
CONWAY MILL TRUST

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Educational Aid for Returning Students:

Conway Mill Trust Board Announces Creation of the Mary Mannion Merit Grant Program

The Conway Mill Trust Board has announced that it is creating a financial aid grant program designed to assist returning students to complete their high school equivalency certification. The program aims to help students 19 years of age and older who have not completed secondary education to achieve General Course Secondary Education (GCSE) certification.

The program develops math, English and history knowledge and enhances the job opportunities for these young adults. Adult students who are not on any benefits have difficulty paying for GCSEs, which usually cost £150.00 through Belfast Metropolitan College (BMC).

An initial grant has been allocated by the Conway Mill Trust Board to cover the costs for full programs for two and perhaps even more students this fall.

The grant program is named after retired educator Mary Mannion, who has spent a lifetime teaching children throughout the U.S. Mary has also been very active in her support of Irish causes and is a member of the Conway Mill Trust Board in Pittsburgh (see separate article on page 2).

“The funding from this program will help to give our young people, especially our women, a much better opportunity to complete their education,” said Pauline Kersten of the Conway Mill Education Centre. “The opportunities provided by these funds will surely mean that some of our young men and



Stacey, Frederica and Janette with the new computers

Conway Education Centre

The Conway Education Centre's Day School computer project was able to meet its goal of purchasing four computers with the assistance of Conway Mill Trust's grant of £800. The 11 students in the Day School program received their new desktop computers on February 4.

The Centre started a new Homework (Afterschool) Club on February 23. The program is a recycling art project that is tied to a larger program covering globalization and climate change. Our \$200 grant will be used to purchase reading books at reading levels of at 4-7 and 8-11 on climate change and its impact on wildlife. This pilot project will end on April 12, but if it is successful it will be repeated with each new group of afterschool children.

Our New Mailing Address

Please forward all correspondence and donations to our new address:

**Conway Mill Trust, Inc.
P.O. Box 101529
Pittsburgh, PA 15237**

Continued on page 2

Mary Mannion: Educator, Activist

Committed to Learning and Justice

Mary Mannion, whom the Conway Mill Trust has recognized in connection with its first ever Merit Grant, is a most appropriate person to achieve such a distinction. Now retired, Mary has had a long history as an educator across the United States. Raised in the small town of Fair Oaks, Pennsylvania, Mary received her Bachelor of Music Education degree, cum laude, from Catholic University in Washington, D.C. She earned her Masters Degree in Education in 1974.

Mary began her teaching career in Harlem in New York City, where she taught at an elementary school for seven years. She also taught Native American children in secondary school in Santa Fe, New Mexico and was an English instructor in a G.E.D. program at the University of New Mexico.

Returning to the Pittsburgh area, Mary taught European civilization and junior English at Quigley High School. At South Side Catholic School, Mary taught American Government, Psychology and American History. Furthering her own education she completed her reading specialist studies at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh. She was employed by the Pittsburgh-Mount Oliver Intermediate Unit at Central Catholic High School for 15 years.

Mary's passion for education, especially for reading, has been matched by her commitment to peace and justice in Northern Ireland. She has advocated for these issues in the halls of the U.S. Congress and she has travelled to Belfast and Derry and to sites of conflict as an international observer.

As a lifelong educator, Mary brings this perspective to her belief in the need for equality and opportunity in Northern Ireland. Mary serves as the liaison person between the Conway Mill Trust Board and the Education Centre at Conway Mill.

Any student receiving a Mary Mannion Merit Grant will be getting much more than financial aid. They will have been given an association with a tremendous role model to help guide them in their future.



Mary Mannion

Grant, continued from page 1

women will now be better prepared to find employment that otherwise would have eluded them.”

The Mary Mannion Merit Grant has been established by the Conway Mill Trust Board, but local control over the distribution of its grants has been built into its structure. The Education Centre at Conway Mill in Belfast will have the responsibility to screen the applicants for the grants and to make the actual grant awards. Responsibility for raising sufficient funds will reside with the Conway Mill Trust in the U.S.

These preliminary grants are just the beginning of what is anticipated to be a much broader effort by the Conway Mill Trust Board to raise funds for these educational purposes. “We feel that the time is right to give our assistance with these pressing educational needs in whatever way we can,” said Conway Mill Trust President Bob Kaniecki. “I would like to call on our supporters to make whatever contribution that they can to help us in these important efforts.”

The Conway Mill Trust Board plans to monitor the progress of these grants and to look toward the classes in the fall of 2009 as a time when it will expand the number of grants available for awards. Outreach to other Irish American organizations, individual donors and supporters is expected to become a major effort for the Conway Mill Trust Board in the year ahead.

