

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

March 12, 2012

**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, West Orange and Newark St. Patrick's Day Parades**

(Newark, NJ) – The Essex County Board of Chosen Freeholders held its Annual "Salute to the Irish" Celebration on Thursday, March 8, 2012, 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 members of the organizing committees for Essex County's three St. Patrick's Day Parades: Nutley, West Orange and Newark.

This year's event was a collaborative effort of the Freeholder Board and its lead sponsors, Freeholders Brendan W. Gill of Montclair and Leonard M. Luciano of West Caldwell, and well as Essex County Clerk Christopher J. Durkin and Assemblyman Thomas P. Giblin (34<sup>th</sup> District).



Freeholders Leonard M. Luciano (back row, left) and Brendan W. Gill (back row, right) posed for a photo with the chairpersons of the three Essex County St. Patrick's Day Parades: Deidre Hollywood of Nutley (front row, left), Stephanie Gallo of West Orange (front row, center) and Michael D. Byrne of Newark (front row, right). (Photo by Glen Frieson)

Freeholder Gill opened the program by saying, “As the newest member of the Board, and as a proud Irish-American, I am honored to carry on this tradition of celebrating St. Patrick, our Irish history and traditions, and especially the accomplishments and contributions of the Irish-American community here in Essex County.” He went on to say, “Essex County is an amazing mosaic of cultures and languages and ethnicities. Ours is a rich history that has seen wave after wave of immigrants, each one very different from the one that preceded it. But in each case, their hopes and dreams were the same... to find political and religious freedom, and a better life for their families... and they did that right here in Essex County. I’m proud to say that one of those waves was green, and that Irish immigrants have played a prominent and productive role in the history of this county.”

During his remarks, Freeholder Luciano revealed that he was ½ Irish, and joked that his 88-year old Irish grandmother, who was in the audience, is still trying to claim him for the Irish side of the family.

The 34<sup>th</sup> Annual Nutley St. Patrick’s Day Parade, which was held on Saturday, March 3<sup>rd</sup>, was represented by its Grand Marshal Thomas J. McEnery, Deputy Grand Marshal Karen O’Connor, Parade Queen Elizabeth Dunigan and Parade Co-Chairperson, Deidre Hollywood. McEnery, who also serves as President of the Nutley Irish American Alliance, remarked, “The Nutley Irish have come a long way. Our parade has become a great community event and we want to keep that going. I also want to thank the County for honoring our Irish heritage.”



**Nutley St. Patrick’s Day Parade:** (left to right) – Parade Co-Chair, Deidre Hollywood, Parade Queen Elizabeth Dunigan, Grand Marshal Thomas J. McEnery and Deputy Grand Marshal Karen O’Connor. (Photo by Glen Frieson)

The 61st Annual West Orange St. Patrick's Day Parade was held on Sunday, March 11<sup>th</sup>, when participants marched down Main Street, which was renamed "Dillon Boulevard" in honor of Grand Marshal Gregory Dillon. "I want to thank the Board of Freeholders for this honor, which I am proud to receive", said Mr. Dillon, who went on to say, "I've been a member of the parade committee for a number of years, and I have always thought that it is just one way to express my Irish heritage." He concluded his remarks by inviting everyone to join-in by marching down Main Street on March 11<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Dillon was accompanied by Deputy Grand Marshals Ellen Mary Sweeney, Neil O'Hare, Michael J. Shannon and Thomas Cannan, and by Parade Chairperson Stephanie Gallo.



**West Orange St. Patrick's Day Parade:** Front Row (left to right) – Parade Chair Stephanie Gallo, Deputy Grand Marshal Ellen Mary Sweeney and Grand Marshal Gregory Dillon. Back Row (left to right) – Deputy Grand Marshals Neil O'Hare, Thomas Cannan and Michael J. Shannon. (Photo by Glen Frieson)

The 77<sup>th</sup> Annual Newark St. Patrick's Day Parade, New Jersey's oldest, will be held on Friday, March 16<sup>th</sup>, in downtown Newark. The Grand Marshal, Kevin Cummings, President & CEO of Investors Bank, was unable to attend the celebration but was represented by Investors' Vice President, Paul Kalamaras. Deputy Grand Marshal, Sister Deborah L. Humphreys, SC, a social worker and long-time community activist and advocate with St. Columba Neighborhood Club and Family Life Center, and the Ironbound Community Corporation Family Outreach Program, thanked the Board for her Commendation stating, "I love Newark, I've lived longer in Newark than anywhere else in my life." She was accompanied by the Newark Parade General Chairman, Michael D. Byrne of Montclair.



**Newark St. Patrick's Day Parade:** **Front Row** (left to right) – Freeholder Carol Y. Clark, Parade General Chairman Michael D. Byrne, Deputy Grand Marshal Sister Deborah L. Humphreys and Freeholder President Blonnie R. Watson. **2<sup>nd</sup> Row** (left to right) – Freeholders Leonard M. Luciano, Brendan W. Gill and D. Bilal Beasley. **3<sup>rd</sup> Row** (left to right) - Freeholders Rolando Bobadilla and Rufus I. Johnson. (Photo by Glen Frieson)

In addition to Freeholders Gill and Luciano, County Clerk Christopher J. Durkin, Assemblyman Thomas P. Giblin, and the “Honorary Irish” members of the Freeholder Board also participated in the presentations to the parade honorees: Freeholder President Blonnie R. Watson, Freeholder Vice President Patricia Sebold, and Freeholders D. Bilal Beasley, Rolando Bobadilla, Carol Y. Clark and Rufus I. Johnson. Freeholder Donald M. Payne, Jr., was unable to attend due to the passing of his father, Congressman Donald M. Payne, Sr., only two days earlier.

The program also included remarks by Essex County Executive Joseph N. DiVincenzo, Jr., who claimed his “Irishness” through his ½-Irish granddaughter. Carolyne Volpe Curley sang the “Star-Spangled Banner” and the Irish National Anthem, “A Soldier’s Song”, and four students from the DeNogla School of Irish Dance (Verona, NJ) provided the event’s entertainment by performing two dance numbers: Ciara McGovern of Roseland, Marykate Schiller of Scotch Plains, Molly Burke of Wet Caldwell and Samantha Cunniff of Verona. Father Augustine Curley of the Newark Abbey at St. Benedict’s Prep, offered both the Invocation and Benediction.

At the conclusion of the program, guests were invited to a Reception on the 5<sup>th</sup> Floor that included corned beef sandwiches provided by Cryan's Beef & Ale of South Orange, as well as Irish soda bread, cakes and cookies.

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