A new year brings ongoing and more in-depth engagement with our Donegal Diaspora. I am pleased to welcome you back to our Donegal Diaspora Ezine the first edition of 2019. I hope you enjoy the stories featured which include details about Donegal Connect, our ambitious plans for Donegal to connect with our Global Diaspora in 2019. The initiative will take place over 10 days from September 27th – October 6th and will have something for everyone including events focussed on culture and heritage, sport and music, genealogy events and clan gatherings, employment and business development opportunities, education and career opportunities, networking events and workshops on the practicalities of relocating or returning to Donegal. Further details on the programme can be found at www.donegalconnect.com.

We hope you enjoy the ezine and would welcome your feedback on particular topics or articles that you would like to read about going forward.

Joanne Kilmartin
Donegal Diaspora Executive, Donegal County Council.

Friendship Charter signed between Letterkenny Municipal District and West Dunbartonshire Council in Scotland

A new Friendship Charter has been signed between Letterkenny Municipal District and West Dunbartonshire Council in Scotland. The signing took place at a special event in Clydebank Scotland on Saturday 30 March 2019 when Mayor of Letterkenny Municipal District Cllr. Ian McGarvey travelled with Donegal County Council Director of Service, Liam Ward to Scotland to sign the Friendship Charter alongside Provost William Hendrie and Bailie Denis Agnew of West Dunbartonshire Council.

West Dunbartonshire is one of the 32 local government council areas of Scotland. The area lies to the west of the City of Glasgow and contains many of Glasgow’s commuter towns and villages, as well as the city’s suburbs and has a population in the region of 89,600.

Speaking following the signing Mayor McGarvey acknowledged the many historical and family links that Donegal and indeed the Letterkenny Municipal District has with Glasgow and the West Dunbartonshire Council area saying “the link between our two regions is of important historical and social significance to both our communities. For generations Donegal people travelled to Scotland mainly for work and many remained in Scotland, set up home and raised their families while all the time retaining a strong link and affinity with Donegal.

“So the signing of this Friendship Charter is a very special occasion for us all and it is an important step forward in recognising and acknowledging our historical ties while at the same looking to future opportunities that will strengthen our educational, sporting, tourism and economic links. We enter into this agreement in the spirit of mutual cooperation and friendship for the benefit of our two communities.”

Pictured at the signing of the Friendship Charter between Letterkenny Municipal District and West Dunbartonshire Council in Scotland on Saturday 30 March are seated Bailie Denis Agnew, Provost William Hendrie, Mayor Ian McGarvey and Deputy Provost Karen Conaghan. Also included Mr. Martin Doherty-Hughes MP for the West Dunbartonshire Area, Mr. Gil Paterson Member of the Scottish Parliament, Mr. Mark Hannify Consul General of Ireland to Scotland, George Hawthorne Senior Official with West Dunbartonshire Council and Liam Ward Director of Services with Donegal County Council.
Seamus Mc Daid shares his story about how he has brought a little bit of Donegal to America.

I got the opportunity in 2011 to move to New York to work as a sports agent with a company that managed American footballers. Whilst there I was always acutely aware of the constant requests that my family would have received over the years in Donegal from members of the Donegal Diaspora to ship our products internationally, so in 2007 I launched our online shop, but shipping outside of Europe was always prohibitively expensive.

Being based in Yonkers, I experienced firsthand the strength of the Irish community there and how easily you could buy Irish products in most of the local stores so in 2014 I seized the opportunity and shipped two pallets of Football Special from Ramelton in County Donegal and so began the journey of McDaids Beverages USA. I quit my day job and began to focus solely on the family business. I was successful in getting our products into 50 stores predominantly in the Irish communities of New York, Boston and Philadelphia and with stock on hand I was in a position to ship orders to the rest of the United States at a manageable rate.

The backbone of our business has always been Donegal people and my business in the United States was no different. However, to really break into the US market we needed to adapt our product to become more American. In 2018, we found a co-packet and under our supervision, keeping a close eye on our secret ingredient, he manufactured Football Special in a facility in Reading, Pennsylvania.

Having used our original recipe from the 1960s and we went back into a 330ml glass bottle and this is the product that we now sell throughout the East Coast of the United States in craft soda stores. If anyone is interested in ordering our products outside of Donegal please go on our website for details www.football-special.com
Donegal Connect 2019

27th September - 6th October 2019 in Donegal

Donegal Connect is a 10 day programme of events in Donegal, aimed at identifying new opportunities for development in Donegal for and by our Diaspora.

