



Conway Mill Trust

Formerly "Doors of Hope"

P.O. Box 101529
Pittsburgh, PA 15237

December 2017

Grants Awarded!

Thanks to your continued generosity, Conway Mill Trust was able to award a total of \$12,934 in grants to the community groups we represent! As always, the grants were received with thanks and appreciation.

Most of these groups are operating in a prolonged state of financial uncertainty due to severe budget cuts by the British government. Your donations have played an invaluable role in helping these groups keep the lights on and the doors open to those they serve.

In this edition of the newsletter, we will detail each grant awarded and provide you with an update on that group's activities.

Again, we cannot thank you enough for your support. We wish you and your families a blessed Christmas and Happy New Year!

Springhill House

Springhill House received a Conway Mill Trust grant in the amount of £2490 (\$3484). Included in this grant was a gift of \$3000 bequeathed to Conway Mill Trust/Doors of Hope from the estate of the late Robert E. Breen. Mr. Breen directed the money be donated from his retirement system plan in a letter received by Fr. Des Wilson. We would like to acknowledge his generosity and thank his family on behalf of Conway Mill Trust, Springhill House and Fr. Des.

We received the following update from Fr. Des:

"September is the start of the new academic year at Springhill Community House and the classes are in full swing. This year we are continuing to deliver General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) programmes aimed at helping residents enhance employment opportunities, as well as ICT and Level 3 Diplomas in Therapy Training. Each year we support victims of the conflict to improve their mental health and wellbeing by delivering therapies to 200 clients, respite programs

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Dove House



Dove House received a Conway Mill Trust grant in the amount of £893 (\$1224).

The “Youth First” program at Dove House strives to help young members of the community engage themselves in productive and educational activities. Over the summer, they were able to travel to Finland to participate in an International Youth Exchange. We received the following report about the visit:

“This summer as part of the Youth First summer schedule we took part in an International Youth Exchange, funding was secured through the European Union Erasmus+ programme to take another group of ten young people from the Bogside and Brandywell to Finland to meet up with young people from Germany, Portugal and Finland.

The ten day youth exchange consisted of group work, teambuilding activities, education, experience sharing and visits to local historical sites in Finland. We stayed for two days in the capital and eight days in Lapland. The group studied the topic of discrimination and typically how it looks where we live, each country had both similar and different experiences. This gave the group insight into how they all face similar experiences and this helped relationship building.

The group also looked at the Sami culture and the traditions of it. Young people took part in some of the local traditions including making traditional handicrafts. The group also visited the Sami museum and Houses of Parliament where they found out how laws and policies are agreed and passed. As well as that the group travelled to Norway to do some swimming. They had a visit to a reindeer farm and had close encounters with reindeers and got to feed them and the lady who owned the farm told us about traditional Sami clothing.

Most of the young people who took part had never been out of Ireland. They were provided with an opportunity of a lifetime and gained friends for life in the process. We will host all the other countries here in Ireland in 2019.”

Programs like Youth First can set an at-risk teen on a better path to a better life. If you would like to help Dove House continue its mission to serve, write “Dove House” in the memo of your check or money order and 100% of your donation will be included in their next grant.

Museum of Free Derry

The Museum of Free Derry received a Conway Mill Trust grant in the amount of £883 (\$1235).

As we reported in our last newsletter, the new museum has opened to the public and it's a huge success! If you are planning a trip to the Derry area, we highly recommend placing the museum on your "must see" list.

Your donations helped see this project to fruition. On behalf of the museum staff, we would like to thank you for your support.



Museum of Free Derry Staff

Springhill House, from pg.1

to improve self-confidence, and personal development. The demand for these programs increases each year while funding decreases. Community groups are being asked by funders to deliver more for less. This situation is unsustainable and is a great case for concern.

This situation is not helped by the fact that we do not have a devolved government at Stormont and civil servants are in control of devolved spending. This means they have limited spending powers and more cuts are on the horizon. The crisis at Stormont looks like it will result in direct rule and the implementation of even more austerity measures and welfare reforms affecting those most disadvantaged within our community. It also means that victims issues have again been left in limbo; funding previously agreed to implement mechanisms for dealing with legacy issues are not being made available because there is no political agreement. This has a huge impact on victims' health and well being, many of whom have been fighting for truth and justice for over 40 years.

