then.



## Dues Notice

If you have not yet paid your dues, enclosed with this newsletter is your 2014 dues bill. Our dues are critical to the operation of our club and our events, and to publish the newsletter. Please pay your dues promptly. **Thank you!**



## New Health Report for Ireland

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is part of the European Union, and recently issued this Health at a Glance report for Ireland.

Prevention and value-for-money in health spending must remain a priority for Ireland, says the OECD.

Ireland continues to make substantive headway in improving health outcomes, but more can be done in reducing risk-factors for major diseases and improving value-for-money in health spending.

Health at a Glance 2013 says that mortality due to cancer fell by 21%, ischemic heart disease by 59% and cerebrovascular disease by 54% between 1990 and 2011 in Ireland. In all three instances, the rate of decline was greater than the OECD average. Life expectancy in Ireland has increased by a full four years since 2000 to reach 80.6 today, over the OECD average of 80.1. Despite these improvements, the mortality burden from cardiovascular disease and cancer remains high and further gains can be made. Investments in cost-effective prevention programmes to reduce Ireland's high rates of smoking, obesity and alcohol consumption could lead to substantial health gains.



## The Bagpiper (A Moving Short Story)

Time is like a river. You cannot touch the water twice, because the flow that has passed will never pass again. Enjoy every moment of life. As a bagpiper, I play many gigs. Recently I was asked by a funeral director to play at a graveside service for a homeless man of Irish descent. He had no family or friends, so the service was to be at a pauper's cemetery in the Nova Scotia back country.

As I was not familiar with the backwoods, I got lost and, being a typical Irishman myself, I didn't stop for directions. I finally arrived an hour late and saw the funeral director had evidently gone and the hearse was nowhere in sight. There were only the diggers and crew left and they were eating lunch. I felt badly and apologized to the men for being late.

I went to the side of the grave and looked down and the vault lid was already in place. I didn't know what else to do, so I started to play. The workers put down their lunches, took off their caps, and began to gather around.

I played out my heart and soul for this Irish man with no family and friends. I played like I've never played before for this homeless man. And as I played "Amazing Grace", the workers began to weep inconsolably. They wept, I wept, we all wept together.

When I finished, I packed up my bagpipes and started for my car. Though my head was hung low, my heart was full. As I opened the door to my car, I heard one of the workers say, "I never seen nothing like that before and I've been putting in septic tanks for twenty years."

## Playing the Irish Lottery

Many of us with grey hair may remember in our youth Irish Sweepstakes tickets being sold in the U.S., especially in cities with large Irish populations. It was technically illegal to sell Irish Sweepstakes tickets in the U.S., but they were popular. In the Michigan Supreme



Court in 1975, there was even a case concerning a dispute over Irish Sweepstakes winnings. How times have changed! Now lotteries and gambling are easily available, and lotteries are owned by state governments.

If you recall the movie Waking Ned Devine, the plot of the film was based upon what happened to a jackpot-winning Irish lottery ticket that belonged to the deceased Ned Devine. Well, it is easy and perfectly legal for U.S.

citizens to participate in that very same Irish lottery.

Since 1988 the Irish government has allowed people from around the world to enter the Irish lottery, and there are participants from 89 countries. Drawings are held every Wednesday and Saturday night. Jackpot tickets are won by picking 6 numbers from 1 - 42, plus a bonus number. For details on how to play the Irish lottery, go to [www.irishlotto.net](http://www.irishlotto.net) or just google "Irish Lottery."



# Scenes from Parade and Flagraising