The objective of Donegal Connect is to entice people to make the journey back to Donegal to explore the county and find out why it is a great county to visit, to live in, to be educated in, to work in, to invest in or to retire to. Through connecting with our Diaspora we want to create new opportunities for our county.

We in Donegal are fortunate to live in one of the most beautiful parts of Ireland - a county of outstanding beauty and one that offers a unique family friendly lifestyle, a fantastic quality of life, a place where investment and employment opportunities exist and where businesses and employees can succeed and compete on the global stage.

From world renowned Donegal artists performing at iconic venues, to opportunities to trace your family tree, to walks, runs, island visits as well as symposia to explore business and investment propositions along with career development and skills opportunities and the practical "ins and outs" of returning home, Donegal Connect has something for everyone.

Full details of the marketing events will be available on www.donegalconnect.com. Come and find out why you should make the journey this autumn.

Donegal Connect, Live the Journey ...

SAVE THE DATES

| 15th May 2019 - Philadelphia | 18th May 2019 - Long Island City, NYC |
| 16th May 2019 - Philadelphia | 19th May 2019 - Yonkers, NYC |
| 17th May 2019 - Boston |

Photo of Ballyhiernan beach, locally called Din’s beach courtesy of Eileen Kelly.
Through the lens looking back 50 years at the Donegal Ball in Philadelphia 1969/1970

The Donegal Association of Philadelphia is a beneficial, social, charitable and cultural organisation founded in 1888 and traces its roots back to County Donegal.

The group evolved from a need in the late 1800's to take care of immigrants who were in need of aid and comfort. The vast influx of immigrants during those years promoted a growth of various Irish social societies in the United States. The first formal meeting of this association was held on September 18th 1888 at the Lewars Hall, Ninth & Spring Garden Street, Philadelphia. The first concert and ball raised $1500 and was sent to Fr. James Mc Fadden of Gweedore for relief of suffering among his parishioners.

Today the Donegal Association continues to exhibit the core values and beliefs. The association also actively participates in cultural programmes such as the Philadelphia and Springfield, Delaware County St. Patrick's Day Parade. They continue their fundraising efforts and in 2018 made a substantial financial contribution to the Donegal Hospice. The annual Donegal Ball is held on the Saturday after Thanksgiving and continues to be a highlight in the Association's calendar of events.

Thanks to Jim Mc Gill of the Donegal Association in Philadelphia in this ezine we look back 50 years to 1969. Jim joined the Association in 1964 after a stint with Uncle Sam. He was the ball chairman in 1966 and was elected president for the years 1969/1970. In 1969 the Association brought the late John Kerr over for the first time as guest artist for the ball.

Do you recognise any of your relations?
Donegal Manager encourages local businesses to act local and think global from day one...

Profile: David Gildea
VP Product, GM of CloudRanger at Druva

David Gildea started his career with Pramerica before taking a position with a new start-up called 3D Issue. David says that working with 3D issue at an early stage gave him the insights that inspired him to set up his own business. In June 2014 David set up CloudRanger and joined the New Frontiers programme starting on a path that would lead him from start-up to acquisition.

The commitment needed to juggle consulting full time and taking part in New Frontiers paid off in 2015 when CloudRanger qualified for Enterprise Ireland’s Competitive Start Fund. Then in November 2016 he built on this success by qualifying for High Potential Start-Up Funding. Visibility of the wide range of support offered by Enterprise Ireland is something he lists as a key benefit of the New Frontiers program. Incredibly less than two years later CloudRanger was acquired by Druva, a global leader in Cloud Data Protection and Management.

On advice for entrepreneurs looking to move their business to the next level, David suggests thinking global and international from day one, with international markets often being an easier path to business growth. He advises picking your first couple of employees very carefully, stating that there is huge level of work and commitment needed in a start-up environment and your team need to really believe in your business.

David sees the business remaining in the North West as it grows and sees no problem in sourcing top talent both locally and by offering remote working opportunities. He has much praise for the facilities at their location in the Colab in Letterkenny, the colocation with LYIT meant that access to students in the early days helped him to develop his product. He also says that the flexibility offered by Colab management gave the business the space to grow, and references the support he received by working in an environment with likeminded people willing to share their knowledge.

The future will see further growth in the range of services offered in the Druva offices in Letterkenny. The team have ambitious targets and move at a rapid pace. While the CloudRanger product remains David’s main focus other Druva teams are already looking to grow their base with the Letterkenny office, testament to the talent and hard work of David and his team.

