

Erin's Echo

Maryland State Board
Ladies Ancient Order of Hibernians, Inc.

President's Message

MARYLAND LAOH Welcomes 2024

Lose weight, exercise, drink less, be kinder and give more. Oh, the list can go on and on when making New Years Resolutions. When we set too many unrealistic goals, we set ourselves up for failure. Let's be realistic, wouldn't we be more successful if we focused our energy on one specific goal and having the self-satisfaction of knowing we not only achieved it, but we did it well?

Like so many others, I hit the reset button. That is the miracle of the New Year, a chance for renewal and rebirth. As I reflect on Maryland LAOH's 2023 challenges and successes, I know that they go hand in hand. I could not have the latter without the former. The challenges gave fuel that led to our success.

Successes are not always measured by monetary value. How can we forget the vision of LAOH ladies sitting on the side of a hill looking for ghosts in the cool autumn night? Or a group of singing nuns bellowing tunes into the mic at our State Convention? Father Frain taking a giant Irish leap during the St. Patrick's Day Parade and sharing laughter over the tears of a life well lived when one of our own passed away?

Ladies, no regrets and no looking back... Place your hands on your hips, tilt your head back and blow a big breath of fresh air into 2024. Look out, reset, here we come.

*-Kathy Norris-
Uachtarán (Maryland LAOH State President)*

-LAOH Website

Go to www.marylandlaoh.org for events, flyers and forms. There are links to items of interest in the local Irish Community as well as information on the national scene. You can also find us on <http://www.facebook.com/marylandlaoh>



Volume 59 No. 1 Jan., Feb., Mar., 2024

Calendar

February

Feb. 11: Feast of St. Brigid, St. Ignatius Catholic Community, Baltimore, 1:30 PM

Feb. 25: Mass for the Installation of the Baltimore St. Patrick's Parade Marshals, Basilica of the Assumption, 1:30 PM

March

Mar. 2: State Board Meeting, 10 AM, Location TBD

Mar. 10: Baltimore St. Patrick's Parade

Mar. 15: Sally Murphy Award Application Deadline

Mar. 17: Annapolis St. Patrick's Day Parade

April

Apr. 13: Maryland LAOH State Board Bingo Fundraiser, Details to follow

Cultural Corner

PROPHET SONG by Paul Lynch,
Booker Prize 2023

THE PAPER MAN by Billy O'Callaghan

DEATH NEAR KENTMORE ABBRY by
Martha Geaney

Book Club selection February

Contact Susan Legg at
susan.legg@icloud.com



-Joanna Cox

Gatherings

I had the occasion to read the current events in Ireland 2024. The crisis currently is housing. Apartments are 2200 Euro and have doubled over 10 years. Two-thirds of Irish young adults between 18-34 live with their parents. On top of this, new immigrants from the Middle East still flood into smaller rural towns like Ballaghaderreen, Co. Roscommon (my dad's town). This creates fear about what will become of Irish culture in such communities. The crisis could have been predicted, based on EU policies and lack of preparation. Affordable housing requires planning and attention to community life.

But why look at Ireland when we have a housing crisis here in Baltimore, though for different reasons? I read one set of statistics that ranks Baltimore 5th among American cities with the most abandoned houses. We can point fingers in every direction, but we must respond constructively because families like mine abandoned the regional city and fled to the suburbs. Housing requires less defensiveness and more advocacy. Besides sharing our great culture, lively music, long dedication to the Catholic faith, the LAOH can constructively advocate for answers to this crisis.

I point to one similarity between present day Ireland and our present-day Baltimore. Let our Irish spirit not retreat in fear in the face of such dangers. It is in such circumstances we are at our best!



Father Frain, SJ, LAOH State Chaplain

Harford County, Division 2

On Tuesday, November 28th, our division and the Catholic War Veterans decorated 61 doors at the VA Rehabilitation Center on Loch Raven at The Alameda. We decorated while some veterans were watching and listening/singing to Christmas music.

On Sunday, December 3rd, the State Board held their annual Christmas luncheon at the Blue Stone restaurant. Those attending had a wonderful time.

