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'Irish connection' eases local nurse shortage

by Bill O'Donnell

MILTON—The Republic of Ireland currently has a surplus of well-trained professional nurses while, in contrast, many hospitals and health centers in the United States are struggling to find qualified personnel to staff their facilities.

The present "nurse overload" in Ireland is directly attributable to the strained economic situation in that country. The persistent high rate of unemployment in the Republic provides far fewer opportunities today then are needed for Ireland's large, well-educated under-25 age group. This situation has been further exacerbated by recent belt-tightening moves by the Irish government, resulting in the closings of a number of medical facilities there.

If you are in the health care business here in the states, and you can't find enough homebred nurses, you could do one of two things—move your medical facility to Ireland or, more logically, make an aggressive move to attract and hire Irish-born graduate nurses. That second option is precisely what Tom Flatley and his Milton-based Mayo Health Facilities has been doing for the past year.

Margo Brunelli, the Director of Admissions for Mayo Health Facilities—don't let her married name fool you, she is a Greene from Carna, Galway — has already made one recruiting sweep looking for nurses in Ireland and has another visit scheduled for this June.

With some 250 full and part-time nursing positions to keep staffed at the six Mayo facilities,

Mayo health team

Maura Burke of Portumna, Galway, left, and Marion Cournane of Castlemaine, Kerry, second from right, are shown with Margo Brunelli, Director of Admissions; Thomas Flatley and Michael Cummings, an official of the Flatley Company. (Photo—Liam Thomas)

green isle suggested an ideal place to locate the nursing help they were searching for—where else but in Ireland!

Brunelli's initial Irish recruiting trip last year—following a great deal of research and groundbreaking from this side—resulted in the hiring of two graduate nurses from Ireland, Marion Cournane of Castlemaine, Kerry and Maura Burke of Portumna, Galway. Both are now employed at the Milton Health Care Facility on Brush Hill Road. Maura began work last November and Marion joined her in January. The two young women will spend at least a year working here and with their H-1 "professional status"

Director in addition to his ownership of health facilities, thinks the innovative hiring approach has a lot to recommend it. Not only does it reduce medical staffing problems, he notes, but it provides opportunities for employment and the latest medical training for talented Irish professionals.

Admissions Director Brunelli is eagerly looking forward to interviewing an even larger number of Irish nurses during her visit there next month. Of her initial recruits—the first two of what she hopes will be many more to come—she says, "They have a lot to bring to us. They are trained professionals with a very real concern for our

New Orleans presentation

Musicians from the Celtic Folk group, traditional music favorites here in Boston and New Orleans, were on hand recently in the Bayou City to greet Gearoid McNamara of the Irish Embassy, third from right. The participants, from left are: Steve Roppolo, Loyal University Union; Patrick O'Keefe, Denis Casey, Patrick O'Flaherty of Celtic Folk; Turlough Faolain, McNamara, Noel Nash of Celtic Folk and Daniel O'Flaherty of Celtic Folk.

Theodore Roosevelt topic of May 6 Forum

CAMBRIDGE—"The Black Crystal: Theodore Roosevelt and the Art of Political Imagery," will be the topic of an address by Edmund Morris, author, The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt, Tuesday, May 6 at 8 p.m. in the Public Affairs Forum of the Institute of Politics, 79 John F. Kennedy Street, Cambridge. Responding to the address will be: Ernest R. May, Charles Warren Professor of American History, Harvard University; and Alan Brinkley, Dunwalke Associate Professor of American History, Harvard University. The event, which is co-sponsored by the Theodore Roosevelt Association, is free and open to the public.

Merrimac Valley INA dinner, May 3

LOWELL—The Second Annual Banquet of the Merrimack Valley Irish Northern Aid Committee (INAC) will be held

Irish Republican movement for almost seventy years, since his active duty in the Irish Republican Army in the war for