

William (Willie) Quinn

The first time you talk to William Quinn it is immediately evident that he is proud to be a “Galway Man” and always speaks fondly of the land of his birth. Willie was born in Graigakillen, Portumna, County Galway, the youngest son of Michael (RIP) and Mary Quinn. Willie has three sisters, Patti, Loreto and Marguerite, and six brothers, John, Michael, Frank, Tom, Martin and Pat.

Willie attended Gortanumera National School until the age of twelve and then progressed to Portumna College to obtain his secondary education. From there he studied Science in University College Galway and graduated with a Bachelor of Science Degree in 1984. With a view to a career in teaching Willie enrolled in the Education Department of UCG and graduated with a Higher Diploma in Education in 1985. In September of that year he was employed teaching Mathematics in Portumna Vocational School and was much respected by his students and colleagues alike. During the summer of 1987 Willie’s cousin, Sr. Maureen James, visited Ireland and convinced him to come to the States and teach at the school where she was Principal. Sr. Maureen James O.P. hired Willie to teach in St. Elizabeth’s School in Linden, NJ. where he taught Science from 1987 to 1993. During that time Willie received his “Green Card”.

As soon as Willie landed in the United States he became an unofficial cultural ambassador for Ireland. He joined the Nugent Association, the oldest Irish organization in Union County and participated in many of their events over the years including the Newark and Union County St. Patrick’s Parades. Willie also served as a volunteer for the NJ Irish Festival for several years when it was held in Holmdel NJ.

It was through the Union County Irish events that Willie met Robyn Miller. Robyn was born in Morristown, Tennessee to Tommy Miller and Birdie Mae Hayes. A mutual friend, Willie Lynch introduced them and later played at their wedding. They married on February 5, 1994 and Willie readily admits that this was one of the happiest days of his life. Robyn has always had a love for all things Irish and it was no wonder that she attended many Irish events. Robyn and Willie have two sons and one daughter. Their sons, Thomas and James are attending Pope John XXIII High School. Melissa lives in Rahway with their two grandsons, Griffin and Gavin. Willie is looking forward to marching up South Street on March 12th 2011 leading the Quinn clan at the head of the parade.

After teaching for seven years, Willie changed his career path and became a Computer Programmer. He attended Chubb Institute where he received a degree in Programming, graduating from the Honors Program. He worked at Prudential Security in New York, NY from 1994 to 1996 and then joined Merck, Inc. in 1996 where he is currently working as a Business Analyst.

Willie is most proud of the fact that his family is “keeping the Irish tradition alive”. Both Willie and Robyn are active in many Irish organizations and events while their sons, Thomas and James also volunteer at many of the events. Willie is proud of his Irish roots and his adopted American home and is very active in promoting Irish Culture. He has been a member of the Irish American Association of Northwest Jersey (IAANJ) since 1999. He has served on many committees and

was Vice President from 2003 to 2005. He served as President of the Association from 2005 to 2007. Willie was instrumental in establishing the Irish Seisiun (Session) and concerts during his presidency and they are still enjoyed at the IAANJ club today. Willie was also the chairman of the 2008 IAANJ Annual Feis and made his acting debut at the IAANJ in 2002 in the Irish play “The Twilight of the Ivy Leaf”.

Willie has served on the St. Patrick’s Parade Committee since 2003 and has been the co-chairman of the parade committee for three parades, 2006, 2007 and 2009. Willie and Robyn both serve on the Morris County St. Patrick Parade Board of Trustees and Willie is currently the vice-president of this charitable Corporation that oversees the Annual Parade in Morristown. Robyn has also served as parade Line of March Chairperson for several years and admits that the 2011 parade may hold a special challenge as she may have to ‘listen’ to advise from Willie on what groups march with him at the head of the parade!

When Willie is not busy working on committees for Irish Culture or helping organize the parade, you will find him wearing a kilt. Willie and his two sons, Thomas and James are active members of the Rory O’Moore Pipes and Drums. Willie and Thomas play the bagpipes while James plays the snare drum. Willie has been a member of the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick since 2004 and he is also a Fourth Degree in the Knights of Columbus at St. Jude’s Church in Hopatcong and a member of the Morris County, NJ, Division One Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH).

Willie left Ireland when he was 23 years old and he has lived in the United States for 23 years and is grateful for the opportunities it has provided him. He became a US citizen in 2001 and is proud to call both countries his home; he has entwined his Irish roots with his American roots. Willie is honored to be selected as this year’s Grand Marshall. “This is an honor for me and my family. It is a privilege to work with all of the hard working volunteers who help organize the best St. Patrick’s parade in NJ.”