



Conway Mill Trust

Formerly "Doors of Hope"

P.O. Box 101529
Pittsburgh, PA 15237

December 2019

Father Des Wilson

1925 - 2019

On November 5, Ciaran Cahill of Springhill Community House shared the following news:

"It is with deep sadness that I have to share the sad news that our beloved friend, mentor and spiritual director, Fr Des the People's Priest, has passed away peacefully among friends."

This past June, the community gathered at Corpus Christi Church to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the ordination of Fr. Des. On November 9th, many of the same people again gathered at Corpus Christi to mourn and celebrate the life of this remarkable man.



His profound love of mankind endured through the darkest years of the Troubles, when he reached out to those on both sides of the divide to help establish a dialogue in hopes of ending the

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Father Des Wilson Memorial Fund

We are proud to announce that Conway Mill Trust has established the Fr. Des Memorial Fund. It was Fr. Des' wish that in lieu of flowers, donations be made to the Ballymurphy Massacre Memorial Garden in care of Springhill Community House. 100% of every dollar we receive to this fund will go to this cause in his memory.

If you would like to contribute, write "Fr. Des" in the memo of your check or money order and 100% of your donation will be included in their next grant. All donations to Conway Mill Trust are tax deductible.

Fr. Des, from pg. 1

bloodshed. His love for his community inspired him to write and work tirelessly in the pursuit of peace and justice. He gave a voice to those who couldn't find their own.

It was that love that inspired the creation of Springhill Community House, a place for people to gather, share, learn and grow. To this day, it is a place that embodies his passion for helping people to live their best life.

Over the years, it has been our privilege to know Fr. Des and carry his message to our donors. In the coming year, we will continue to share stories about his remarkable life with our readers, and to support the causes close to his heart.

Rest in peace, Fr. Des.

Fall Grants Awarded!

Thanks to the generosity of our donors, we were able to deliver a total of \$8765.00 in grants to the organizations we support. Included in that total was \$3230.00 in donations made in memory of late CMT President Robert Kaniecki. On behalf of Conway Mill Trust, and the Kaniecki family, we thank you for your support

Drumcree Community Centre

A grant on the amount of \$1800.00 was awarded to the Drumcree Community Centre. The grant was accepted with thanks to our donors.

Drumcree Community Centre provides activities, outreach services and a gathering place to all members of the community – from children to senior citizens.



During the summer months, there are travel opportunities for teenagers to protect them from being exposed to the unrest that occurs during parade season. There are also activities for seniors to help prevent them from being lonely or isolated. There is something for everyone at Drumcree Community Centre.

If you would like to support the Drumcree Community Centre, write "Drumcree" in the memo of your check or money order and 100% of your donation will be included in their next grant.

Conway Education Centre

A grant in the amount of \$1650.00 was awarded to the Mary Mannion Merit Grant, which is administered by the Conway Education Centre. We received the following message from the Education Centre Manager, Pauline Kersten:

“Dear Friends,

The days are getting shorter and in Conway Mill that means the heating is on, classes are running



from 9am until 9pm and are filled with people who want to gain a qualification and improve their lives. It might be cold outside, but the atmosphere in Conway is warm and welcoming.

Participating in adult learning has been proven to help substantially to reduce poverty through enhancing employment prospects; it also improves the health levels of poorer people, and gives them a better chance of acquiring the tools needed to run their own lives.

Thanks to the support of organisations like Conway Mill Trust USA, we have been able to offer again an excellent adult education programme to the people of West Belfast that will allow them to build up their confidence, gain qualifications and make positive changes in their lives.

In addition to these courses, Conway also provides English language courses to the growing refugee community in West Belfast. The September 2019 semester offers adult education classes in Maths, English, ICT, Business Administration, Accountancy and Bookkeeping, two ReStart programmes (one-year preparation class for Higher Education courses and University for mature students) and a great variety of unaccredited courses in holistic therapy, Art, Craft, Irish History, web design, Yoga, etc. There are 377 people enrolled in 40 courses and workshops.

Our September 2019 GCSE Maths class has a record number of 15 students enrolled and the GCSE English class has 12 students. Again, this year we will provide volunteer mentors who support individual students to help them complete the course successfully.

The exam results for the all-important English and Maths GCSE's were out in late August and we are proud to report that from the class of 2018/2019, 100% of our GCSE English students (11) passed, with 3 getting top marks!! Twelve out of 15 GCSE Maths students passed their exam, again an improvement on last year and a testament to the hard work of students and tutors.