On Wednesday, December 6th, we went on our Sight and Sound Bus Trip. The trip and show were sold out. Then on Sunday, December 10th, we attended the St. John's 10th Ward Christmas Party/Bull and Oyster Roast at St. Elizabeth School. The division treasury paid \$10 per member attending to help defray the cost of the \$40 ticket. All proceeds went to the St. Elizabeth School.

We will be having our St. Ita Mass and Crabcake Dinner on Sunday, January 14, 2024 at 2:00 PM. The mass will be in



the main church at St. Mark and the dinner in McCall Hall. A flyer with more details will follow.

Best wishes for the New Year,

-Gleela Kolakowski-Reporter

Anne Arundel County, Division 1

The ladies of Anne Arundel County had a fruitful fall. We changed things up a bit with our November 18th fundraiser by hosting a genealogy workshop, led by one of our own – Louise McDonald – as well as serving a delicious Irish dinner with all the fixings. Louise guided those in attendance through various ways of using available information on the Internet in order to research your family tree. In addition, we held a 50/50 raffle, Basket of Cheer raffle, and a silent auction with 20 donated baskets. In all we raised just over \$4700 for our designated charities.



At our December meeting we elected a new slate of officers that will be installed in January. Congratulations to the following sisters who graciously accepted executive board positions:

President – Dee McCarthy, Vice President – Jane Bannon, Treasurer – Kate Carr, Recording Secretary – Susan Koepf, Financial Secretary – Kathy Finnerty, Missions and Charities – Marilyn Haney, Catholic Action – Lyn Tilden, Irish Historian – Louise McDonald.

A special thank you goes to Jane Bannon for serving as our Division President for 6 years. Your leadership has been a great asset to our Division and we are grateful for your continued support as Vice President in the coming year.

-Dee McCarthy, President-

Cecil County, Division 1

The members of LAOH Cecil County Division 1 wrapped accepted nominations for 2024-2025 officers in October, elected same in November, and then gathered joyfully for a Christmas Party and gift exchange in December. We partnered with our AOH brothers at the annual Mass in the 204-year-old St. Patrick's Chapel in Conowingo for Advent. We welcomed a new Chaplain (Father Rich Jasper) and conducted a successful Boscov Fundraiser in October, raising \$1,769.

Nancy Sheehan-Becker was accompanied by Rose Holley to be degreed by the Tri-state Shamrock Degree Team in November. To increase membership several members worked at two church Christmas Bazaars and met ten potential members. President Hild also searched for new members at a Genealogy Symposium and the Maryland Irish Festival and celebrated Christmas with the Maryland LAOH.

Cecil County LAOH installed their 2024-2025 officers on January 3rd:

Christine Hild-
Division
President, Anne
Fazio- Vice-
President, Nancy
Sheehan-Becker-
Treasurer, JoAnne
Bierly- Secretary,
Sharon Bittner-
Financial
Secretary, Regina
Simon- Irish
Historian, Mary
Anne Loftus-
Smith- Catholic
Action, Karen
Bower- Missions
and Charities, Pat
Widmayer-
Mistress at Arms, Rose Holley- Sentinel



During January and February plans are in place for two "Fill the Trunk" Food Drives to replenish the pantries of Immaculate Conception's Outreach and Good Shepherd's St. Vincent de Paul Society. On February 3rd we will celebrate our St. Brigid Mass at 4PM at Good Shepherd, Perryville and award Sarah Mulhern \$100 for her winning essay for the National Irish History Writing Contest. Our Diaper Drive begins on Ash Wednesday.

-JoAnne Bierly, Reporter

Harford County, Division 1

Happy New Year!

