



**Buffalo Irish Dance  
Parents Organization**

# 2023-2024 ANNUAL REPORT



**September  
2024**

*First Edition*

Prepared by  
**Caity O'Connor**  
*Program Development  
Director*



# Buffalo Irish Dance Parents Organization

## Annual Report

### Fiscal Year 2023-2024

#### Leadership

##### **Timothy Wadhams**

*President*

##### **Nadine Halliwell**

*Vice President*

##### **Greg Thornton**

*Vice President*

##### **Renee Luck**

*Treasurer*

##### **Caity O'Connor**

*Program Development Director*

##### **Kelley Mistretta**

*Secretary*

##### **Kristin Wells**

*Information Officer*

##### **Tabitha Rodenhaus**

*Information Officer*

#### Outgoing Board Members

##### **Summer Morin**

*Vice President*

##### **Ryan Morgan**

*Vice President*

In May 2024 elections were held at a General Membership meeting to elect the new board members for the term of May 2024- May 2026. We would be remiss to not acknowledge significant impact of the board members who served the previous term. Both Summer Morin and Ryan Morgan served as Co-Vice Presidents from May 2022-May 2024. We are grateful for their commitment and dedication during our organization's transitional time.



All board members and members of BIDPO are unpaid volunteers who donate their time and efforts to supporting local Irish dancers and the continuation of this traditional cultural practice in Western New York. We would like to thank all of the families who work endlessly in fundraising efforts and volunteering their time for performances, festival booths, whiskey cake bakes, and all of the countless other jobs to be filled. Serving 100+ families is a group effort and we are privileged to work alongside you.

# Letter from the President



## Timothy Wadhams *President*

As president of the Buffalo Irish Dance Parent Organization (BIDPO) I am extremely proud to discuss and document the progress we have made in just over two years since May 2022 when our organization transitioned into BIDPO as we know it today. BIDPO began with the desire for an organization that placed the utmost value in supporting our Irish dancers and continuing the strong tradition of Irish culture in Buffalo and Western New York. We quickly realized other things were just as important: communication, accountability, and inclusion to name a few. During the May 2022 transition, the new board immediately took to the task of assuring transparency and communication with the families and dancers we support. We built a strong, open social media presence where all BIDPO members can see activities, events and information posted, parents can ask each other questions, and everyone can share their experiences. This has also allowed us to highlight families and fostered a shared sense of community that we are all in this together and all families

and dancers are important. BIDPO holds three general meetings per class year that are open to all where details of the workings, planning, and past activities are discussed in an open and transparent way so all members of the organization can be confident that the board has the families and dancers best interests in mind and heart. These general meetings also include voting on major topics and elections bi-annually. Board members encourage each other to also be available regularly during class times to answer questions, give advice, and discuss the business of the parent organization. Finally, BIDPO has the ultimate goal of inclusion of all in the beauty and history of Irish dance and culture. Whatever your background, wherever you live, whatever your financial situation we want to make sure all have the opportunity to participate and experience. Whatever you want to achieve in Irish dance, whether that be participating in the culture, learning a new dance, being athletically active, making and keeping new acquaintances and friends, meeting other like minded families and parents, or competing at the highest levels of dance; we want all of these things to be accessible by all. To accomplish this, the board of BIDPO works hard to be welcoming and open to all families, raise funds to support dancers and families, and reaches out to the Buffalo and Western New York community through Irish clubs and organizations, festivals, arts institutions, and the business community. Despite all of this hard work and success, we are constantly looking for how we can do even better in our primary missions to help dancers and families create lifetimes of memories and friendships that they someday can pass onto others. I could not be prouder of the progress we have made and the work we have done and I look forward to many more years of the same.



# Our Story So Far

In January 2013 Clann Na Cara Parent Organization, Inc. obtained 501c3 non-profit tax status. Since inception, the purpose of this organization has been to support local Irish Dancers.

