

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 7, 2014

**ESSEX COUNTY FREEHOLDERS CELEBRATE ST. PATRICK'S DAY
Annual "Salute to the Irish" Event Honors Grand Marshals, Deputy Grand Marshals &
Organizing Committees of the Nutley, Newark and West Orange St. Patrick's Day
Parades, and the Late Thomas E. Durkin, Jr. as "Irishman of the Year"**

(Newark, NJ) – The Essex County Board of Chosen Freeholders held its Annual "Salute to the Irish" Celebration on Thursday, March 6, 2014, in the Main Lobby at the Hall of Records in Newark. The program was highlighted by presentations of the Board's Commendations to the grand marshals, deputy grand marshals and chairpersons of the organizing committees for Essex County's three St. Patrick's Day Parades in Nutley, Newark and West Orange. The program also included the posthumous honoring of the late Thomas E. Durkin, Jr., Esq., of Essex Fells as the "Irishman of the Year".

This year's event was a collaborative effort of the Freeholder Board and its lead sponsors, District 5 Freeholder Brendan Gill of Montclair and District 4 Freeholder Leonard Luciano of West Caldwell, as well as Essex County Clerk Christopher Durkin and Assemblyman Thomas Giblin (34th District).



Bagpiper Jack McGarry led the line of dignitaries into the Hall of Records Lobby to begin the Freeholder Board's annual "Salute to the Irish" celebration of St. Patrick's Day held on Thursday, March 6th, in Newark.

PHOTO BY GLEN FRIESON

Freeholder Gill opened the program by welcoming the audience saying, "My co-sponsors, Freeholder Leonard Luciano, Essex County Clerk Chris Durkin, Assemblyman Tom Giblin, and I look forward to this event all year long because it gives us a free hand to celebrate our Irish heritage, loud and proud." He also explained that this year's St. Patrick's Day season "... has been especially meaningful, exciting and humbling for me because the wonderful people of Nutley selected me to be their Grand Marshal. As a proud Irishman, It is an honor I will remember for the rest of my life." He went on to explain, "This year, in addition to honoring the great Nutley, Newark and West Orange parades, we've added another

presentation to our program, one we are proud to make, to a man who has been a hero to so many, a man who has been a giant in the legal and Irish-American communities, and a man we sadly lost this past New Year's Day, the late Thomas E. Durkin, Jr., who we honor as our 2014 'Irishman of the Year'".

Co-host Freeholder Luciano introduced his colleagues and dignitaries and counted-down the "Top 10" reasons March is his favorite month of the year before introducing Freeholder President Blonnie Watson, who welcomed the guests by saying, "I may not be Irish, but I certainly feel Irish today", commenting that the Board enjoys celebrating the diverse communities "...that make Essex County the exciting and interesting place it is, because together, we populate a beautiful mosaic where we share and enjoy each other's history, culture and pride."

County Clerk Christopher Durkin joked that this year was unique in that the parade grand marshals include a politician (Freeholder Brendan Gill - Nutley), a law enforcement officer (Jere E. Cole, Jr. – West Orange), and a physician (Dr. John Brennan, Newark), "because I believe that in the Irish community, if you fail the police and fire tests you become a doctor."

The 36th Annual Nutley St. Patrick's Day Parade, held on Saturday, March 1st, was represented by its Grand Marshal Freeholder Brendan Gill, Deputy Grand Marshal Carl Thunell, Parade Queen Alyson Rose Ridings, Nutley Irish American Association "Member of the Year" Mike Frobose, and Parade Co-Chairperson, Deidre Hollywood.



Nutley St. Patrick's Day Parade: Pictured above are (from left to right): Deputy Grand Marshal Carl Thunell, Grand Marshal Brendan Gill of Montclair, parade chairwoman Deidre Hollywood, Parade Queen Alyson Ridings, District 4 Freeholder Leonard Luciano and Nutley Irish American Association "Member of the Year" Mike Frobose. **PHOTO BY GLEN FRIESON**

"As always", said County Clerk Durkin, "the Nutley Parade was a great time and a great success. From humble beginnings back in 1978, it has grown to be one of the best parades in New Jersey that attracts thousands of revelers who enthusiastically celebrate being Irish, even if they aren't Irish."

