



Muskegon Irish American Society

# NEWS



Fall 2016

## Warm Up At Whiskey School

**Wednesday, November 16, 6:30 pm at Hennessy's**



Last November we learned how much fun it is to attend a whiskey school at Hennessy's. Thanks to Mike Hennessy and our club's relationship, we will once again hold our own special whiskey school at the unbelievable price of **\$15.00 per person!**

So, you ask, what is this whiskey school all about? At the whiskey school Hennessy's closes the front restaurant section to the public, and up to 60 participants sit at the booths and tables there. A buffet that includes some of Hennessy's favorite food offerings is set up, and is available all evening. Our instructor will be Alistair Jackson, who hails from Scotland and is an expert on whiskeys and other libations. Hennessy's staff distributes tasting glasses to everyone, and pours a small sample of whiskey in each glass. The instructor explains the history and gives information about the whiskey, and the whiskey is tasted. Then the tasting glasses are cleared away, and everyone has food from the buffet. New glasses are brought out, and this is repeated over about a two hour period, with a total of six different whiskeys being tasted. The idea is to introduce a variety of whiskeys with different tastes. Some may be sweet, some will have milder or stronger flavors, etc. The instructor selects the whiskeys. This is an event not to be missed - regular price is \$30.

**IMPORTANT NOTICE:** The maximum number for this event is 60 members. After 60 reservations are made, reservations will be closed. To make your reservations call **Kathleen Marek, as soon as possible, at 231-759-7344**. Reservations will be made in the order they are received. If more than 60 members make reservations, a waiting list will be kept. We hope to see you there! **Sláinte!**



# Michigan Irish American Hall of Fame Induction



President Kevin Donovan opens Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony



Neil Mullally James Blanchard



Inductees at Hall of Fame at Hennessy's



Michael Patrick Shiels broadcasting his Michigan Big Show from Hennessy's with Seamus Kennedy and Chris Zahrt



James J. Blanchard James J. O'Kelly Kathleen Dewan O'Neill Michael Patrick Shiels Michael W. Kerwin

Photo Credits: Scott Decker



## 2016 Michigan Irish Music Festival

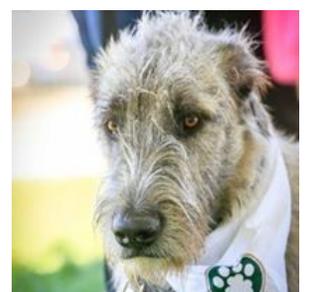


Photo credits: Michigan Irish Music Festival

### About our 2016 Michigan Irish American Hall of Fame Inductees (Pictured on Previous Page)

In the category of Public Service, former Governor James J. Blanchard was inducted, and in the field of Arts and Entertainment we inducted Michael Patrick Shiels. He is the star of the statewide morning radio program called The Big Show, which is carried on WKBZ 1090 AM, Mon- Fri from 6 - 8 a.m. In the field of Education, three persons were inducted: Kathleen Dewan O'Neill, James J. O'Kelly, and Michael W. Kerwin. They have all been active in Irish educational and cultural projects for many years in the Detroit area, including the Gaelic League. Kathleen O'Neill has hosted an Irish Sunday radio show on WNZK 690 AM in Detroit for more than a decade.

Congratulations to all of our inductees, and thank you for all you have accomplished for all of us!



**Congratulations** to the Honorable Neil G. Mullally on his upcoming retirement after 30 years in the Muskegon County Probate and Circuit Court. Neil is a past president of the Muskegon Irish American Society and now serves as the Program chair. He has served on various community boards and committees including Mediation & Restorative Services, the United Way, Catholic Social Services, the Grand Rapids Diocese Secretariat for Social Justice, the Muskegon Forum Committee, the YMCA, the Muskegon Museum of Art, and the Muskegon County Bar Association.

Neil and his lovely wife Diane have three children and are anxiously awaiting the birth of their first grandchild!



To find the origin of Halloween, you have to look to the festival of **Samhain** in Ireland's Celtic past.

Samhain had three distinct elements. Firstly, it was an important fire festival, celebrated over the evening of October 31 and throughout the following day. The flames of old fires had to be extinguished and ceremonially re-lit by druids. It was also a festival not unlike the modern New Year's Day in that it carried the notion of casting out the old and moving into the new.

To our pagan ancestors it marked the end of the pastoral cycle – a time when all the crops would have been gathered and placed in storage for the long winter ahead and when livestock would be brought in from the fields and selected for slaughter or breeding.

But it was also, as the last day of the year, the time when the souls of the departed would return to their former homes and when potentially malevolent spirits were released from the Otherworld and were visible to mankind.

Being 'between years' or 'in transition', the usually fairly stable boundaries between the Otherworld and the human world became less secure so that puka, banshees, fairies and other spirits could come and go quite freely. There were also 'shape shifters' at large. This is where the dark side of Halloween originated.

To ward off the evil let loose at *Samhain*, huge bonfires were lit and people wore ugly masks and disguises to confuse the spirits and stop the dead identifying individuals who they had disliked during their own lifetime.

They also deliberately made a lot of noise to unsettle the spirits and drive them away from their homes. The timid, however, would leave out food in their homes, or at the nearest hawthorn or whitethorn bush (where fairies were known to live), hoping that their generosity would appease the spirits. For some, the tradition of leaving food (and a spoon to eat it!) in the home – usually a plate of champ or Colcannon – was more about offering hospitality to their own ancestors.

### Irish Halloween Blessing

At all Hallow's Tide, may God keep you safe  
 From goblin and pooka and black-hearted stranger,  
 From harm of the water and hurt of the fire,  
 From thorns of the bramble,  
 From all other danger,  
 From Will O' The Wisp haunting the mire;  
 From stumbles and tumbles and tricksters to vex you,  
 May God in His mercy, this week protect you.

[www.irelandcalling.ie/samhain](http://www.irelandcalling.ie/samhain)

Just as spells and incantations of witches were especially powerful at *Samhain*, so the night was believed to be full of portents of the future.

<http://www.irish-genealogy-toolkit.com/origin-of-Halloween.html#sthash.YNT0Xyy0.dpuf>