In May 2022, the organization underwent a phoenix-like revival and a new governing board was elected in entirety. To solidfy the beginning of a new era, the organization assumed the name of Buffalo Irish Dance Parents Organization. Buffalo Irish Dance Parents Organization (BIDPO) has since solidified the organization's vision and mission statement and made strides in supporting local dancers and the Irish American cultural community in Western New York.

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## Vision

The Buffalo Irish Dance Parents Organization envisions a community rooted in inclusivity and infused with joy, where Irish culture - through Irish dance - is cherished, taught, and shared.

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## Mission Statement

The Buffalo Irish Dance Parents Organization sustains and builds support for Irish culture in Western New York. We champion a style of dance that is equal parts athleticism and art, creating inclusive opportunities for aspiring dancers of all levels to experience, share, and spread the joy or a time-honored tradition. We proudly collaborate with other area organizations to ensure that Irish culture remains vibrant and accessible through this generation and the next.

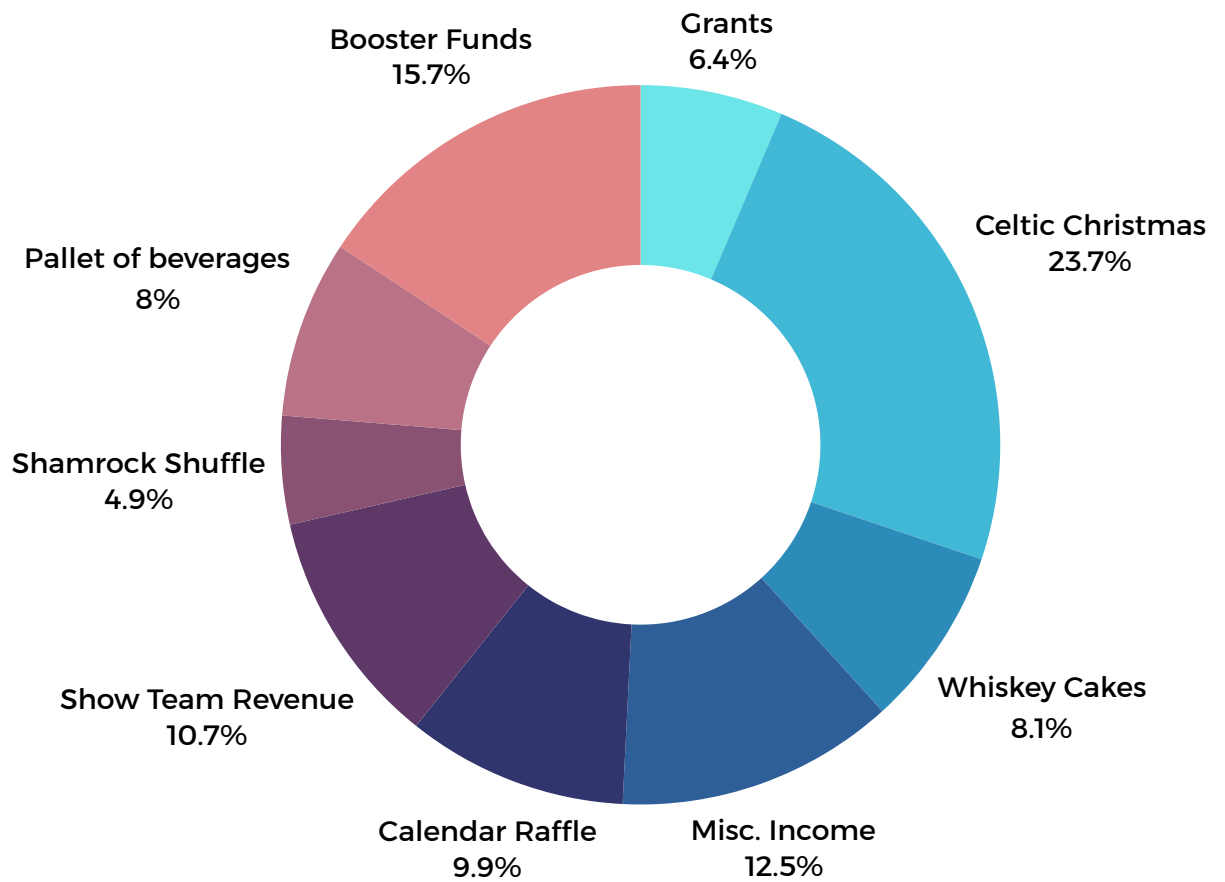
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# Financial Highlights