"This is actually one of my favorite events of the season", said Parade Chairwoman Deidre Hollywood, as she thanked the sponsors of the "Salute to the Irish" event. She thanked Gill for being the parade's

grand marshal and commented, "I am lucky to be part of an organization, led by Tom McEnery, where whenever anything has to get done, everyone always steps up to do it." She went on to say that "it really meant a lot to us that so many people took the time out of their personal lives to be a part of our parade."

"I take my responsibility as a public servant very seriously, because serving your community is one of the greatest traditions of the Irish community", said Grand Marshal Gill, "so it is truly an honor and a privilege for me to both represent the 5th freeholder district and be recognized in this way by the Nutley Irish American Alliance." He went on to remark that he was part of a great team of parade dignitaries, saying, "I couldn't have walked down Franklin Avenue with three finer people than Carl, Alyson and Mike, who represent the very best of the Irish and of the great Township of Nutley."

Grand Marshal Brendan Gill is currently serving his first term as the Essex County Freeholder for District 5, which includes the Township Nutley. A rising star in the Democratic Party, he worked for congressmen Bill Pascrell and Steve Rothman, was a spokesman for the NJDOT, served as state director for the late Senator Frank Lautenberg, and is currently a senior political advisor to Senator Cory Booker. He graduated from Montclair H.S. and earned his degree in Political Science from Seton Hall University. He is very active in the Irish-American community, is a third generation Irish-American, and traces his Irish roots to Counties Cork and Mayo.

Deputy Grand Marshal Carl Thunell is a lifelong Nutley resident where he has volunteered as a coach, a Nutley volunteer fireman, and with many other community committees. For the last 14 years, Mike has also been employed by the Township of Nutley as a building and housing inspector. He traces his Irish roots to County Sligo, Eskraugh, Masshill, and Dublin.

Mike Frobose, the Nutley Irish American Association "Member of the Year", is also a Nutley resident who graduated from Nutley H.S. and then earned an Associate's Degree from Bergen Community College and a degree in Business Management from Rowan University. He was the general manager of Blockbuster Video in Nutley, before joining the Modell's Sporting Goods team. He is very active in the Irish-American community, has been a member of the Nutley Irish for 8 years, and served as an adjutant for the Nutley Parade for the previous 5 years. He traces his Irish roots to Counties Cork and Laois.

Parade Queen Alyson Rose Ridings, a Nutley resident, graduated from Nutley H.S. and earned a Bachelor's Degree in Nursing from Rutgers-Newark. Currently, she is a Registered Nurse at both Clara Maass Medical Center and Hackensack University Hospital. Alyson traces her Irish roots to The Great Hunger of the 1840's when her father's family emigrated from Donegal, Galway, Antrim and Dublin. Her mother's family hails from Cork, Roscommon and Offally, and arrived in the United States in the late 19th Century.

The 79th Annual Newark St. Patrick's Day Parade, held on Friday, March 14th, was represented by its Grand Marshal John A. Brennan, MD, MPH; Deputy Grand Marshal Marion C. O'Neill; General Chairman Michael D. Byrne; and Theresa McQuade, standing in for her husband, Dr. Francis P. McQuade, Esq., to whom the parade was dedicated.

"Tonight I have the privilege of making the presentations to the Newark St. Patrick's Day Parade, the grand-daddy of them all, the oldest St. Patrick's Day Parade in the State of New Jersey!" said Freeholder Gill. "This year's Parade has again drawn incredible support from Newark's corporate community which has made this traditional celebration of Irish heritage and the Irish-American community such a noteworthy event in New Jersey's largest city. You have two outstanding dignitaries, Dr. John Brennan

and Marion O'Neill, and have also dedicated the parade to 'Doc' McQuade, who has been a mainstay of the Irish American community and a loyal supporter of the parade for decades."