©2019 Mary Rodgers

Bloody Foreland, courtesy of Mary Rodgers
Small and medium enterprises in Donegal have been called upon to turn their passion into action and ‘Dare to be amazing.’

The call was made by Head of Enterprise in Donegal, Michael Tunney, at the end of Local Enterprise Week, who said that the backbone of the economy of the county is small and micro enterprises - but they don’t get the importance they deserve.

“I’d say to our businesses – you need to have more confidence in yourselves – you need to tell your story, because if you don’t, how will people know?”

The theme for the week was ‘Peak Performance’ and the Head of Enterprise urged Donegal businesses to be ambitious.

“Know what you want to achieve and then match that with the ambition. If you are going to have peak performance, then you need to have the ambition to perform at that level.

At the end of the day, you have to have some sort of goal – but you shouldn’t set those goals too low and make them easy to achieve. Be ambitious, aim high,” Mr. Tunney said.

His comments came as another busy Local Enterprise Week came to an end with 25 events at locations right across the county, thanks to support from other agencies and partners.

The Local Enterprise Office organised events that included a number of high-profile speakers, but many local businesses also featured on the podium over the course of the week to share their stories.

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Those stories this year ranged from the opening event and continued right through the week until the final event, the launch of ‘Donegal – We Create’ charting the stories of 8 creative businesses in the county.

Local businesses also featured in many of the partner events and the Head of Enterprise paid tribute to all those who had made the week’s series of events a huge success.

“It was great as always, to have some excellent speakers come in to give brilliant advice, information and inspiration over the course of the week, but one of the highlights of the week certainly was the fact that we were able to include so many local businesses who could share success stories that hopefully will inspire other businesses to follow in their footsteps,” the Head of Enterprise said.

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“It was great to have such co-operation from other agencies and partners in the county and I’d like to thank them, all our speakers and all our venue hosts for their contribution towards a great week for Donegal businesses.

I’d also urge the businesses who attended and indeed those thinking of starting a business, to continue to engage with the Local Enterprise Office and we will do everything possible to help them,” he concluded.

Local Enterprise Office Donegal is supported through co-funding from the Irish Government and the European Regional Development Fund 2014 – 2020. To contact the Local Enterprise Office in Donegal, log on to www.localenterprise.ie/donegal or phone 074 9160735.
Connecting the Donegal Diaspora to its Roots: The Irish American Partnership

Over 30 years ago, Former Donegal TD Paddy Harte Snr., a leading proponent of peace and reconciliation among divided communities, conceived of a supportive partnership between Irish America and Ireland. Having secured £50,000 in seed funding from the Irish government, the Irish American Partnership was formed, its mission—to empower the next generation of Irish leaders through education and community development.

Education has been the gift passed down from one generation of Irish to the next, allowing Ireland’s diaspora to thrive all over the world. The Partnership encourages the Irish diaspora to honour their heritage by giving back to the schools and community initiatives that made an impact on their lives, or the lives of their ancestors.

“Ní neart go chur le chéile.”

This incredible network of support has raised over $32+ million in assistance to Ireland, North and South, allowing the Partnership to fund more than 500 primary schools, university access scholarships, job training programmes, and community development organisations across the island. The impact of this giving is immense. In just one year, the Partnership affects the lives of thousands of children, students and families, providing:

- New books and STEM materials to 53 schools
- Science and technology training to 103 teachers
- Access to primary school science fairs to 7,500 students nationwide
- University scholarships to 20 disadvantaged students

Patricia Uí hArlaigh, Principal of Scoil Náisiúnta Ghrot a Choirce in Letterkenny, recently received a Partnership grant of $2,000 to run an innovative and inclusive new literacy programme in her school. The programme harnesses the fun of Legos to engage students who traditionally struggle with literacy, encouraging them to build their stories with Lego blocks and narrate them with an iPad or smartphone. As Principal Uí hArlaigh said:

“Children’s imaginations are boundless and the stories within limitless! Providing a means by which we can motivate and enthuse children helps them to develop strong, authentic literacy skills.”

In 2018, the Partnership was honoured to give a gift to St. Patrick’s National School in Murlog, Co. Donegal in Paddy Harte Snr’s name.

