



LISA WAKELAND/STAFF  
Dozens of volunteers showed up to help clean out the Irish Heritage Center in December. Here, they work on clearing the back parking lot.



LISA WAKELAND/STAFF  
The freshly painted and decorated stage was the setting for the Irish Heritage Center's first major event in February. Here, Barb Kennedy Kenny, center, on stage, Kent Covey, right, and Maureen Kennedy, left, rehearse a scene for "Moll," a play by John B. Keane.

### Upcoming events

- Traditional Irish music night, 8:30 p.m. Thursday, July 8, at the Irish Heritage Center, 3905 Eastern Ave. Featuring Murphy's Law, Dark Moll and Mick McEvilly. Doors open at 7 p.m. for the free event.
- Irish Session – Drinks, Songs and Stories: 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, July 14, at the Irish Heritage Center, 3905 Eastern Ave. Takes place the second Wednesday of every month and features instrumental and singing sessions. A \$5 donation is requested.
- The play, "Blood," by Larry Kirwan: 7 p.m. Thursday, July 29, at the Kennedy Heights Art Center, 6546 Montgomery Road. The Irish American Theater Co. will perform a play about the 1916 Easter Rising. The event is free and will also feature Irish comedy, music and dance.
- Ongoing events: Irish language classes at 7 p.m. Wednesday evenings. A six-week session costs \$65 for non-members and \$55 for members.
- Irish art exhibit featuring sheet music from Tin Pan Alley. Call 533-0100 for an appointment.
- Irish karaoke: The center is planning a free night of karaoke and will start once seven people express interest. Call 533-0100 to sign up.
- Visit [www.irishcenterofcincinnati.com](http://www.irishcenterofcincinnati.com) for a complete list of events.

# Irish Heritage Center off to strong start

By Lisa Wakeland

lwakeland@communitypress.com

When Maureen Kennedy and Kent Covey bought the former McKinley School in Columbia Tusculum last year they never dreamt it would become a bustling community center in less than six months.

"When we came in (the building) was in disarray," said Kennedy, artistic director of the Irish American Theater Company.

"We have so many wonderful people who want to see this place be a tremendous success and they want to do what's needed to help."

Volunteers began cleaning up the former school on Eastern Avenue, now the Irish Heritage Center of Cincinnati, in December and have made loads of progress.

Months of cleaning, painting, plaster work and other renovations helped transform the gymnasium into a theater and classrooms into social gathering places.

The Irish Heritage Center officially opened with a play in late February and has hosted multiple events in the past few months, including a St. Patrick's Day celebration and Bloomsday, which honors the James Joyce novel "Ulysses."

Covey, managing director of the center, said it's "mind-boggling" how quickly the Irish Heritage Center took off, but there is still a lot of renovation work to complete.

In addition to fixing the building, Covey said they have volunteers with a variety of expertise to help organize the administration aspect of the center in the coming months.

Plans for the Irish Heritage Center also include a library, genealogy research area, museum and art gallery.

"Many people in the Irish community were so happy and said they now have a home," Kennedy said.

"That was our dream, to make this place a success."



LISA WAKELAND/STAFF  
Maureen Kennedy and Kent Covey bought the McKinley School last year. It is now the home of the Irish Heritage Center, 3905 Eastern Ave., in Columbia Tusculum.



LISA WAKELAND/STAFF  
The school's gymnasium, seen here in December, was transformed into the theater by many volunteers.



LISA WAKELAND/STAFF  
The main hallway is decorated with Irish symbols.



LISA WAKELAND/STAFF  
A ghost light illuminates the stage in the theater of the Irish Heritage Center while the curtains, made by a volunteer, cast a rosy hue.



LISA WAKELAND/STAFF  
An upstairs classroom, sometimes used for Irish language classes, will become the library.



LISA WAKELAND/STAFF  
Maureen Kennedy, artistic director of the Irish American Theater Company, left, said she knew this was the right building when she saw the Celtic insignia scattered throughout the building.



LISA WAKELAND/STAFF  
A large crowd gathers for a St. Patrick's Day parade day party on March 13.



LISA WAKELAND/STAFF  
Visitors to the Irish Heritage Center are greeted by an Irish flying pig.



LISA WAKELAND/STAFF  
The former gymnasium now serves as a theater and gathering place for large events such as the St. Patrick's Day parade day event on March 13.



AMIE DWORECKI/STAFF  
Maureen Kennedy and her husband, Kent Covey, in the theater at the Irish Heritage Center, the former McKinley School on Eastern Avenue in Columbia Tusculum. Kennedy and Covey said they never expected the center to transform so quickly.

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