## Revenue

Revenue Streams	Amount
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Grants & Funding	\$5,000
Booster Funds	\$12,265.25
Celtic Christmas	\$18,535.19
Show Team Revenue	\$8,356.80
Whiskey Cake Sales	\$6,332
Calendar Raffle	\$7,750
Pallet of Beverages	\$6,230
Shamrock Shuffle	\$3,800
Miscellaneous Income	\$9,751.24
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$78,020.48</b>



### Major Grants 2023-2024

Erie County Cultural	\$3,000
Give for Greatness	\$2,000

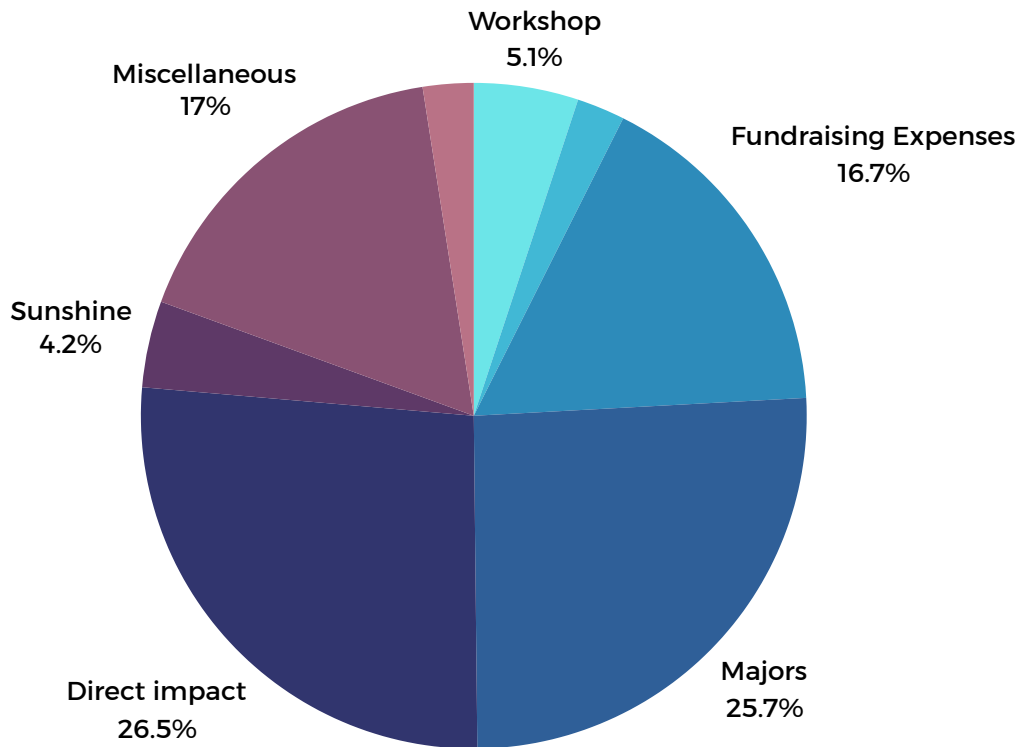
**Total Amount**  
**\$5,000**

# Financial Highlights

## Expenses

Expense Category	Amount
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BIDPO Functions	\$1,484.60
Workshop Sponsorship	\$3,226.11
Fundraising Expenses	\$10,643.11
Oireachtas & Majors	\$16,335.39
Sunshine	\$2,671.50
Booster/Direct Impact	\$16,875.25
Cultural Contributions	\$1,565.46
Miscellaneous	\$10,792.91
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$63,594.33</b>



### Support to Outside Cultural Endeavors 2023-2024

- Buffalo Feis \$250
- Buffalo Irish Festival \$500
- Other Cultural Contributions \$610.46

BIDPO also lends assistance via volunteers to work both events and attend planning committee meetings year round.