Newark St. Patrick's Day Parade: Pictured above are event co-hosts District 5 Freeholder Brendan Gill of Montclair (front row, far left) and District 4 Freeholder Leonard Luciano of West Caldwell (back row, far left), with the Newark parade dignitaries (front row, left to right): General Chairman Michael D. Byrne, Theresa McQuade (representing husband "Doc" McQuade), Grand Marshal Dr. John A. Brennan and Deputy Grand Marshal Marion C. O'Neill. Also pictured (back row, far right) is Louis LaSalle of Saint Barnabas Health Care System. **PHOTO BY GLEN FRIESON**

"I'm excited about the parade", said Chairman Michael Byrne, who previewed a long list of events leading up to the parade's kick-off. He also expressed his appreciation to freeholders Gill and Luciano for "taking this freeholder board event to a new level" in the last couple of years, saying, "I look forward to it every year."

"I'm humbled, honored and very excited to be this year's grand marshal", said Dr. John Brennan. "We all look for role models, and 'Doc' McQuade and the Durkin family are those role models." He spoke about having gotten to know the Durkin family over the last 25 years and of "...really coming to understand just how much their father meant to the community." He concluded by encouraging everyone to come out for the parade on March 14th, "because it will be a great day!"

John Brennan, MD, MPH, is the President and Chief Executive Officer at Newark Beth Israel Medical Center and the Children's Hospital of New Jersey, and is also Executive Vice President of Barnabas Health. He has a long and impressive career in emergency medicine, pediatrics, and hospital administration. Dr. Brennan received his Medical Degree from Georgetown University School of Medicine and completed his Emergency Medicine Residency at Los Angeles County/University of California Medical Center. He also earned a Master's degree in Public Health from Columbia University, is a member of many professional organizations and a much sought-after speaker. He was also a Major in the U.S. Air Force, where he was Chief of Emergency Services and the recipient of

numerous commendations. Dr. Brennan resides in Randolph and traces his Irish roots to Dublin and Kilkenny.

Marion C. O'Neill resides in North Caldwell and is the Manager of Corporate Contributions in the Corporate Responsibility Department for the Public Service Enterprise Group, a diversified energy company that includes the subsidiaries Public Service Electric and Gas Company and PSEG Power. She

has an impressive corporate resume and a reputation that stretches across the country, and has been very involved in corporate government relations at the national and local levels. She is very active in community affairs and Irish-American organizations, earned her B.A. from Montclair State, her M.B.A. from Fairleigh Dickinson, and traces her Irish roots to Counties Roscommon and Tipperary.

Dr. Francis P. McQuade, Esq., holds seven academic degrees, including a B.A, M.A. and Ph.D. in Philosophy, an LL.B and Doctorate in Law, an LL.M. in Law, and an M.A. in Theology. He is a Professor Emeritus at Seton Hall University, a former Essex County Counsel, an ordained Deacon, and was even designated a Knight of Saint Sylvester and a Knight of Malta by the Catholic Church. McQuade, a giant in the Irish-American Community, has been named “Irishman of the Year” by many organizations, including the Essex County Board of Chosen Freeholders, and is the Counsel Emeritus of the Newark Parade.

The 63rd Annual West Orange St. Patrick’s Day Parade, held on Sunday, March 16th, was represented by its Grand Marshal Jere E. Cole, Jr.; Deputy Grand Marshals Gail McGeady, Kelly Reilly and Francis Schott, Jr.; and Chairman Joseph Ryan.



West Orange St. Patrick’s Day Parade: Pictured above are: (front row, left to right) Freeholder Brendan Gill, Deputy Grand Marshal Gail McGeady, Chairman Joseph Ryan, Deputy Grand Marshal Kelly Reilly; and (back row, left to right) Deputy Grand Marshal Francis Schott, Jr., Grand Marshal Jere E. Cole, Jr., and Freeholder Leonard Luciano. **PHOTO BY GLEN FRIESON**

“I have the privilege of representing 11 towns on the Freeholder Board”, said Freeholder Luciano, “and one of them is West Orange which I enjoy visiting all the time, but especially in March. I don’t think I’ve missed a parade in the last 15 years, and I look forward to enjoying this year’s edition as well.”

Parade Chairman Joseph Ryan commented that the parade was “blessed to have four wonderful honorees this year”. He invited everyone to turn out, but also noted that everyone involved with the parade was saddened by the passing of Frank Darcy and Gregory Dillon in the last year, who, he said, had been the backbone of the parade for many years. “So on March 16th, every step we take along the parade route will be in their memory.”