The Partnership invests in the people, ideas, and activities that build peace and prosperity, strengthening the global Irish community by linking the diaspora to modern Ireland. For more on the Partnership’s mission, visit www.irishap.org or follow us on social media. If you are interested in giving back to a specific Donegal school or community program, please contact Clodagh Boyle at clodagh@irishap.org.
Donegal has long been renowned for its spellbinding beauty that captivates visitors, Diaspora and citizens alike, deepening their love and connections to the county while offering a quality of life that is simply unparalleled. In November, 2018 Donegal’s Local Community Development Committee carried out a ‘Happiness Survey’ to gather evidence on citizens everyday experience of what it is really like to live and work in County Donegal. A total of 678 people completed the survey and the sample was distributed across different size towns, rural countryside, coastal and Gaeltacht communities.

The research sought to identify a number of factors that can influence a person’s quality of life and one such factor is having access to quality services. Donegal citizens were asked to rate 56 different services or functions and 91% revealed that they were most pleased by the ‘beauty of the natural surroundings’; 84% by the ‘superior air quality’; 77% by the ‘cleanliness of their neighbourhoods’; 75% felt ‘personally safe’ in their neighbourhoods and 73% felt ‘noise levels’ were at a minimum highlighting the tranquillity of rural living. In addition, educational services, the quality of the hospitality sector and services like community centres, library, sports and recreational facilities and parks, green areas and open spaces all rated very highly. Interestingly citizens who had previously lived abroad provided even higher ratings for the above services and an international comparison for the quality of life that is offered within County Donegal.

Being able to form meaningful connections to the community can also impact on a person’s quality of life and 62% of citizens highly rated the friendliness and inclusivity of community members and neighbours. This is further endorsed by two out of every three citizens, indicating that they would not relocate from Donegal if they had the chance highlighting their strong linkages to their community and county.

Reaching your full potential is a further factor that can influence a person’s happiness and two out of every three citizens believed that they would be successful in reaching their full potential within the county and in finding quality work opportunities that would match their existing skills sets.

For further information on the results of this survey please contact the Research and Policy Unit @ 074 91 72569.
In December 2017, issue 4 of Donegal Connections featured the news that INTERREG VA 2014-2020, administered by the Special European Union Programmes Body (SEUPB), was to fund the construction of 46.5kms of cross-border greenways, linking Buncrana and Muff to Derry respectively, and Lifford to Strabane.

Fast forward to March 2019 and substantial progress has been made on the overall project. In May and June 2018, consultation events were held in Muff and Fahan to allow local residents, landowners and interested parties discuss the potential route corridors on display. The large attendance at both events was an indication of the popularity of the project. In October, a further event was held at the Courthouse, Lifford to showcase the route linking the town to Strabane. In parallel, the project’s brand was finalised and the new logo was published to coincide with the public consultation process, allowing the Council to build interest in the greenway concept to a wider audience.

In January 2019, planning permission for route 3, Lifford to Strabane, was granted by Donegal County Council. Ronan Gallagher, Communications Officer for the project said: ‘our funding is to encourage modal shift, meaning that people consider leaving the car at home and using a bicycle to make their daily journey, whether to college, school or work.’ He continued: ‘while we have a long way to go before we’re finished, construction in Lifford should begin before December 2019, and subject to planning approval by Council in July 2019, route 2 (Muff to Derry) will commence by February 2020.’

This leaves the marquee corridor – route 1 – linking Buncrana to Derry. With the exception of the Fahan area, an emerging route corridor has been identified linking the two urban areas. The project team are confident that once negotiations have been concluded in the coming weeks, the full route will be announced by June 2019.

Gallagher concluded: ‘this project will be a massive catalyst for economic and social change in Donegal. These routes are just the beginning of an ambitious Council plan to develop similar routes across the county, bringing the vision of the North West City Region to life in a very tangible way. With INTERREG support for these three specific routes and match funding from the Department for Transport, Tourism and Sport in Dublin and the Department for Infrastructure in Belfast, Donegal is ideally placed to offer green infrastructure and business opportunities while helping the County reduce its carbon footprint.’

Keep in touch with the greenway progress at www.nwgreenway.com or on Facebook/Twitter: @nwgreenway.

He writes, "I've only been back to the States once since moving here. When I was in upstate New York, I had an amusing exchange. I met a perpetually-smiling man there who, when I told him I lived in Donegal, said: "I've been to Donegal. My family is from Donegal. We have a castle up there. D-something. Dun...Doc...D-""Doe?" I interjected "That's it, Doe!"

He then proceeded to show the man a picture of his ancestral home. His already-grinning face broke into a full beam. Jasper recalls that moments like that, when he is able to connect with someone about their past, helps him feel like he is beginning to be a part of his new home in Donegal.

Connecting with the history of a place, learning facts and dates and names you also connect with the community that built what still stands.

