

Clare to host world dancing competition

Ron Kirwan

CLARE will host the first World Senior Irish Dancing Championships this November. The announcement was made at a Senior Feis held in Ennis over the weekend.

Adult Irish dancers, aged between 18 and 75, competed in all grades, from beginner to open standard and age groups from under 21 to over 50, at the Feis organised by Ennis dance teacher, Cora Summerville.

"We had 35 dancers competing in the Senior Feis and they danced their hearts out," said Cora, a retired garda, who last year founded the Alliance of Irish Dance Teachers (AIDT).

The new organisation is for Irish dance teachers who wish to work outside of the framework of the big organisations, such as An Coimisiun and An Comhdhail.

Cora and other dance teachers think of Irish dancing as being creative and free, believing that at times it is stifled by rules and regulations and the AIDT has adopted a different approach to adult dancing, another neglected area in the Irish dancing world.

"We owe Michael Flatley hugely for putting our dancers on the map and as a result of Riverdance, Irish dancing became very popular worldwide," said Cora, who travels extensively around the world giving Irish dancing workshops and judging competitions.

"The dancers involved in my workshops and in competitions have mainly been adults and feeling guilty about the way we neglect our adult dancers here in Ireland, I set up adult classes in Ennis three years ago," Cora explains.

"Now the next step is to create a platform for adult competitions where they are not in the shadow of children. Dancing is a great form of physical and mental



■ Ali Kelly, Ennis, a pupil of the Summerville School of Dancing, presenting a delighted Margaret Corry, Ennis, with her first place prize in the over 50 competition at the Clare Senior Feis.

Photograph by Rice Innis

exercise for adults. While you physically dance, you have to remember the pattern of your steps and then you move to the next level of steps. Of course, it goes without saying that it is never too late to start dancing and we have loads of adults who have done just that," she said.

Among the adult dancers competing in Ennis at the weekend was Graham McKane, an Australia who lives on the Spanish border in France and attends Irish dancing lessons in Spain.

"I danced when I was young until I was about 25 and then you feel really old with all the young dancers and you stop competing. I lived in London until recently and started thinking, 'I wish I could dance again' but there were no classes who cater for adults. But now what's happened is in-

teresting," he told The Clare Champion.

Having moved to France, Graham realised that following the success of Riverdance, there is now a whole new movement in Europe and adults in Germany, Spain and Russia have learned to dance.

"I realised that moving to France I might have more chance of competing in Irish dancing there than I did in London. My teacher said to me recently, 'there's a competition in Clare, would you go', so I thought I could visit some friends in London and then I'm off to Germany for a championship in a month's time. So here I am. It's the first time I've danced in 25 years," Graham said.

Another adult Irish dancer, Mags Corry has

been living in Clare since last year and took up Irish dancing again two years ago. "I danced as a kid but never danced in competition," she said.

Her daughter is an Irish dancing teacher and it was through one of her workshops that she met her adult dancing teacher, Ni-amh.

"My first feis was in Germany two years ago and I absolutely love dancing. One of the reasons I took it up was for physical exercise but it's also exercise for the brain as well. I think the biggest fear as you get older is probably Alzheimer's and I think if you can remember Irish dancing steps, your brain will always be active. I've only started heavy shoes dancing over the past few months and today is my first time doing the treble jig, so I'm happy and I love it.

"I've inspired a few people to get involved; people from Portlaoise and from Kerry, people from everywhere. I'm dancing with kids aged from six to 11 but it's dancing so it doesn't matter. The kids say to me, 'Oh, you got a second, that's great'. And I say, 'yes but I had to work very hard'. There was a woman dancing in Germany two years ago. She was 74 and she's a teacher now. If she can do it, anyone can," Mags said.

Jackie McCaw learned Irish dancing in London as a child, before moving to Kilmaley with her parents. She first started dancing with Cora but she had to give Irish dancing up when she moved to Wales. However, when Jackie came back to Clare, she heard that Cora was teaching adult classes and took up Irish dancing again.

"It's great for fitness and it keeps your brain active. You can do all the keep-fit classes you like but this is something else," Jackie said.

The first World Senior Irish Dancing Championships was launched at the Ennis event and will be held in Ennis on November 15. Details are available on www.aidt.ie.