Our November meeting was quite busy. We started by installing our newest member, Lisa Jester, Emily Jester's mother. Elections were held for the 2024-2025 Officers. We will be installing the following members to their positions on January 14, 2024, after Mass at St. Mark's:

President: Kathy Lay, **Vice President:** Betty Weiderhold, **Recording Secretary:** Carole Franz, **Financial Secretary:** Fran Murphy, **Treasurer:** Claudia Beresh, **Missions and Charities:** Eileen Verch, **Irish History:** Emily Jester, **Catholic Action:** Chris Brown, **Sentinel:** Ceil Terry, **Mistress at Arms:** Juanita Bochniak

Also, at our November meeting, we selected the following charities in which to disperse funds: St. Mark's Church, Father Simmons, The Empty Stocking Fund, Choose Hope Women's Center (Birth Rite), and one of our favorite charities, Boy Scout Troop 4513, a Troop for special needs boys.

On Sunday, November 26, members attended St. Mark's healing service and while wearing sashes we presented prayer cards to those who received the blessing.

In December, our Division Christmas Party was held at Kathy Lay's home. Kathy provided wonderful food and a "Secret Santa" gift exchange was enjoyed by all. We were so happy that Father Simmons was able to join us again this year.

Several of our members attended Thelma Graziano's funeral Mass in December.

Starting mid-January, we will be having a 50/50 raffle that runs until St. Patrick's Day. Chances will be available on the LAOH website. We are also working on a few other fundraising ideas.

We are looking forward to participating in the St. Brigid's Mass in February, parade fundraisers and the St. Patrick's Day Parade.

On Sunday, March 17th, we will hold a membership Mass at St. Patrick's in Havre de Grace followed by a lunch.

We look forward to seeing members of other Divisions at those future events!

- Laurie Hauser, Reporter

Worcester County, Division 1

The beach is beautiful in the winter. Come take a walk on the boardwalk.



November: Two of our sisters attended the Delaware Degree ceremony. On November 29th we had an outing to the Winterthur Museum. At our meeting, we also discussed our charities.

December: Our Christmas luncheon was held at the Ashore Hotel. Lunch was served to 22 sisters. Cathy Bocci said a beautiful grace. The ladies outdid themselves with the amount of clothing that they donated for the homeless in the true meaning of Christmas.

January: After the holidays, 4 new members were installed. We discussed the donation of cereal for Joseph House. We will be collecting both In January and February. Plus, we scheduled the mass for St Brigid which was planned by Catholic Action, Kitty Reeves, who also did a great job of fulfilling the wishes for the giving tree at Christmas.

- Ann Cottingham, President-

Baltimore County, Division 1

We wish everyone a happy, healthy and blessed year in 2024! We all enjoyed the Irish music, food, beverages, exhibits and the Irish spirit that runs thru halls of the Irish festival. Some of

our ladies volunteered at the LAOH membership table. The Anne Arundel County genealogy event was fun and informative with new avenues to trace family histories. Hats off to the



chefs who made the delicious dinner!

We have another new member, Nancy Hobbs, and know you all will welcome her. We held our Christmas dinner at Spirits West with Rudolph joining the fun! We raised enough in our fundraisers this year to donate to the Little Sisters of the Poor, Oblate Sisters, The Women's Center West, Maryland Food Bank and Catholic Relief Services for the war torn countries.

We will be attending the St Ita mass and the St Brigid mass and look forward to the fundraisers for the St Patrick Day parade. We're praying for good weather for the parade and for the outdoor Stations of the Cross Walk at Manresa on Good Friday.

God bless you -now and always- with the gift of Irish cheer; May God give you a happy heart and keep you through the year!

-Maureen Shettle, President-

Baltimore City, Division 1

Happy Winter from the ladies of the Venerable Catherine McAuley Division of Baltimore City! We support Marian House, a holistic, healing community for women and their children who are in need of housing and support services.

We meet the 2nd Thursday of each month, 7PM, at Squire's restaurant. We invite you to join us in helping women in need in the City of Baltimore and celebrating our Irish history and culture.

Stay warm!

-Dorothy Reed, Reporter

Howard County, Division 1

We welcome the **New Year** and look forward to writing our history on a clean page. We are kicking off January by re-electing our current officers and installing a new member. We will be focusing on other Howard County parishes in an effort

to increase membership. At least one member will be attending the HoCoPoLitSo's 46th Evening Irish Evening with novelist Darragh McKeon on February 3.