Grand Marshal Jere Cole spoke about how great it was to come home to Essex County, “because you are family, and this parade is all about family and keeping the traditions alive.”

Cole, currently of Rockaway, has been deeply involved in the Irish-American community and its organizations for many years, especially the Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH) where he has been a member of AOH Division #9 in Montclair for 23 years and has held statewide and national AOH leadership positions. He has also been a member of the West Caldwell Volunteer Fire Department for over 40 years where he served as the 1st Assistant Chief, and is very active with the Fireman’s Association, the Fireman’s Home and the NJ State Fire Chief’s Association. Jere earned an Air Force Commendation Medal during his service with the U. S. Air Force in the Vietnam War, was General Manager with Sunrise Supermarkets of Fairfield for 22 years, and also served as an Essex County Sheriff’s Officer until his retirement in 2010. He has been married to his wife, Marjorie, since 1971, and they are the proud parents of daughters Dawn and Kelly, and have two grandchildren.

Deputy Grand Marshal Gail McGeady of Wayne is employed by the Passaic County Technical Institute in Wayne where she is the Secretary for the Academy of Medical Arts, the Schools of Communications and Culinary Arts Business, and Building Maintenance. She has been a prominent member of the Women of Irish Heritage for many years, where she has held many highly-responsible positions.

Deputy Grand Marshal Kelly Reilly of West Orange attended the County College of Morris to study Criminal Justice. He joined the Essex Fells Police Department in 1978 and rose steadily through the ranks during his 31-year career, eventually retiring in 2009 as Chief of Police. He is a member of Irish organizations and was named “Law Enforcement Officer of the Year” by the Emerald Society in 2008.

Deputy Grand Marshal Francis Schott, Jr., is widely-acclaimed in the restaurant industry both for his restaurants and charitable activities, and he was named “Restaurateur of the Year” by the NJ Restaurant Association. He opened the highly-successful and highly-regarded Stage Left Restaurant in New Brunswick more than 20 years ago, is President of Prigmore Corporation, which owns 2 restaurants and is an exemplary corporate citizen, and hosts a popular food podcast on the internet.

The event concluded with the posthumous presentation of the 2014 “Irishman of the Year” award to the family of the late **Thomas E. Durkin, Jr., Esq.** The Board’s commendation honoring Mr. Durkin, a true giant in the legal, Catholic and Irish-American communities who passed on New Year’s Day, was presented to his wife of 65 years, Elizabeth Murphy Durkin, who was accompanied by five of her seven children.

“Tonight we will honor the memory of the late Thomas E. Durkin, Jr., and we are so honored to have his family with us here tonight to receive this posthumous award”, said Freeholder Gill. “He was larger than life, and will be remembered for generations to come. We are so sorry that he has left us, but also happy to be able to acknowledge his far-reaching contributions to our county, our state and our nation.” Gill also spoke about Durkin having been a World War II veteran saying, “He was among the greatest of the ‘greatest generation’, and it is our responsibility to never forget people like him, because we stand here today because of what he did, of what he achieved, and especially today, for what he gave to the Irish-American community.”



Posthumous presentation to Durkin Family: Surrounded by her family, Elizabeth Murphy Durkin (front row, center) accepted the 2014 “Irishman of the Year” posthumous award in memory of her late husband, Thomas E. Durkin, Jr. Also pictured above are Freeholder Brendan Gill (front row, far left), Freeholder Leonard Luciano (back row, 3rd from right), Essex County Clerk Christopher J. Durkin (front row, far right), and Essex County Executive Joseph N. DiVincenzo, Jr. (behind Clerk Durkin). **PHOTO BY GLEN FRIESON**

“To celebrate the Essex County Irishman of the Year”, said Freeholder Luciano, “it is only fitting that we honor Mr. Durkin in his beloved hometown of Newark, right around the corner from his alma mater, St. Benedict’s Prep, and on the same property he frequented so often as an esteemed trial attorney for over 50 years.” Luciano recalled having first met Mr. Durkin many years ago as a 14-year old caddy at the Essex Fells Country Club. “What impressed me most about Mr. Durkin was his love of family, and of his preference for playing golf and spending time on the links with his children and grandchildren, rather than with the many celebrities, pro athletes, distinguished doctors, famous entrepreneurs, lawyers, judges and elected officials who were also members there.” He went on to say, “Despite his immense professional reputation, he was a very humble man who simply enjoyed being with his family.”