# Whiskey Cakes

## Continuing the Tradition

If you have ever been to the Buffalo Irish Festival or Celtic Niagara Festival and wondered what goes into those whiskey cakes, the answer is a lot of love, hours, and tradition! BIDPO's members rally every year to hold a massive whiskey cake bake in order to sell the cakes at local festivals. Although this started, and continues to be, a fundraiser to benefit the dancers, the making and selling of whiskey cakes has certainly transformed into a tradition that precedes any of our current members. Cranking out nearly 1600 cakes that hundreds of people seek out at the festivals is certainly a labor of love that provides a sentimental payout. Without fail you will hear festival goers "I've been waiting all year for these cakes!" or "I freeze these for Christmas gifts!" and "You guys are the only place we can ever find these!" Running the whiskey cake booth is also done by volunteers, with some enthusiastic help from the dancers themselves. If you're looking to give our Whiskey Cakes a try this year, just follow the blue bows!



# Booster

## A new venture

This year BIDPO began partnering with Delaware North's Non-Profit Organization Fundraising Program in order to allow families an opportunity to raise funds to support their dancers directly. This program has allowed us to make significant strides in our goal of making Irish dance a more equitable experience for anyone who wishes to participate.

Through the facilitation of six events with Delaware North and allocating funds from the calendar raffle, BIDPO was able to provide funds directly back to \$12,265.25 families. BIDPO will be continuing this partnership with Delaware North during the upcoming 2024-2025 fiscal year and is looking forward to the opportunity to facilitate more direct impact fundraising for families. What do the Booster funds go to? Helping dancers to purchase their necessary costumes, travel costs, shoes, attending competitions, workshop fees, and even dance tuition!



# Local Partnership

## Dancers from Harris-Grieco Academy of Irish Dance

In an effort to benefit as many local dancers as possible BIDPO has formed a relationship with the Harris-Grieco Academy of Irish Dance. This not only allows BIDPO to provide services directly to local Irish dancers and their families, but allows us to obtain feedback on what the needs of the Irish dancing community are and how to best serve those needs. Unfortunately, Irish dance often comes with a significant financial barrier to participation. BIDPO provides support and subsidies to families in order to lower the financial burden and ensure that dancers are not prevented from participating or reaching their highest potential due to financial hardship. Through BIDPO's partnership with Harris-Grieco Academy of Irish Dance, our organization has been able to subsidize the costs of dancers' costumes, attending guest instructor workshops and attending major competitions at the regional, national, and international level.

*"The Buffalo Irish Dance Parents Organization has had such a positive impact on all of our dancers at Harris-Grieco Academy of Irish Dance and their families. From supporting our dancers financially to attend competitions nationwide and internationally, to offering them opportunities throughout their community to share their passion and skills. BIDPO goes above and beyond to make sure every dancer has the Irish dance experience they deserve, no matter their skill level"*

