



**MCCARTHY TAKES  
OVER GAA REINS**  
SPORTS, PAGE 62

**TRANSATLANTIC  
40 Under 40**  
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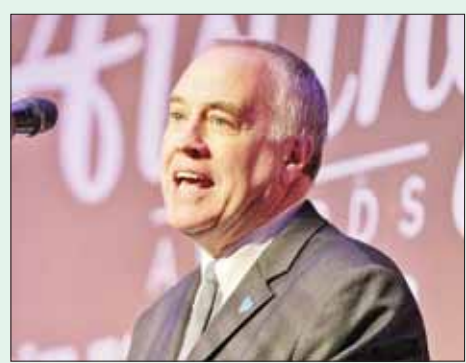
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# The Irish Echo

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The USA's most widely read Irish-American newspaper



New York State Comptroller Tom DiNapoli speaking at the Aisling Awards in Belfast.

## DiNapoli Urges Envoy

By Anthony Neeson

Appeals to President Joe Biden to appoint a Special Envoy to Northern Ireland have been boosted with an endorsement of such an appointment by New York State Comptroller, Tom DiNapoli.

Like his predecessors in the comptroller's office, DiNapoli has been closely involved with efforts to boost the Northern Ireland economy by means of pension fund investment, and as the man who oversees his state's \$194 billion pension fund, he wields enormous influence while being widely respected for his efforts to underpin the peace and political process with such job-creating investment.

As an investor in many companies with operations in the North, Comptroller DiNapoli — who won more votes in the last state-wide election than any other candidate — has visited Belfast often to voice support for the peace process, and for the MacBride Principles on Fair Employment.

In a letter to President Biden, the comptroller weighed in behind the envoy campaign, fronted by an online petition, which was initiated by the Ancient Order of Hibernians and the Irish Echo following the president's inauguration.

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## Albany Appeal To AIHS



New York State Assemblyman Michael Cusick.

By Ray O'Hanlon

First there was a letter from a range of well known community members and activists. Now comes the letter from the politicians.

Members of the Irish American Legislators Society of New York State have written to the American Irish Historical Society expressing their "great concern" over the proposed sale of the AIHS headquarters on Fifth Avenue in Manhattan.

The letter is penned by Assemblyman Mike Cusick of Staten Island, President of the Irish American Legislators Society, and is co-signed by 31 of his fellow New York State legislators in both the Assembly and Senate. (The names of signatories can be seen in an ad on Page 5).

The letter is addressed to AIHS President Maureen Bateman.

The letter states: "On behalf of the American Irish

Legislators Society of New York State, we write to you with great concern over the recent listing for sale of the property at 991 5th Avenue, the home of the American Irish Historical Society.

"As the President of the American Irish Historical Society, you are aware that this cherished cultural landmark has been at this location since 1940. Its presence on 5th Avenue is not only a prominent location; it is where the New York City St. Patrick's Day parade ends.

"For decades this tradition has helped to showcase the American Irish Historical Society and the important role it plays in serving Irish Americans and preserving Irish culture. The groundswell of opposition to the sale of this building indicates that there is adequate support in the community for the Society to thrive at this location with the right structures in place.

Continues on page 2



**IrishEcho**  
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## *Comhghairdeas*

### Congratulations, 40 Under 40 Honorees

*Especially our member, Michael O'Rourke*

Business Attraction & Retention Manager, Office of International Business Development,  
PA Department of Community & Economic Development

#### Join the Irish American Business Chamber & Network

Led by a dedicated Board of Directors, the Irish American Business Chamber & Network (IABCN) promotes the interests of our members and the development of commercial, economic, and educational relationships between the Greater Philadelphia Region & the Island of Ireland.

The Irish Chamber encourages and facilitates business relationships among its members by providing virtual educational and networking forums (returning to in person programming in mid to late 2021) and extensive opportunities for the exchange of information and ideas, especially about import/export issues, customs regulations, investment opportunities, industry trends, and market research.

With a solid record of accomplishment and achievement over the past twenty-two years, the Irish Chamber's trusted role in facilitating business development has been recognized on both sides of the Atlantic.



Connect with the Irish American Business Chamber & Network

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## Congratulations to Kieran McGirl!

### 5th Generation AOH



**5th Generation American - Irish,  
keeping the tradition alive!**

**Your Grandpa, Al O'Hagan would be so proud!**

**We love you,  
GG, Mom, Dad, Uncle Shaun, Aunt Jess, Siobhan,  
Sean and Kayla - Ryan and Norah too.**

# IRISH 40 UNDER 40



## Michael O'Rourke

**Where you live:** Litzitz, PA

**Place of Birth:** Harrisburg, PA

**Age:** 38

**Family:** Sheila (wife), Aidan (son), and Maeve (daughter)

**First Job:** Busboy  
**What it taught me:** It taught me how gratifying and powerful it is to serve and take care of

others, as well as reaffirming the joy of connecting with strangers.