And he recalls that is what made him want to learn more. He scoured books and websites, looking for information on Doe Castle and other important sites in the county's history pulling together the strands for his first book. He calls the book "A history book disguised as a travel book." Too few tourists, in his opinion, really get to know the story behinds the sites they visit but if they stopped and just explored a little bit, the opportunities to learn more are vast.

Going back to Doe Castle as an example, there are so many great stories like how the castle changed hands 16 times during the 17th century, or how one owner of the castle, Myles MacSweeney, reportedly escaped imprisonment by jumping out of the ship transporting him across Lough Foyle and swimming to safety in the dead of night.

This is the beauty of local history.

On a final note, Jasper would encourage people who still live in the area, or those who still have a connection to it, those who don't to explore the history of Donegal.
Donegal’s new tourism brochure unveiled

The splendid surroundings of the Villa Rose Hotel in the busy town of Ballybofey played host to the launch of the new Donegal Tourism brochure for 2019. This brochure which is undoubtedly an important calling card for the county gives a flavour of the fantastic facilities and attractions in Donegal and brings to life the strong visual image of Donegal for the potential visitor.

Launching the brochure, Cathaoirleach of Donegal County Council Cllr. Seamus O’Domhnaill described the brochure as “a ‘window’ into our beautiful county that reaches out across the world to our diaspora and tourists alike, encouraging them to come and visit and experience a welcome second to none”.

This is the third edition of this 64 page brochure which is distributed throughout Ireland, the UK, USA, France and Germany. The brochure uses over forty different themes and headings from popular activities, such as surfing, golf, and angling; to unique Donegal amenities and resources, such as local produce, Islands and the Gaeltacht and festivals allowing the reader to easily plan their visit.

Speaking at the launch Cllr. O’Domhnaill said that “tourism in Donegal has been a mainstay of the economy for as long as I can remember and even well before that. The people of Donegal have always been revered for their hospitality and friendly welcome. We are blessed in Donegal with a tourism offering that can match anything worldwide. It gives me great pleasure to see the investment and commitment that Donegal Tourism continues to provide to our county in terms of marketing Donegal on a national and international basis. I truly believe that Donegal is now a world class holiday destination for the intrepid visitor and is also a great place to live and do business”.

Chief Executive of Donegal County Council Seamus Neely who is also the Chair of Donegal Tourism Ltd said that “tourism is perhaps the strongest growth sector in Donegal and I am confident that it will continue to play a vital role in the economic growth of the region. Ireland’s tourism initiative, the Wild Atlantic Way has and will continue to be a very positive development for County Donegal. It is a resource that we will work to develop and promote throughout 2019 and beyond.

“We have over the past 12 months delivered some exciting events and initiatives and by working in partnership with both trade and agency partners including Failte Ireland and Tourism Ireland our team will continue to promote Donegal at home and abroad across a range of platforms. One of these platforms will be the refreshed govisitdonegal.com website which will be live in the coming weeks and training will be provided to businesses to upload their products and services onto this new platform”.

Barney McLaughlin Head of Tourism in Donegal County Council presented details of the 2018 achievements as well as the plans for the year ahead. See the new brochure here https://bit.ly/2TeWcPX
Representatives from Donegal County Council, Derry City & Strabane District Council, Letterkenny Institute of Technology, and the Irish Centre for Local and Regional Development visited Harvard Graduate School of Design (GSD) recently to set a context for the work being undertaken by the school. In examining the region and its potential, the GSD from Harvard are preparing an analysis of the city regions landscape and looking at the potential future scenarios for the area in a post Brexit era.

Eunan Quinn Senior Planner with Donegal County Council explains that the work brings a fresh perspective on the regions landscape and seeks to define the place-based issues that the two local authorities’ can continue to work on together.

An intensive series of lectures and workshops by the representatives from the North West provided the students with local perspectives, challenged assumptions and worked to bring added value to the extensive work already undertaken by the GSD Harvard under the guidance of the projects Lead Investigator, Professor Gareth Doherty.

Karen Phillips, Director of Environment and Regeneration with Derry City and Strabane District Council believes that this is a unique project and has the potential to bring new thinking and fresh insights that can only enrich plans for the future development of the city region.

The Graduate Design School Harvard undertook a reciprocal visit to the North West recently wherein the students got the opportunity to engage with local communities and organisations and to examine the rich landscape of the North West first-hand.

Karen Phillips, Director of Environment and Regeneration, Derry City & Strabane District Council