-Rachael Grieco, owner of Harris-Grieco Academy of Irish Dance

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BUFFALO IRISH DANCE PARENTS ORGANIZATION



**BIDPO Booster funds allowed for the subsidy of dancers costume costs**



**HARRIS-GRIECO  
ACADEMY**





# Celtic Christmas

## Eat, Drink, Dance, Be Merry

Celtic Christmas made it's second annual appearance on December 9, 2023. Already a loved event after it's inaguration in 2022, Celtic Christmas 2023 far surpassed expectation! This event highlights local musical talent, irish dancers, irish fare, cultural holiday traditions, group dancing, and raffles. 670 people were accommodated for this event, with more wishing to have attended. This year, expanding into a larger space allowed for more activities and attendee involvement. The additional space not only provided an area for rehearsal but also raffle times, a kid's craft space, a balloon artist, and games. Erie County Pipes and Drum band once again played multiple sets and Crikwater, the premier Irish-American Traditional Folk Band in Western New York headlined the event. Both bands kept the party going and spirits merry throughout the night. Dancers from Harris-Grieco performed multiple times, with dancers ranging from 4-22 years old and of every skill level. The joy of the season was certainly present for the event, with giddy dancers sporting santa hats, christmas dresses, and elf Towards the end of the night the dancers took to the floor again and invited the audience to join them for a traditional ceilli dance that is danced at weddings and parties. While the performances were carefully crafted, this ceilli dance allowed an opportunity for people to participate in irish dance in a low pressure, fun filled environment. This event was made possible by countless in kind donations from local buinesses. The planning of this event is a year round effort and the volunteers that show up to help run the event could rival a small army, however the success of the event makes that effort well worth it. Celtic Christmas 2023 brought in \$13,296.55 that will be used to support BIDPO's programs and subsidize dancers' costs.

## Save the date!

**Celtic Christmas  
2024 planning is  
well underway,  
we'd love for you  
to join us this year!**



ST. JOHN'S THE BAPTIST UKRAINIAN CATHOLIC CHURCH | 3275 ELMWOOD AVE. • KENMORE, NY 14217





# Oireachtas & Majors

O-ROCK-TUS

## Goals, Teamwork, Accomplishment

Irish dance is a unique intersectionality that is equal parts performative art, cultural tradition, and competitive sport. In addition to year round performances, many dancers also compete year round in feisanna. A feis (singular) translates to “festival” and is a chance for dancers, musicians, and artists to showcase their mastery of their artform. Oireachtas, is a much larger regional competition that dancers attend for a chance to qualify for national and international level competitions. These events include both team and individual events. Attending is Oireachtas and/or qualifying for the subsequent national/world competitions is a massive achievement dancers strive for. BIDPO was able to provide support to 32 dancers attending their regional Oireachtas in Philadelphia, 13 dancers attending the North American Irish Dance Championship in Grapevine, Texas and 3 dancers competing internationally during the 2023-2024 fiscal year.



**26.6% of Expenses**

**19.4% Increase**



**30% participation**

Oireachtas and Majors costs account for 26.6% of BIDPO’s annual expenses. This is not only the organization’s biggest expense but undoubtedly the most significant financial burden facing Irish dancers and their families. During this 2023-2024 fiscal year, BIDPO was able to increase the amount of families we subsidize Oireachtas and Major’s costs by \$12,041.11. This however also means the amount of our revenue dedicated to these expenses continues to grow as our membership continues to grow. This expense category experienced a 19.4% increase when compared to the previous fiscal year.



# Community Involvement

**BIDPO serves three interconnecting layers of community; Irish dancers and their families, the Irish cultural community, and the community at large in Western New York.**

This unique blend of intersectionality presents itself in nearly all of the work we do to support dancers. First, we are most directly involved with dancers, and the families of Irish dancers. This allows BIDPO to provide direct support in the most impactful ways possible. Not only does BIDPO support dancers by making Irish dance more equitable, we also facilitate performances throughout Western New York, bringing joy and Irish culture to people who may have never experienced Irish dance before, or to people who seek it out to keep the tradition alive. BIDPO members show support for other organization's cultural endeavors by sending representatives to planning meetings, volunteers for events, and sponsoring member attendance at fundraising events. We are keenly aware that a healthy cultural landscape in Western New York ensures space for Irish dancers to exist and share their passion, so this support to other community cultural efforts doubles in its importance. During this fiscal year BIDPO provided sponsorship to the Buffalo Feis, Buffalo Irish Festival, as well as donations to Buffalo Irish Center fundraising events, and member attendee sponsorship.

BIDPO's Community involvement creates a beneficial reciprocity. Although the dancers are volunteering their time to perform in the community, the dancers also benefit. Not only do they have the opportunity to perform and have pride in sharing their artform, but by sharing it in schools and different types care facilities you can see the dancers understanding that they have the ability to make an impact and bring joy to others. This sense of service fosters their sense of community, belonging, and understanding that people have varying looks, abilities, and backgrounds.



Dancers with the Harris-Grieco Academy Of Irish Dance perform during the St. Patrick's Day Parade in Buffalo on Sunday, March 17, 2024.