**Current Company and position:** Business Attraction & Retention Manager, Office of International Business Development, PA Department of Community & Economic Development (DCED)

**Best advice you could give someone starting out:** Treat everyone with kindness and respect – you never know who you'll run in to again on your journey. Practice gratitude, and never forget to thank the family, friends, and colleagues who helped you along the way. Give them a call, or better yet, send them a handwritten note. And honor them by paying it forward with the next generation of professionals.

**How do you embrace your Irish Heritage?** I celebrate my heritage by helping to build stronger economic ties between Pennsylvania and the island of Ireland.

I enjoy working closely with partners such as the Local Enterprise Office network, Enterprise Ireland, Invest

Northern Ireland, Belfast City Council, Cork Chamber of Commerce, Queen's University, Ulster University, and the Derry City & Strabane District Council on technology and business development opportunities, and collaborating on inbound and outbound missions. I was honored to represent Pennsylvania at the 2016 Medtec Ireland Exhibition in Galway and the 2019 National Ploughing Championships in County Carlow.

I am a member of the Irish American Business Chamber & Network and the Ancient Order of Hibernians, and serve on the Steering Committee of The Ireland Funds Philadelphia Chapter.

I'd like to read and speak Irish one day and am enjoying the Duolingo mobile app lessons (special shout-out to a world-class educational tech company headquartered in Pittsburgh, PA).

### Three things people would be surprised to know about me:

1. I met my wife, Sheila, when we both volunteered at a peace and social justice organization in Northern Ireland (the Corrymeela Community).
2. I visited the Korean Demilitarized Zone.
3. I've been passionate about genealogy since I was a teenager and can go back 200+ years in most branches. I enjoy building relationships with distant relatives and collaborating together on research. The most rewarding moments have been answering questions for my paternal grandfather who lost his father at a young age and had little knowledge of his family history.

Michael O'Rourke works to promote the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to foreign companies seeking to locate or expand in the United States. His position involves collaborating with the state's seven overseas offices (covering 27 countries), and statewide economic development partners, to provide comprehensive support to each prospect. In recent years, Michael helped organize and participate in business development missions to Brazil, Canada, Chile, Ireland, the

Netherlands, South Korea, and the United Kingdom to promote Pennsylvania to international investors.

Michael's position at the commonwealth provides a unique platform to celebrate his Irish heritage while also helping to build stronger economic ties between Pennsylvania and the island of Ireland. He regularly partners with economic development agencies in Ireland and Northern Ireland on business development initiatives. He represented Pennsylvania at the 2016 Medtec Ireland Exhibition in Galway and the 2019 National Ploughing Championships (Europe's largest outdoor agricultural exhibition and trade show) in County Carlow.

Previously, Michael provided executive support to a former DCED Secretary, and worked for a non-profit economic development organization in Boston, MA, a successful state gubernatorial campaign, and a government affairs firm in Harrisburg, PA.

In 2007 and 2008, Michael served as a year-long volunteer for the Corrymeela Community, a peace and social justice organization in Northern Ireland. He was named Grand Marshal of the 2009 Harrisburg St. Patrick's Day Parade in recognition of his service.

Michael earned a B.A. degree in Business Administration and Economics at Muhlenberg College in Allentown, PA, where he was Class President, a Resident Advisor, and a college radio disc jockey. He is currently pursuing the Economic Development Finance Professional Certification Program through the National Development Council. He is expected to complete the program in Spring 2021.

Michael is a member of the Irish American Business Chamber & Network and the Ancient Order of Hibernians, and serves on the Steering Committee of The Ireland Funds Philadelphia Chapter.

Michael lives in Litzitz, PA with his wife, two children, and dog. He enjoys volunteering in his community, playing the drums, attending live music events (and he can't wait for their return), hiking with his family, biking rails-to-trails, and cooking.



## Melissa Ward

**Where you live:** Milwaukee, WI

**Place of Birth:** Ohio

**Age:** 28

**Family:** Parents: Mark and Shirley Nickels of Deshler, Ohio; Husband: Sean Ward of Brookfield, Wisconsin

**First Job:** Communications Web Assistant

**What it taught me:** How important it is to like what you do. I

loved this job, and when you love what you're doing, it becomes a lot easier to motivate yourself to be better and continuously learn.