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In Northern Ireland, to obtain a job or to be accepted on most university courses, you need to have passed your GCSE English and GCSE Maths exams. Outside of school, these exams can be quite costly, but with the help of the Mary Mannion Merit grant, Conway is able to offer these courses at a much lower cost (and provides payment plans so that students can pay for the course a little every week).

At our Celebration of Achievement in June 2019, the hard work of Conway students was acknowledged by well-known community and human rights activist Bernadette McAliskey. There was a real positive buzz at the ceremony and attendance was high. A local business sponsored the catering and several refugee families brought their local dishes. The event was enjoyed by everyone.

The financial future of Conway Education Centre remains uncertain, the political landscape has not changed from last year and unfortunately that means that, once again, civil servants will cut the budget of organisations like Conway Education Centre with 5%. That means we will have to find £5000 to keep our service provision on the same level as last year.

We will work hard to raise funds to meet this shortfall and we very much hope that our friends in Conway Mill Trust can support us in this effort.

Please know that we are very grateful for your support. Every contribution counts and makes a difference. It supports a student gaining a qualification, to have the chance to get a job, or make positive life choices, and that is priceless!

Many thanks and warm regards to all our friends in the USA

Best wishes from all of us at Conway, Pauline Kersten.”

Springhill Community House

Springhill Community House was awarded a grant in the amount of \$725.00. The grant was accepted with thanks and gratitude.

As we reported on page 1, we have established a fund in memory of Fr. Des Wilson. Donations from the memorial fund will be designated to the Ballymurphy Massacre Memorial Garden, per Fr. Des' request.

If you would like to donate to Springhill Community House or the Fr. Des Memorial Fund, please indicate how you would like to designate your donation in the memo of your check or money order.

Irish Republican Museum

The Irish Republican Museum was awarded a grant in the amount of \$1600.00. We received the following message from the museum volunteers:

“We would like to take this opportunity to thank the Conway Mill Trust and all your supporters in America for your continued support that has allowed the museum to thrive, now in its 12th year, in its current location. We



would also like to let you know that donations of artifacts continue with new items arriving on a monthly basis.

In your last newsletter we informed your readers that we were in the process of developing a new exhibition focusing on the 50th anniversary of the start of 'the Troubles'. This new exhibition has been up and running from August. This includes dozens of framed newspapers from 1969 detailing the outbreak of what became known as 'the Troubles' and that would continue for the next three decades. One of the front page articles details the British Army's effort in locating Radio Free Belfast, a pirate radio operated by the nationalists of West Belfast. In a display case facing that article is that same radio, never found by the British Army and proudly on display for all to see.

We have also installed a new security grill on the entrance doors making it easier for the volunteers to enter and lock up, as well as adding an extra level of security. As mentioned previously the next few years will mark a number of important centenaries and we are in the process of planning a number of exhibitions to mark these historic events and we will keep you up to date as we progress.

Once again we would like to thank all those involved with the Conway Mill Trust for your

The Still Imprisoned Project

The Still Imprisoned Project (SIPS) was awarded a grant in the amount of \$690.00. As always, your donations are appreciated and put to good use. Because they accept no government funding, SIPS relies on grants from organizations like Conway Mill Trust to keep its doors open.



SIPS is managed and operated by ex-prisoners. Their mission is to help former prisoners overcome the issues associated with their incarceration. They offer counseling, assistance with obtaining

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benefits, employment assistance and help dealing with substance abuse issues.

In recent months, SIPS has seen a significant increase in referrals from other agencies. This has strained both their human and financial resources. Your generosity is needed to ensure that no one in need is turned away.

If you would like to help, write "SIPS" 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 (MoFD) was awarded a grant in the amount of \$725.00. Our donors have helped the museum through its formative years and we are happy to report that your generosity has made a real difference.

We received the following report from the museum:

"The award-winning Museum of Free Derry has become the first museum in the north to be awarded Interim Accreditation in the Museum Standards Programme for Ireland. The Museums Standards Programme (MSPI), administered by the Heritage Council, works towards the care of Ireland's heritage.

Representatives from MoFD attended the event at Kilkenny Castle earlier this summer and were presented with framed recognition of the museum's excellence in caring for collections, museum management, education exhibition and visitor services.