Added to all of this is Brexit. If a hard border is reintroduced in Ireland it will harm the economy, restrict trade and damage the peace process at a time when it is already fragile."

If you would like to help Springhill House help those in need, simply write "Springhill" in the memo of your next check or money order and 100% of your donation will be included in their next grant.

Conway Education Center

Mary Mannion Grant

A grant in the amount of £1453 (\$2,032) was awarded to the Conway Education Centre for the Mary Mannion Merit Grant. This grant enables people to complete their GCSE courses. The GCSE is equivalent to the GED in the U.S. However, unlike the GED, the GCSE requires students to take a series of courses, at their expense, to obtain their degree. It is the cost of these courses that prevent many from completing their education. This is where the Mary Mannion Merit Grant comes into play. Your donations to this fund can make the difference in enabling individuals to complete their degree and better provide for their families.

We received the following update from Pauline Kersten, Centre Manager, regarding the GCSE courses:

“This year we have seen another increase in the number of adult learners enrolling in educational courses at Conway Education Centre. Our courses are set to start on Monday 18 September and 32 of the 34 courses and 3 out of 4 workshops are full, with only a few places left on the ones that aren't full yet. 17 out of the 34 courses are accredited, enabling people to gain qualifications that will help them gain employment.

The GCSE English course has 15 students enrolled. The course cost is £195. The GCSE Maths has 18 students enrolled, this course is £60. The GCSE Maths is cheaper than the GCSE English because the GCSE Maths students have to do a test in December and only those that pass the test will be entered for the GCSE exam. As you know the GCSE Maths course is delivered through the Belfast Metropolitan College and this is a new approach they have come up with.

The results of last year's GCSE students have been excellent for English, all but one of the students that sat the exam (11) passed, 3 students even had top marks. From the 9 GCSE Maths students of last year, 6 passed. We continue to work with volunteer mentors, they are vital in providing some of our students with one-to-one support and encouragement and allow students to complete courses and achieve their qualification.”

The Mary Mannion Merit Grant has made a real difference in the lives of many students and their families. The cost associated with GCSE courses prevents too many people from completing their education. Your generosity has removed the financial barrier for those wishing to build better lives for themselves and their families.

If you would like to help Conway Mill Trust to continue providing this grant to deserving students, you can direct 100% of your donation to the Mary Mannion Grant.

Conway Education Centre, cont. pg. 6

Altram received a Conway Mill Trust grant in the amount of £893 (\$1226).

The history of Altram is a study in perseverance. In addition to the severe cuts in funding to all non-profit community groups, Altram had to find a way forward when the entire Irish language sector was reorganized. This reorganization threatened the very existence of Altram. However, thanks to your donations and the hard work and dedication of Altram staff and Danny Cassidy, Altram has kept its doors open and is planning for the future.



Altram held its Annual Conference in the Dunsilly Hotel Antrim on the 27th October 2017. The conference speakers included Professor Antonella Sorace, Bilingualism Matters, School of Philosophy, Psychology and Language Sciences, University of Edinburgh Scotland, Gerry Conway from KoalaT Consultancy and Aine Andrews, one of the foremost experts in Irish medium early years education in the North of Ireland. Over 70 delegates attended the conference made up of naiscoil practitioners, and voluntary and statutory representatives.



The main theme of the conference was key issues affecting the Irish-medium early years sector.

Overall, the conference was a great success and enables Altram to plan a way forward to ensure that children from the Irish language community will

be provided with a quality education system which in turn will ensure the continuing growth of the Irish speaking community in the North of Ireland.

If you would like to help Altram keep the Irish language alive, write “Altram” in the memo of your check or money order and 100% of your donation will be included in their next grant.

Conway Education Centre, from pg. 4

In addition to a detailed update on the progress of GCSE students, Pauline provided an update on the Day School project:

“In the current financial climate of decreasing government support, Conway Education Centre has to rely more on the support of our community through asking for volunteers to help us with delivering our services and continuing our work. The response from the West Belfast community, and from those living further away has been truly amazing, we now work with a team of 23 homework support volunteers, 7 volunteer mentors and 3 admin and canteen volunteers. We are proud of the fact that our volunteers come from all walks of life, some of those from other areas, would have never ventured before on the Falls Road or into West Belfast. I believe the work that Father Des started in 1982 and we now are continuing through the Education Centre, develops and builds good relationships between people of all faiths and none, in a natural way.

