

Reaching Out to New York's

Forgotten Irish

Caring for those
who came before us



Who Are The Forgotten Irish?

In the Ireland of the 1920s — 1960s, tens of thousands of Irish men and women immigrated to the U.S., driven by economic necessity and lack of opportunity at home. Armed with great determination, they set out for America. Some worked in hospitals; others drove cabs and toiled on American roads and railways. As they built their lives here they never forgot home, sending money and hope back to Ireland. So generous were their contributions that a line item in Ireland's national accounts at that time read "Emigrants Remittances." Today in the New York area, many elderly Irish live in poverty and isolation, some left behind by family and friends and disconnected from the community, often too proud to ask for help. Many live meagerly after having sacrificed so much. **They are the Forgotten Irish.**

The plight of the Forgotten Irish

was highlighted by the sad and lonely death of Tony Gallagher. Tony's body was discovered before Christmas 2008, in his Sunnyside New York apartment where he lay for a week or more before being discovered. A Mayo man who was 72 at the time of his death, he spent his adult life contributing in the United States and working hard. The fact that he was unvisited and undiscovered for so long was testimony to the fact that so many of the older Irish were disconnected.

In 2009, The American Ireland Fund identified three Irish centers in New York with programs that specifically addressed the needs of this fragile community. A portion of the proceeds from the last two annual New York Dinner Galas have supported The New York Irish Center, The Emerald Isle Immigration Center and the Aisling Irish Community Center. These special places offer dignity, care and contact with the elderly Irish who have given so much to the fabric of the Irish-American community.

The generosity of New York Dinner Gala attendees and partners such as Atlantic Philanthropies, Atlantic Hoisting, Goldman Sachs and Fitzpatrick Hotels has enabled The American Ireland Fund to direct over \$550,000 in assistance to programs serving the Forgotten Irish.

How Has The American Ireland Fund helped the Forgotten Irish?

Thanks to your generosity, The American Ireland Fund's Forgotten Irish campaign has helped the three New York centers offer the following services:

The Aisling Irish Community Center:

- Assistance to over 460 seniors over the past 12 months. This includes finding suitable companions for over 150 elderly people living alone and in need of homecare assistance
- Recreational activities to keep seniors engaged and active
- Workshops on issues such as bereavement, depression/loneliness and alcohol dependency
- Informational meetings on pension/social security entitlements, independent financial advice and estate planning
- A cultural and heritage program that takes seniors to places of historical and cultural interest
- A Senior Telephone Help Line that helps those who are isolated and are in need of friendly conversation

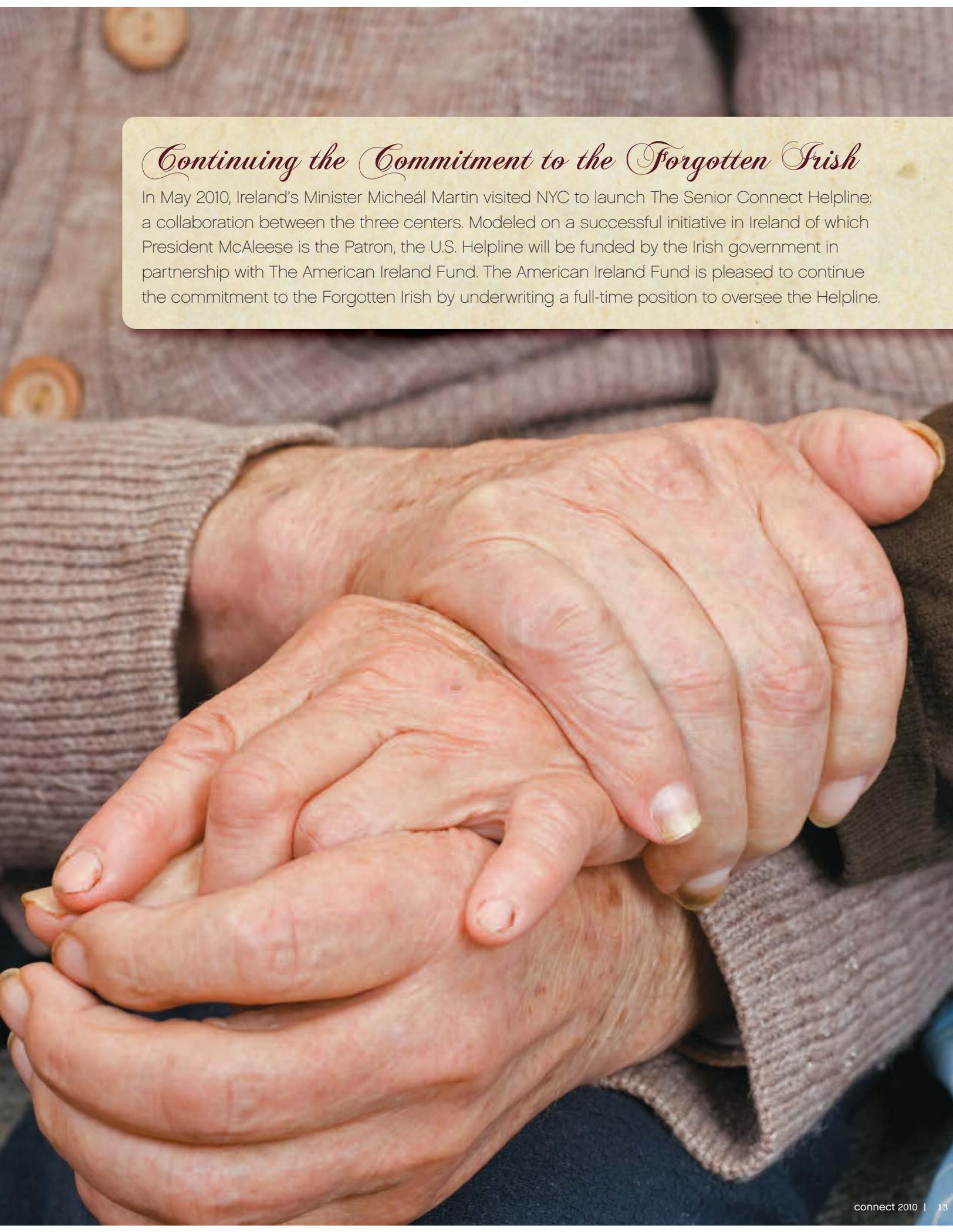
The Emerald Isle Immigration Center:

