

NORTH TEXAS IRISH FESTIVAL

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

North Texas Irish Festival Celebrates 30th Annual Festival with ‘Harps & Fiddles’

‘Erin go Bragh!’ Largest celebration of Irish culture in southwest makes return to Fair Park

DALLAS, TX – Jan. 6, 2012 – The largest celebration of Irish culture in the southwest, the 30th Annual North Texas Irish Festival, makes its return to Fair Park with a “Céilí” (“gathering” in Gaelic) of unprecedented size and a theme in tune with its roots: “Harps & Fiddles.” Presented by the Southwest Celtic Music Association, the North Texas Irish Festival celebrates the music of the Emerald Isle by featuring many of the top Irish musicians and dancers in the world, as well as cultural presentations on nine stages at Fair Park March 2-4, 2012.

“The North Texas Irish Festival’s 30th Annual celebration of Irish culture and lore will be our best year yet,” said John Hebley, managing director of the North Texas Irish Festival. “It is our honor and privilege to bring the best of Ireland to North Texas in what is one of the largest celebrations of Irish culture in the country.”

After taking in all the music and dancing at the North Texas Irish Festival, hungry appetites can be satisfied with Irish stew, Shepherd’s pie, or even fish and chips at one of the many food booths featuring traditional Irish cuisine. New for this year are culinary presentations from top chefs who will modernize Irish classics with new flavor twists and cook with traditional Irish ingredients such as Guinness.

Musicians

Featured musical performers at the 30th Annual North Texas Irish Festival include: Natalie MacMaster and Donnell Leahy - Two Fiddles Two Pianos; Máire Ní Chathasaigh & Chris Newman, Nollaig Casey & Arty McGlynn – Heartstrings; Eileen Ivers; Celtic Fiddle Festival; Goitse; Seamus Kennedy; Patrick Ball; and Ed Miller with Scooter Muse & Jil Chambless, plus John Taylor. Urchin Street – an area dedicated to kids at NTIF – features performers such as: Hailey Sandoz and Reelin’, Lady Amber and Micheal Harrison, Heirloom, Arabesque, Don Gabbert, Killavil, John Burleson, Jane McDaniel, and Rickey Pittman.

Dance

The colorful traditional and modern Irish dancers with their hand-embroidered dresses and fast foot-tapping rhythms will delight audiences at the festival. Some of the finest dancers in the country are

located in local schools in the DFW Metroplex, including the well-known Emerald School of Irish Dance, the Shandon School of Irish Dance, the McTeggart Irish Dancers and the Maguire Academy of Irish Dance. Performers from these schools will delight audiences with continuous performances on the dance stage. In addition there will be dance workshops throughout the weekend, and everyone is encouraged to get into the spirit of Ireland at the Saturday night Irish dance party.

Cultural

The North Texas Irish Festival brings together a wide variety of exhibitors, workshops, plays and demonstrations. The popular **Scottish Village** will feature local Scottish clans doing demonstrations and giving explanations as to the strong connection between the Irish and Scots in their music, ancestry and culture. **Urchin Street** will offer a special place where the younger Celts can find entertainment, education, play and fun, including music, dance, storytelling, magic and mystery. **Storytellers** -- or "seanchaí" in Gaelic -- will perform traditional Irish stories in the way that the Irish learned of their history for hundreds of years. The **Spirit of the Celtic Horse** and several other equestrian shows, blacksmithing, archery and other amazing demonstrations will be performed in the Marine Square and Fountain Plaza area of Fair Park. And not to forget that the Irish do love their "sport," hurling and Gaelic football will also be featured.

Attendees can peruse for a new pet with the largest gathering of animal rescue groups in North Texas. Last year alone, 111 animals found new homes through the NTIF.

Hours, Admission and Location

Gates open on Friday evening, March 2, at 6 p.m. Hours are 6 to 11 p.m. on Friday; Saturday, March 3 from 10:30 a.m. to 11:30 p.m.; and Sunday, March 4 from 11:30 a.m. until 7:30 p.m.

Admission is FREE on Friday from 6 to 7 p.m.; \$10 after (50% off coupons online at www.ntif.org or half off at the gate by saying "Happy 30th"!). A one-day ticket is \$20 on Saturday and \$15 on Sunday at the gate, while a two-day ticket is \$25 and a weekend pass is \$30. Discount tickets will be available at area Tom Thumb stores. Children 11 and under are FREE when accompanied by adult family member. Dogs are allowed in on a short leash and a \$1 donation to the SPCA is requested. Members of the SCMA, Students (with ID) and senior citizens age 65 and over receive a \$2 discount at the gate.

Parking is available in and around Fair Park, or attendees can take the DART Green Line (no coincidence there!) to the front entrance of Fair Park and the North Texas Irish Festival. Detailed directions and parking tips are available at www.ntif.org. The public can call 972-943-4616 or visit www.ntif.org for more information or to volunteer to work at the festival.

About the Southwest Celtic Music Association The Southwest Celtic Music Association (SCMA) is the producing organization for the North Texas Irish Festival (NTIF). More than 600 volunteers will help in organization, promotion and execution of this year's festival. The first such festival was held on March 5, 1983 at the legendary Nick Farrelly's Lounge on Oak Lawn and was billed as the First Texas Céili. This event was so popular that it has continued every year since on the first weekend in March as the North Texas Irish Festival. Shortly after the first festival, the all-volunteer Southwest Celtic Music Association was formed to promote the study, performance and preservation of traditional Celtic music, dance and culture. In 1984, the event was moved to Fair Park and its name changed to the North Texas Irish Festival. The Southwest Celtic Music Association is a 501(c) 3 corporation headquartered in Dallas, Texas and serves a five-state regional area. The organization maintains a web site at www.scmatax.org.

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