Our Day School project for vulnerable young people has amalgamated with New Start Education Centre half a mile up the road. New government regulations insisted that the Day School project took place in a stand-alone unit where the young people had their own space. This was impossible to accommodate on the education floor and no other space was available/affordable. After talks with New Start's young people's project and negotiations with our Education Authority, there was finally agreement that this important service would be retained for West Belfast and the project would amalgamate with the young people's project in New Start Education Centre.

A celebration of all that the Day School project has achieved since it started in Springhill Community House in the 1970's and then moved to Conway Mill in 1999 will be organised for October/November 2017.

With your support we were able to replace five of our oldest computers, many thanks for your generous donation, it makes all the difference.

Your support continues to be vital for the survival of our education centre. Just when we think we won't be able to pay the bills, there is an email from Conway Mill Trust USA announcing that a grant is on its way. It lifts our spirits and keeps us going, a heartfelt “Thank You” to you, from us all.’

Drumcree Community Centre

The Drumcree Community Centre received a Conway Mill Trust grant in the amount of £893 (\$1226). The Centre staff is busy making full use of their newly renovated facilities by organizing programs to benefit all members of the community.

Over the summer, the center provided activities for over 300 area children; held fitness and wellness activities for adults; and 65+ adults were provided meals and activities in the centre. There was something for everyone!

Still Imprisoned Project

The Still Imprisoned Project received a Conway Mill Trust grant in the amount of £893 (\$1224). We received the following update:

“Thank you so much for your recent very generous donation and for your continued support to our project, without this help we would not be able to provide this much needed service. It is important to us to keep you up to date with progress of the Still Imprisoned Project. Here are some examples of how you’ve helped:

March this year 11 members of SIP took part in a cross-community project event hosted by Kingsley Donaldson to Westminster in London. Whilst there we had a tour of Westminster, met with Francie Molloy in the Sinn Fein rooms, visited the Imperial War Museum and also had a group discussion meeting in the Irish Embassy with the Irish Ambassador.



Also in March SIP members were invited to The Dail. We had a tour of the building and met with Sinn Fein. We also had a guided history tour of Dublin.

Sadly in March SIP members were afforded the privilege of attending the funeral of our late great leader Martin McGuinness due to your kind donation, which paid for our transport costs.

In April some members attended The Kevin Bell Repatriation Trust Gala Dinner in City Hall, as guests of Mary Ellen Campbell, former Deputy Mayoress.

April SIP attended Media Training classes to instruct us on recording audio interviews of ex-prisoners and their families and photographing articles and crafts made in Long Kesh and other prisons for DUCHAS. This information will be archived and exhibited in a museum in the future. This is a very important programme because it will ensure that all the untold stories are told. At present we are recording interviews; so far we have interviewed 6 ex-prisoners and have lined up a further 10 in the coming weeks.

The snap Election in June meant that our members were kept busy with canvassing etc. and the Project remained busy and kept an open door to the community.

Thank you so much because without your help none of the above would be possible.”

Irish Republican Museum

We are happy to report that the Republican Museum is going strong! Thanks to the hard work and dedication of museum volunteers, visitors and revenue have increased. The museum was awarded a grant from Conway Mill Trust in the amount of £935 (\$1282).

We received the following report from the museum:

“Once again we are delighted to report visitor numbers have greatly increased in 2017, both by individuals and groups, and we already have bookings received for 2018. Over the coming Christmas holidays we will have the opportunity to put together a new exhibition. We are in the process of designing pop-up displays to cover subjects we have not covered before. By using these pop-ups they take up very little space which is great for the museum.

One of the subjects we will be covering is the work done by the Association of Legal Justice from its beginning in the 1970’s, we have original statements and typewriters from the organisation which we have not had on display before. Something else that has increased is the sale of our key rings and magnets which are made here in the museum, taken from posters we have.

Once again we would like to thank you for your donations to the museum that helps us to make the changes that we have planned for the coming year. We would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.”

The Republican Museum staff work very hard to ensure that the history of the conflict is not forgotten. They accept no funding from the British government. They rely 100% on donations from groups like Conway Mill Trust. If you would like to help them to preserve Irish history for future generations, you can direct 100% of your donation to their next grant.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you, our supporters, for your amazing generosity throughout the year.

We wish you an abundance of happiness, health and prosperity in 2018.