*Joshua Bessex/ Buffalo News*



Direct Impact Funds Distributed

**\$16,875.25**



Workshop Sponsorship

**\$3,169.26**



Oireachtas/Major Subsidies

**\$16,335.39**



Cultural Contributions

**\$1,565.46**



A vendor market was set up near the entrance. Harris-Grieco Academy of Irish Dance, which also performed at the festival, sold whiskey cakes, which are yellow cakes with a whiskey glaze that seeps through the loaf.

Tim Wadhams, president of Buffalo Irish Dance Parents Organization, said the Irish festival helps create a stronger sense of connection.

“Our dancers can come here and see the fact that they’re part of a larger community,” he said.

I think he was talking about the region’s Irish community. Or maybe he meant Buffalo. Either way, as I found out Friday, he was right.

*Featured in the Buffalo News*



# Buffalo Feis



# Celtic Niagara Heritage Festival and Highland Games



# Performances & Audience

## Show Team

Unlike many genres of dance hold a yearly recital or cumulative performance, Irish dance performances take on a different structure. BIDPO facilitates performances year round in schools, local businesses, festivals and private events. Not surprising to anyone, March is the busiest time of the year, this year totaling 46 performances in March alone, amounting up to 14 shows in a day! The dancers, teachers, parents all throw an enormous amount of effort and dedication into providing high quality performances and making show team a memorable experience. This performative art aspect is often the favorite part of Irish dancing and includes dancers from all levels.

## Community Impact

While shows in pubs, restaurants, and businesses are fun and appreciated, the real impact can be seen in community shows. Shows at schools are tailored to the audience, allowing for questions and audience participation to allow the students to really absorb the experience and the excitement the children show is infectious. Meanwhile, the joy of residents of nursing and care facilities makes the all of the hustle and bustle to make these shows possible, worth the effort. Being able to bring performances out to these facilities allow residents to have experiences they may not have otherwise been able to and dancers can often be seen after shows visiting with residents who seem to equally enjoy the company.

## Dancer/Family Perspective

*"Shows as a beginner were such a fun way for my daughter to see the results of her work in class for the first time. They were also some of the first times she was able to see the older girls dance and what she could look forward to in the future!"* -Ashley Del Plato, parent of a beginner dancer



### Performance Revenue

**\$8,156.80**



### Performance Expenses

**\$2,537.21**



### Shows Performed

**58 shows & 2 parades**



- 7 Festival Performances
- 18 School Performances
- 11 Private Events
- 10 Performances at local businesses
- 11 Performances in Nursing/Assisted Care Facilities



### Booking shows year round!

Are you interested in having dancers perform for your business, school, or event?  
Email us! [BuffaloIrishDanceshows@gmail.com](mailto:BuffaloIrishDanceshows@gmail.com)





# Future Outlook

Irish dance is a transgenerational tradition that links dancers to centuries of culture, while also connecting them to the dancers that will follow after them. BIDPO seeks to keep this tradition alive and to support its continuation for future generations. Supporting dancers to have a memorable and enriching Irish dance experience, supporting cultural efforts so there are spaces for Irish dance to exist, and sharing this art form with the community at large are all vital aspects to ensure the tradition of Irish Dance in the future. This fiscal year 56% of the families BIDPO served had a dancer in beginner levels, with years of dancing ahead of them!

## Future Plan

BIDPO's future planning incorporates not only this fiscal year and two year term of the current governing board but also goals for the organization long term. It is our utmost goal that this organization will continue and thrive for many years to come. As part of supporting dancers achieve their highest potential we are adopting the policy to now pay for both entry and family fees for majors. To provide opportunities for Irish dancers to advance in their mastery of Irish dance, BIDPO plans to offer it's first Grade Exams this fiscal year.