“When you sat with Tom Durkin, you realized how much you didn’t know”, said County Clerk Christopher Durkin, “but you were also inspired to know more, and to be more.” The County Clerk described Mr. Durkin as a man of few words, “but each word carried so much weight, so much meaning, and so much wisdom.” He also explained, “His parents instilled in him the importance of earning his keep on this earth, and he made sure he did just that with his church, his family, his beloved St. Benedict’s, with the blind, and as the voice of so many people who didn’t have a voice.” He concluded by saying, “Tom Durkin received more satisfaction and joy from giving than any of those recipients could ever have imagined.”

“I miss my husband terribly”, said Mrs. Durkin accepting the Board’s commendation honoring her husband. “I enjoyed my time with him very, very much for over 65 years, and although it hasn’t been easy since January, with all the support I have it hasn’t been all that difficult either.” Mrs. Durkin also joked that her husband was a wonderful golfer, “but not when he played with me!” explaining that aside from their small golf-related disagreements, they had a very happy household. “I do miss him, but I am also so honored you decided that he is worthy of being your honoree, and I know that he is looking down

and happy to see all of you here. I’m sure he’s only sorry that he will miss this year’s Newark St. Patrick’s Day parade. Thank you very, very much.”

The late Thomas Edward Durkin, Jr., was born in Newark on January 2, 1924, the first of six children born to Thomas Edward Durkin, Sr., and Mary Ward. He attended Sacred Heart School in Vailsburg and graduated from St. Benedict's Prep in 1943, after which he enlisted in the U.S. Navy and served in the Pacific Theater during World War II. Thereafter, he graduated from Fordham University and Fordham School of Law, and in 1955 founded what would become the prominent law firm of Durkin & Durkin, and to litigate some of the most noted criminal cases of his time and argue before the U.S. Supreme Court on several occasions.

He was elected to the N.J. General Assembly in 1957, but his influence in state politics extended far beyond his tenure in office due to his rare combination of legal brilliance and personal humility, which enabled him to serve as a uniquely trusted counselor to Catholic prelates, political figures, law enforcement leaders, and a host of ordinary people in need of his help. He also devoted his energy and expertise to numerous charities, especially those involving the Catholic Church and the visually-impaired.

He was also very active in the Irish-American community. He marched in every Newark St. Patrick's Day Parade from 1938-2013 (except those during WWII), was named "Irishman of the Year" by the Brian Boru Association in 1968, and decades later the Newark parade was dedicated to the Durkin Family in his honor.

Mr. Durkin was the recipient of numerous other honors for both his professional accomplishments and charitable contributions, including: he was named a Knight of the Order of St. Gregory by Pope John Paul II at the behest of Newark Archbishop Theodore Cardinal McCarrick; St. Benedict's Prep awarded him the "Medal of St. Benedict's" in 1997 and its Thomas E. Durkin, Jr., Scholarship was endowed in his honor; and in 2009 the Seton Hall Law Center awarded him the "St. Thomas More Medal" for outstanding contributions to the law, the community and the Catholic Church.

Thomas Edward Durkin, Jr., resided in Essex Fells with his dear wife of 65 years, Elizabeth Murphy Durkin, until his passing on January 1, 2014. He is also survived by their seven children: Thomas E., III, Hugh, Dennis, Cornelius, M. Murphy, Liz and Tish (O'Sullivan).

In addition to the presentations to the event's honorees, the program included bagpiper Jack McGarry, the singing of the "Star-Spangled Banner" and "A Soldier's Song" by Carolyn Volpe Curley, and performances by dancers from the DeNogla School of Irish Dance in Verona. The opening prayer was offered by Father Edwin Leahy of St. Benedict's Prep, and the closing prayer by Reverend Paul Donohue of St. Lucy's Church in Newark. The honorees and their guests were also invited to a reception following the ceremony, provided by Michael's Roscommon of Belleville.

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