- Hot meals delivered to those who need them
- Programs that provide home visits to those who are living alone
- Weekly contact from volunteers, a trained social worker and at times a visiting Irish social work intern
- A feasibility study for senior housing in the Bronx, Queens and surrounding areas
- A volunteer nutritionist who provides monthly sessions on healthy eating and cooking

New York Irish Center

- Weekly catered lunches for senior citizens, where they can meet old friends and new
- A referral service to the many agencies in the New York area who provide services, such as immigration, legal, medical and personal counselling
- On-site counselors/therapists with deep understanding of Irish culture and values
- An internet cafe and an Irish Tea Room, where they can enjoy a convivial atmosphere
- Social functions and parties, arts and crafts, concerts, "seisiúns" (traditional Irish music), "ceilis" (dances), plays and game nights





Continuing the Commitment to the Forgotten Irish

In May 2010, Ireland's Minister Micheál Martin visited NYC to launch The Senior Connect Helpline: a collaboration between the three centers. Modeled on a successful initiative in Ireland of which President McAleese is the Patron, the U.S. Helpline will be funded by the Irish government in partnership with The American Ireland Fund. The American Ireland Fund is pleased to continue the commitment to the Forgotten Irish by underwriting a full-time position to oversee the Helpline.

Larry

"The loneliness is the hard part. The New York Irish Center gives me something to look forward to every week, just coming down for a chat and being made to feel so welcome. I don't know where I would be without it." — *Larry, a regular at the New York Irish Center in his late 70s, from County Leitrim in Ireland*



"*Alice* is a 76 year old Irish senior from the West of Ireland. She has lived and worked in New York City for the past 30 years. She had no family here in the U.S. and limited family back in Ireland. Alice was forced to stop working last year because of an unexpected health problem, had no plan for retirement and only her savings to live on. Over time, staff members have built a relationship with Alice and have helped her to advocate for herself. Visits from our staff have become the highlight of her week." — *Alice's case worker at the Emerald Isle Immigration Center (EIIC)*

"As the Emerald Isle Immigration Center helps future generations of Irish on their path to US citizenship we are humbled to provide assistance to seniors in our community, as we have since 1988. Former generations have sacrificed in many ways and should not be forgotten in their golden years. We are particularly grateful to those who support the programs of the Forgotten Irish." — *Siobhan Dennehy, Executive Director, Emerald Isle Immigration Center (EIIC)*

"The Ireland Funds are again showing how important they are to the global Irish community by championing the cause of the Forgotten Irish. Having left Ireland myself, I can tell you how hard it can be to be separated from loved ones. I left under good circumstances and go back to Ireland frequently. But many of these folks aren't in a position to visit Ireland much at all, if ever. I can only imagine the isolation and loneliness that they sometimes must feel. The programs supported by The Ireland Funds help provide important support for these Forgotten Irish, giving them access to people with shared experiences, concerns and interests." — *John Fitzpatrick of Fitzpatrick Hotels and Board Director of The American Ireland Fund*

"All our services are delivered with a signature Irish 'fáilte', i.e. 'welcome' in Gaelic and our location is very accessible. In recent years, the support we have received from the community at large, particularly through The American Ireland Fund and its Forgotten Irish program, has proven invaluable to us in meeting our overhead costs as we strive to carry out our mission." — *Paul Finnegan, Executive Director of the New York Irish Center*

"The funding received from The American Ireland Fund has not only contributed to the cost of programs for seniors here at the Aisling Irish Community Center, but has helped us to further the outreach work that we do in the elderly Irish community here in New York." — *Orla Kelleher, Executive Director of the Aisling Irish Community Center*

For more information on how you can assist the Forgotten Irish in New York and other U.S. cities, please visit www.irlfunds.org/connect