CONWAY MILL PRESERVATION TRUST REFURBISHMENT PROJECT UPDATE: FEBRUARY 2009

By Susan J Glass, Project Support Officer
Conway Mill Preservation Trust

After many delays and false starts, work has finally commenced on the Conway Mill Refurbishment Project. The following is an update on progress and an overview of the future work schedule and funding package.

The good news is that the external fabric of the building will be restored to its former glory, with a beautiful outdoor courtyard space covered by an atrium roof for tenants and visitors to enjoy. Internally, there are 20 new artists' studios, 2 workshop spaces & resource rooms and 15 new enterprise units. As well as a new reception area there is also provision for a café and there are plans for a small museum, with historical interpretation throughout the building.

The bad news is that costs have risen considerably since the start of the planning process. The project has been considerably de-scoped in order to bring the cost down to its current figure. There are several areas within the facility that will not be fitted out internally – this will require more funding in the future. Funds from the Windows & Doors of Hope have contributed significantly over the years to the running costs associated with Conway Mill and the early planning stages of the refurbishment project.

Unfortunately, there is still a funding shortfall, £129,433 of which the Project's Management Committee has under written. Your donations will be gratefully received and acknowledged.



Before Demolition

The total cost for the refurbishment is now projected at £5.5 million.



After Demolition

TOTAL FUNDING PACKAGE TO DATE:
£5,263,950

Your Donations At Work!

Conway Mill Trust Board Members Sandy Haas and Ed McManus recently traveled and delivered a total of \$3,200 in grants. In addition to the nearly \$1,800 donated to the Conway Education Centre (see article on page 1), donations were also distributed to the following organizations in Belfast and Derry. If you would like your donation to be directed to a specific organization, write the name of the group on your check and 100% of your donation will be forwarded to that group.

Springhill Community House -- \$400 USD

Ed and Sandy presented our grant to Fr. Des Wilson and Noelle Ryan for Springhill's Suicide Prevention Program. Springhill's current emphasis is on community health education, to combat the overabundance daily negative messages experienced by the community. A new course titled "It's My Life" is aimed at young people aged 16-25, with another course aimed at children 7-12 years old. The courses will help these young people to overcome negativity, reduce stress and change behaviors. Fr. Des reported that they are also working on intervention programs where there are symptoms of depression or emotional problems.

Irish Republican History Museum -- \$600 USD

Johnny Haddock and Patsy Hickey reported that a new project was underway: a full-color pictorial timeline of Irish history. Six large murals are planned, with plans for the first one just getting started. They reported that the \$600 grant from Conway Mill Trust was very timely. The museum also now has a website: eileenhickeymuseum.com.

Museum of Free Derry/Bloody Sunday Museum -- \$400 USD

The unveiling of the Bloody Sunday Banner in its display case took place on January 30. Adrian Kerr and John Kelly considered this milestone and the addition of two other recent full-wall displays to be the completion of Phase I of the museum's development. As he received our donation of \$400, Adrian asked that we express his thanks to our donors and to the CMT Board.

Conway Mill Trust Blog to Launch in Spring '09!

The site will feature information and updates from the organizations supported with your grant dollars. Bookmark the address on your computer and stay tuned!

conwaymilltrust.org

Dove House Needs Your Help

With a long history of assisting women of the Bogside and Brandywell areas of Derry, Dove House has a staff of 25 that delivers its range of services, including its drug and alcohol services to children, youth and adults. Its Neighborhood Assist program provides advice to individuals who are eligible for government entitlement programs. This advice is needed because none of the government entitlements are automatic.

Dove House is launching a new program: the Learner Access Engagement Project that will assist individuals to achieve a Level II education. The LEAP program has three levels, with the third level being equivalent to a GCSE (see article on page 1). About 70 individuals started the program on February 9, with an objective of enrolling 80-90 students in the first year.

Dove House's Divert Project recently secured a new 5-year contract with the Department of Health and Social Services for the delivery of drug and alcohol services. One staff member is devoted to working with children affected by the drug and/or alcohol addiction of their parents. Dove House plans to add a second case worker to the program because of an increased caseload. April is the anticipated start date for expanded staff and program, but the Divert Project's funding primarily covers only staff salaries.

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Receiving your copy of the newsletter by email helps us conserve more contributor dollars for making grants. If you would like to receive your newsletter electronically, please email us at:

editorconwaymilltrustinc@comcast.net



Wishing You a Happy and Blessed Saint Patrick's Day!