**Current Company and position:** Director of Marketing & Public Relations, CelticMKE, home of Milwaukee Irish Fest

**Best advice you could give someone starting out:** Have patience with yourself. When you're just starting out, you're still learning. Allow yourself to slowly step into things versus thinking you need to know everything

right away to be successful.

**How do you embrace your Irish Heritage?** I have a profound affinity for the culture - from the music (Irish folk is my favorite) to Ireland's rich history. I'm fascinated by all of it. I'm most especially fascinated by the Irish community, particularly here in America. It's our love and pride for our heritage that keeps us all connected, no matter where we happen to be. There's nothing quite like it. It's a wonderful sense of warmth and belonging. It's like what Yeats once said: "There are no strangers here. Only friends you haven't yet met."

Melissa Ward was born and raised in Ohio to Mark and Shirley Nickels; she grew up developing a curiosity for people, cultures and their stories. Studying abroad in London further enhanced her curiosity, as she became fascinated with world history and culture. After earning a Bachelor of Arts Degree at Grand Valley State University, in Grand Rapids, Michigan, one of her first jobs after college centered on archiving history through direct recounts of wartime experiences.

Ward had the honor of capturing and editing oral history interviews with war veterans through the Grand Valley State University Veterans History Project, an initiative that is in collaboration with the Library of Congress. The project collects, records and archives interviews and materials pertaining to military veterans

of all eras, as well as of civilians, with stories relating to the American experience of wartime.

She also had the pleasure of working with a wonderful team on producing a documentary about the All American Girls Professional Baseball League called "A Team of Their Own." In the later part of 1942, with so many baseball players heading off to war, Phillip Wrigley decided to establish a league for women to keep the game going. She served as the Associate Producer and worked alongside the director, producers and editor on telling the story of the amazing women who played in this league. One of Ward's most memorable moments was when her team had the privilege of meeting some of these women at a reunion event in Indiana.

Ward currently works as the Director of Marketing and PR for CelticMKE, a nonprofit organization whose mission is to promote and preserve Irish American and Celtic culture. She works to elevate both the organization's brand and people's interest in the rich heritage of Ireland and the Celtic nations, and to expand the organization's reach to a more global audience. In addition, Ward spearheads all marketing and advertising campaigns for their signature event, Milwaukee Irish Fest. She is also a part of the entertainment committee for the festival and CelticMKE's year round concert committee.

Ward thanks Irish Echo for the honor, as well as her incredible team at CelticMKE.



## Paul Stanton

**Where you live:** Weehawken, NJ

**Place of Birth:** Co. Cork, Ireland

**Age:** 34

**Family:** My wife Emma is from Co. Donegal and we are parents to a newborn baby Eleanor born on January 20th, 2021.

**First Job:** Picking Potatoes on a Farm in Ireland

**What it taught me:** It taught me that I didn't want to be a potato farmer.

**Current Company and position:** Principal at Darby Construction Services

**Best advice you could give someone starting out:** Don't measure your own achievement against the success of others. Do your own thing but always look to improve.

**How do you embrace your Irish Heritage?** I have a strong interest in Irish American history, community work and regularly attend Irish events including theatre and sporting events. I am a member of INNYC, The Ireland Funds Young Leaders and the Manhattan Gaels.

### Three things people would be surprised to know about me....

1. On a visit to DC, I spotted a plaque dedicated to John Saul, a 19th-century horticulturist, in the White House garden in 2012. Through research, I made the connection to Castlemartyr close to my hometown of Midleton, Co. Cork. Through the discovery, a plaque was mounted in the grounds of the hotel and unveiled by former US president Bill Clinton.
2. I am hoping to run a marathon in every state of the USA. So far, I have completed 30 marathons and ticked off 24 states.
3. I would like to live in Argentina at some point in my life. It has a lot to offer - good steak, wine, nice weather, outdoor activities, architecture, culture and interesting history.

Paul Stanton is a Civil Engineering graduate of NUI Galway and a Chartered Quantity Surveyor with 12 years of industry experience in the New York City market. Paul has worked on a range of construction projects including retail, residential, hospitality, healthcare, infrastructure upgrades and corporate office space.



# IRISH 40 UNDER 40



Stephen Place, Mairead Rogan, Sean Patricia, and Michael O'Rourke.



Young Irish American award - Tom Griffith.



Dennis Brownlee, African American Irish Diaspora Network President.



Pride of Irish America award - Thomas Tubridy.



Sophie Colgan.



Rachael Rollins, Suffolk County District Attorney in Massachusetts.



Máirtín Ó Muilleoir and Conna McCann beaming in the award winners from across the Atlantic.



Paul Stanton, Melissa Warde, Brendan Sullivan, and Matthew Sweeney.