One annuity loan granted since 2011

Ron Kirwan

A CALL has been made to change the lending criteria and the cost for applicants to the annuity loans scheme, after councillors heard that only one loan has been granted since 2011.

At a recent county council meeting, Councillor Mary Howard had called for a report from the director of services with responsibility for housing on the low numbers applying for annuity loans and asked why there is such a high rejection rate for the annuity loan scheme and what fee is charged for processing annuity loan applications.

To have an application processed costs €150. In 2011, there were 13 applications for annuity loans to the council; two were withdrawn and none were granted. In 2012, 2013 and 2014, there were three applications each year and of these nine, only one was granted – in 2013, while a number were still in process at the end of the year in which the application was made, according to Ger Dollard, director of services.

He said there is a high refusal rate for local authority annuity loans because the applicants are finding it difficult to meet the required lending criteria. To be eligible, an applicant must be a first-time buyer; aged between 18 and 70; earning under €50,000 single and under €70,000 as joint applicants; the primary earner in continuous employment for at least two years, while the second applicant must have at least one year's employment.

The Housing Agency provides an underwriting and support service to all local authorities. This central service processes loan applications, carries out credit checks and issues a recommendation to the council on each application. Applications are stress tested and mortgage repayments cannot exceed 35% of household net income.

Evidence of good financial standing must also be shown with a payment track record in respect of previous borrowings and also a good savings record.

A Credit Committee is in place within the council to make a decision following receipt of the recommendation from the Housing

Agency.

Applications are being refused by the council for one or a combination of the following reasons: applicants are not in continuous employment for the required length of time; earnings are not sufficient to make loan repayments and would exceed 35% of household net income, if granted; there is evidence of difficulty with repayments on existing borrowings; applicants do not have the required 3% deposit and/or are unable to show evidence of savings of at least 1.5% of the purchase price of the property.

The council meets with each potential applicant before submitting an application and carries out a desktop exercise to assess their eligibility. If the eligibility criteria cannot be met, the loan application is generally not submitted, thus saving the applicant the time and expense of making an application, Mr Dollard explained.

Having read Mr Dollard's response, Councillor Howard queried if the fee of €150 is too high and Councillor Johnny Flynn asked if all the criteria were improved, might it improve the success rate of people who are trying to build their own homes.

Councillor Tom McNamara said the council should be encouraging people to take out loans and give them the ownership of their own property.

"I think it's about time we looked at the current housing list and see how many people would succeed under the current criteria that could actually get a loan. If we could get those people a loan and give them a sense of ownership, that's what is badly needed. I believe there are some people who could meet these criteria and why not reduce the criteria and let them pay it off over 40 years or 50 years and let them have some place to call their own. It would definitely bring down the number of people currently on our housing lists," he said.

Councillor Tony O'Brien also supported the motion.

Mr Dollard said the Government is currently looking at another house purchase scheme and said under the present loan scheme, if people can't meet the criteria they are advised not to make an application, which saves them the €150 fee.

Daffodil Day coffee morning

THE Irish Cancer Society has called on people in Clare to host a coffee morning on Daffodil Day, on Friday, March 27.

Last year, there were 293 coffee mornings held all around Ireland on Daffodil Day and €3.4 million was raised. This year, the society needs to raise their target of €3.5m to continue to be able to provide free nationwide support and

information services and fund research and advocacy campaigns.

Liz Logan, national campaigns manager for the Irish Cancer Society said, "We are seeing a big increase in people holding coffee mornings to raise money for the Irish Cancer Society. It's a really nice thing to do for yourself and your friends and a really easy and fun way to raise money

for Daffodil Day. More coffee mornings around the country will help ensure that we can support more people affected by cancer."

Visit cancer.ie/daffodilday or CallSave 1850 606060 to register a coffee morning at home or in work and receive a pack with balloons, posters and a fundraising guide with everything needed to host the event.

Gary's jingle in semi-final

GARY Carroll of Cronan Lawn, Shannon is one of 10 semi-finalists in with a chance of picking up €5,000 in a national radio jingle competition on Today FM.

There were hundreds of entries to the Le Crunch Apples 7G jingle competition, which has run for the last three weeks.