Museum Curator Adrian Kerr said, "It's a fantastic achievement for the Museum of Free Derry to gain interim accreditation again so soon after the opening of the new building. It is vitally important that we maintain curatorial and archive work to the highest possible standards to ensure the long-term safety of a collection that is of such historic importance, and this underlines our commitment to doing that. "It's also good to become the first northern museum to gain accreditation through the Museum Standards Programme for Ireland. Now we can move onto full MSPI accreditation, alongside attaining accreditation under Northern Ireland Museums Council standards," he added.

If you would like to help the museum continue to thrive, write "Derry Museum" in the memo of your check or money order and 100% of your donation will be included in their next grant. Also, if you are travelling to Ireland, be sure to include the museum on your itinerary!



Altram

Altram was awarded a grant in the amount of \$850.00. We received the following message of thanks from Danny Cassidy:

“Firstly, may I offer my sincere thanks the Conway Mill Trust for this tremendous grant-aid we have received. It will assist Altram to provide additional support to Irish medium pre-schools in the North of Ireland. Could I also acknowledge the generosity of the family and friends of the late and badly missed Bob Kaniecki who contributed to Conway Mill Trust as a memorial tribute to Bob's (and Jean's) dedication to the important work we are doing here in Derry. I really enjoyed meeting up with Bob and Jean whenever they visited Derry and could you please pass on our best wishes to Jean and let her know that we keep her in our thoughts and prayers.

Altram engages almost on a daily basis with Irish-medium pre-schools (naíscoils) in the North of Ireland to provide them with the expertise they need to deliver an immersion curriculum to children who are receiving their education and care through the medium of the Irish language. One of the main aspects of our work is to provide innovative training to practitioners who work in the sector. On an annual basis we run approximately 12 training sessions which provide them with new ideas. Our most recent workshops were held in both Belfast and Derry and were attended by over 78 participants.

The training programme in Derry was on supporting children's needs through therapeutic experiences in Early Years IME Settings. The course content included using therapeutic experiences to address social, communication, developmental and emotional needs and developing children's self-awareness and self-esteem through therapeutic experiences. This, in turn, will have a positive impact on children's social skills and abilities, encourage them to engage in appropriate behaviour and develop their turn taking skills.

With the support of the Conway Mill Trust, Altram will maintain our support for Irish medium early years sector and provide the children under our care with a very positive start in life!

Dove House

Dove House was awarded a grant in the amount of \$725.00. As with many of the organizations we support, Dove House relies heavily on donations from groups like Conway Mill Trust to maintain the level of service they offer the community. We received the following update from Dove House:

“During the summer of 2019 Dove House ran its very successful “Meenan Square Village Fair” fun day. This event saw hundreds of residents of the Bogside and further afield enjoy a day of fun,

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games, competition and laughter. This is the third year we have carried out this event and the turnout increases every time. This event is run in the lead up to bonfire night in August when tensions are high and helps to unify a sometimes-conflicted community.

Throughout the summer Dove House also participated in a drop-in lunch service, which helped residents who were feeling isolated. This took place throughout the summer and was sponsored by an international supermarket.

The Women's Advocacy Project which offers support to victims and survivors of Domestic Abuse have worked in partnership with the Know it, Change it, Live it project to mount a campaign which raises awareness about Financial Abuse and Fraudulent activities for vulnerable older people in the city. Presently many older people are falling victim to these scams and some have lost their life savings.

We took this campaign on the road and visited local community groups to discuss and raise awareness of these issues. This was very successful and informative.

Further to this, the Women's Advocacy Project Officer met with the Mayor of Derry City and Strabane District Council, Cllr Michaela Boyle to discuss the Council putting forward a Motion to support victims and survivors of Domestic Abuse. This Motion was brought forward and passed at the end of October. This is progression in this area as it recognises coercive control as a form of Domestic Abuse.

Going forward onto Christmas 2019, the project is spearheading a campaign of "16 days of Action Against Domestic Abuse". This campaign will include information sessions and group sessions across the city, raising awareness and letting the public know about services available for those in need."

Your donations can go a long way in helping Dove House keep its doors open to the community they service. Write "Dove House" in the memo of your check or money order and 100% of your donation will be included in their next grant.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

On behalf of Conway Mill Trust trustees and the organizations we support, we would like to extend our sincere wish that you enjoy a blessed Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

We are eternally grateful for your continuing generosity. There would not be a Conway Mill Trust without you.

Thank you!