In February and March, members plan on attending the St. Brigid's and Installation Masses and the Baltimore St. Patrick's Parade. Congratulations to Patti Petti (Anne Arundel Division 1) and Sharon Strobel (our Division President) for being selected Maryland LAOH's 2024 Parade Deputy Marshalls.

In addition to attending meetings, we continue to assist at St. John the Evangelist's Holy Grounds Café, will be sponsoring a Mothers' Day Baby Shower benefitting a local pregnancy center, are planning a joint flea market with the Parish's St. Vincent de Paul Conference, hope to hold a canvas-bag painting fundraiser, and continue to engage with the Knights of Columbus and Tanzanian Children's Project.

We resume efforts to find a meeting time that better meshes with members' busy schedules and creates opportunities for connecting socially within not only our Division but with other LAOH Sisters. Here's to 2024!

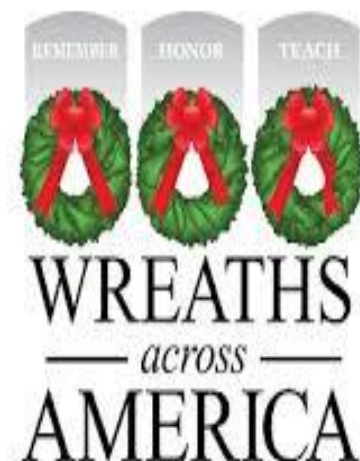
-Sharon Strobel, President-

Carroll County, Division 1

"Athbhliain Faoi Mhaise"- Happy New Year!! Our Division has been pretty busy since our last Erin's Echo Report. We had a Bake Sale Fundraiser at St. Bartholomew's on October 13th & 15th. On October 15th some of our members attended the AOH/LAOH Memorial Mass as one of our own Peggy Parks was remembered at the Mass.

November found many of our Sisters working the Maryland Irish Festival and what a successful Festival it was! Kelly Parks and Mary Beth Connolly, both members of the Irish Charities Board want to thank those LAOH Sisters who volunteered at the Festival. We would also like to thank our own Chaplain Fr. Collin Poston for Celebrating the Festival Mass and of course, Otto, for being there.

December was a busy time also. Two of our members



volunteered for Wreaths Across America Family Day and

Wreaths in Day. One day was rainy and the other was beautiful sunshine. Many members attended the State Board Luncheon at Blue Stone; everyone enjoyed themselves as we sang Christmas Carols. Diane Zeller hosted our Christmas Luncheon attended by many of our members and our Chaplain. Our Division continues to adopt a Family each year through St. Bartholomew's Social Action Committee.

Our Division had our elections, with our new Officers to be installed in February. Hoping all had a Blessed Christmas and wishing everyone a Happy & Healthy New Year...

Respectfully Submitted,
-Mary Beth Connolly, Secretary

Baltimore County, Division 14

Kennedy Kreiger Festival of Trees was held at the Maryland State Fairgrounds on November 24-26, 2023. Some of our members donated ornaments and decorated the tree including Patrice Bell, Denny Mullin, Katie McKune, Lisa Hackett, Heather Breidigam and Lauren Breidigam. The tree was sold for \$150.00 benefiting Kennedy Kreiger.



Our division is continuing to donate to the Viva House, especially during the winter months. They have requested socks for the month of January. Of course, we also continue to donate blankets and winter clothing.

We lost a member in December – Chip Merkle. Her family had a private service for her. We sent a Columban Fathers card to her family.

At our January 28, 2024 meeting we will install our newly elected officers.

-Eileen Edwards, President-



Baltimore County, Division 4

No Report

-Mary Helene Miller, Reporter

Let Us Pray

Let us remember in prayer our Sisters who are sick and suffering, especially those in nursing homes and hospitals, as well as our deceased sisters, that they may rest in God's eternal embrace.



-In Memorium-

**Thelma Graziano, Harford County, Division 2
Laura "Chip" Merkle, Baltimore County,
Division 14**