## Capacity Building

One issue facing BIDPO, is that fundraising efforts often call on the same people we are trying to serve, for contributions. While we know families are passionate and invested in Irish dance, if the goal is to help alleviate financial barriers to participation we must find outside sources of funding. Give for Greatness awarded BIDPO \$2,000 to be used for copywriting services to aid with our grant writing applications and development of a strategic plan in order to more effectively obtain funding from outside sources. As we pursue a more developed funding plan, our capacity to directly impact dancers and the cultural community in Western New York will be able to increase as a result.



## Direct Impact

This fiscal year saw the implementation of BIDPO's Booster program, which received participation from families of all experience levels and has provided an avenue for direct support to families. The success of BIDPO's partnership with Delaware North at Highmark Stadium has opened the door to opportunities at KeyBank Center this upcoming fiscal year. We have also secured a partnership with Legends for opportunities beginning in 2025. We are excited for this expansion and look forward to continuing to find ways to make Irish dance more equitable and attainable for all families. This upcoming year will also see BIDPO's first implementation of scholarships for dancers that will provide three scholarships to dancers of varying experience levels.

## Cultural Community Involvement

BIDPO continues to be committed to involvement with the Irish American cultural community in Western New York. Through support of other artists and cultural endeavors in our region we help to ensure that our community maintains a rich cultural landscape. BIDPO will continue to contribute to other organizations' efforts, with hopes to strengthen connections and build additional community relationships. We have intentionally incorporated cultural contributions into our budget for the upcoming fiscal year and will again request representatives attend meetings to not only show financial support but investment and dedication to the endeavors we are supporting.



# Acknowledgements

*go raibh míle maith agat*

## Major Funders

Delaware North

ASI of WNY

Erie County

Giving for Greatness

United Healthcare

## Community Partners

Harris-Grieco Academy of Irish Dance

Buffalo Irish Festival

Buffalo Irish Center

Celtic Niagara Heritage Festival and Highland Games

Green Beer Sunday

St. Andrews Country Day School

## Donors

AAA Quality Improvement

Albright Knox

Andersons

ARG Trucking

Belleek Pottery

Black Bird Cider

Bocce's Pizza

Brandon Sinkiewicz

Briar Brothers Brewing

Company

Buffalo Bandits

Buffalo Bills

Buffalo Sabres

Camelia Rose

Colvin Cleaners

Cooke Doyle LLC

Costanzo's

Eli Fish Brewery

Feis Fit

Irish Classical Theatre

Iron Smoke Distillery

Lockhouse

Louie's Bar

Niagara Label

Pressure Drop Brewing

Premier Liquor

Resurgence

Rutherford

Say Cheese Pizza

Straight UP Liquor

Target Training

Village Yoga And Wellness

Wavelengths Hair Salon

WD Henry and Sons

Wegmans

Zuca

## Performance bookings

Amherst Senior Center

Big Tree Elementary

Brookdale

Buffalo Club

Buffalo Irish Center

Buffalo Irish Festival

Catholic Academy

Celtic Christmas

Celtic Niagara Festival and

Highland Games

Dale Association

Doge Elementary

Elderwood

EPIC fundraiser

Fathey Beer

Fontanese Family

Golden Age Center

Hoover Elementary

Hoover Middle

Intandem

Kaegebein Elementary

Kaleida High Point

Kenmore Fire Company

Knights of Columbus

Knights of Equity

LaSalle Yacht Club

Linde Engineering

America

Luck Family

Misters

Mooney's

O'Brien's West End New

York Beer Project CHC

Learning Center

Our Lady of Victory

Our Lady OF Victory

Elementary

Park Dale Elementary

Platters Chocolates

Saturn Club

Schofield

Shamus

Sisters of St. Joseph

St. Amelia's

St. Benedict's

St. Mary's Highschool

St. Mary's of Swormville

The Willows

Woodrow Wilson

Elementary

Youngstwon Yacht Club

**we thank you**  
FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT IN  
**our programs**

Give for Greatness



Delaware  
North.



Arts  
Services  
INC



# We couldn't do it without our volunteers!

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BUFFALO IRISH DANCE PARENTS ORGANIZATION



Thank you for always showing up, fundraising, and all the time and effort you put into making Irish dance a memorable experience for the dancers!



# Contact Us

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