Speaking about the competition, Gary, who is employed at Connor-Windfield, said, "I was at work and I heard the thing on the radio. I make these silly things on YouTube where I dub over videos and on some of them I make funny jingles. I heard about this competition and thought that's something I could possibly do." He got to work on his laptop and of the

results, he says, "It's for a company called Le Crunch apples. The jingle starts off a bit depressing, until I eat 47 apples and then I'm as high as a kite. It's basically about how boring life is until you eat an apple."

Among the judges are stand-up comedian, Fred Cooke and Today FM's head of production, Sinead Buckley. The public can vote for their favourite jingle online at www.ouitolecrunch.com.

Voting closes at midnight on Friday and after that five finalists will have a chance in the national final, which takes place at Today FM studios on Friday, March 27.



■ Employees of HLB McKeogh Gallagher Ryan, Limerick who were recently promoted. Standing, from left, Sinéad Mansell, Eimear Quin, Peter O'Brien, Brid Darcy, Conor McElhinney and front, from left, Michelle Loftus, Eoin Ryan, Mary McKeogh, Eoin Gallagher and Sarah Kelly.

Clare personnel promoted at Limerick accountancy firm

LIMERICK accountants and business advisers, HLB McKeogh Gallagher Ryan, has announced a number of promotions, effectively doubling its management team.

Peter O'Brien (Broadford), Sarah Kelly (Quin) and Eimear Quin (Limerick City) have been promoted to the positions of manager, while Sinéad Mansell (Ballylanders), Conor McElhinney (Ennis), Brid Darcy (Kilmihil) and Michelle Loftus (Cratloe) have been appointed assistant managers in their respective areas of expertise.

The firm was established in 2012 by three of the region's strongest commercial advisers – Mary McKeogh, CTA, leading the Tax Department; Eoin Ryan, ACA & CTA, leading the Business Advisory and Corporate Recovery Department and Quin's Eoin Gallagher, ACA, leading the Audit Department.

The company, based in Shannon Street in Limerick, joined the HLB International network in early 2014, expanding its reach to the 130 countries that HLB is represented in. With a client base covering the length and breadth of the country and a service offering to match in depth and intensity, HLB McKeogh Gallagher Ryan has become one of the region's strongest firms.

Speaking at the announcement of the promotions, managing partner Ms McKeogh stated, "We are delighted to recognise the success of so many of our staff members. Seven promotions is a lot for any firm to announce, particularly when we are only in operation two and a half years, but their hard work and ability has been instrumental to our firm's success."

"It is also important to note that each one is local to the Mid-West region and highlights the calibre of the workforce we have here. Developing our own talent pool is a key objective for our firm and these promotions are testament to the strength of the education and training professionals receive in the Mid-West."

A graduate of the University of Limerick (UL), Peter O'Brien is a chartered accountant and is the firm's new audit manager, working closely with audit partner, Mr Gallagher to manage the audit department.

Sarah Kelly is also a graduate of UL. She is a chartered tax adviser and is the firm's new tax manager. She works with tax partner, Ms McKeogh on tax advisory projects and with business advisory and corporate recovery partner, Mr Ryan on the tax aspects of insolvency assignments.

Eimear Quin is a graduate of Trinity

College and University College Cork. She is the firm's new operations manager, working closely with the three partners on operational and business development projects.

A graduate of UL, Sinéad Mansell is a chartered tax adviser and qualified financial adviser and is one of the firm's new tax assistant managers. She works with Ms McKeogh on tax restructuring projects.

Chartered tax adviser and chartered certified accountant, Conor McElhinney is a graduate of the National University of Ireland, Galway. He is one of the firm's new tax assistant managers working with Ms McKeogh, and tax director, Anne Hogan on tax advisory and compliance assignments.

A graduate of Dublin City University, Brid Darcy is a member of the Institute of Certified Public Accountants. She is the firm's new business advisory and corporate recovery assistant manager. Ms Darcy works closely with Mr Ryan, managing large insolvency appointments.

Finally, Michelle Loftus is also a graduate of UL. A chartered Accountant, she is the firm's new audit assistant manager, working closely with Mr Gallagher managing statutory audits and audit compliance assignments.

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