

# Harnessing the spirit of the dance

For Unateresa Sheahan-Gormley, Irish dance is in the blood. She talks to Ciara McGuigan about sharing her culture through the medium she loves.

By Ciara McGuigan  
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Not only is she a loving wife to Husband Sam, a devoted mother to son Shea and a hard-working board member and part-owner of sports facilities - NYSL Therapist, Unateresa Sheahan-Gormley also plays a number of other roles in her community. She is a dedicated contributor to a local rehab center in the Bronx, the owner of a homeless shelter and a carer for young children who are placed in her care through the U.S.-based Project Children, which brings children from Northern Ireland to America for much-needed vacations.

And did we forget to mention that she is also an accomplished Irish dancer and dance teacher through her self-established school, the Sheahan-Gormley School of Irish Dance?

With so many demanding aspects of her life to juggle, it is hard to imagine that this busy Bronx native has even

got time to think, but that's what she does most: think about others.

"Our greatest challenge in life is to give as much of ourselves as we can," said Sheahan-Gormley warmly. "[We can do that] by helping others in need, opening a door and making a difference in a child's life. Be true to yourself and life's rewards are unending," she added.

A first generation Irish American, Sheahan-Gormley has always clung strongly to her Irish roots — not least of all a few weeks ago when her County Tyrone-born husband was cheering on the homecoming of another Sam altogether.

Born to a Co. Longford mother, and a Co. Kerry father, Sheahan-Gormley's family were well-known in the Bronx for their passion for all things Irish, as well as for their involvement in the N.Y. community.

Involved in the church, in Irish dancing and Irish music



Unateresa Sheahan-Gormley is an inspiring woman.

circles, with classical music groups, the Pioneer Association, hand ball clubs, Irish football clubs and county

associations, Sheahan-Gormley's parents led and their children followed.

A dancer at the age of three, with the Anna O'Sullivan School of Dancing, Sheahan-Gormley won her first open championship at the age of eight, traveling to Ireland every year to take part in feisanna all over the country.

From the age of 11, she placed sixth at the Regional Oireachtas and qualified for the World Dancing Championships several times.

"Dancing and music were in the blood, part of our being, part of our soul," said Sheahan-Gormley. "But my greatest achievement in Irish dancing is being a teacher and having the opportunity to share my culture, traditions and talents with the younger generations of today. The younger generation is diverse, and to see their willingness to learn and to watch their accomplishments is very rewarding."

Sheahan-Gormley began her teaching career with her brother at the age of 16, and taught for several Irish cultural societies, including The Irish American Society of Tom's River, The Sons and Daughters of Saint Patrick,

The Middeltown Irish, American Association and the Gaelic Society. Eventually, she opened her own school in the Bronx after she took her TCRG exam and became a qualified teacher registered in her region, nationally and for An Coimisiun in Dublin.

"There are always challenges when you start a new venture, but none too great when you have determination and dedication and the will to follow your dreams," she explained. "Challenge is what makes you a stronger person, whatever the obstacles."

Now with classes held in the Bronx, Monroe, Washingtonville, Cornwall on the Hudson, Garrison, Middeltown, Goshen, Chester and Milford, the Sheahan-Gormley School of Irish Dance caters for everyone from basic beginners to advanced adults.

"I have many hopes and dreams for the school," she said proudly. "My goal now is [to see] my dancers bring home a World Medal."

For more details on the Sheahan-Gormley School of Irish Dance contact Unateresa Sheahan-Gormley on 845-477-3886 or go to: [www.geocities.com/sgsoid](http://www.geocities.com/sgsoid)

## All aboard!



Comhaltas Ceoltoiri Eireann sent a performing troupe, gathered from all over Ireland and Britain, to the American missions again this year, its 36th year on the road. The two-week tour plays nine venues in the Northeast and Midwest this year, traveling across the country in a coach colorfully wrapped with Tourism Ireland's signage. Pictured above, outside Ireland House, are Joe Byrne, (left), Tourism Ireland Executive Director, and Breandan O'Caollai, (Deputy Consul General on Park Ave. Full details of the tour can be found on [www.comhaltas.ie](http://www.comhaltas.ie)

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