

Boston Irish Honors

16TH ANNUAL LUNCHEON

John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum
Dorchester, MA
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2026

2026 Boston Irish Hall of Honors



Brig. General Jack Hammond



Martina Curtin



Rev. Thomas B. Kennedy



Sam Kennedy

Boston Irish Honors recognizes the leadership and accomplishments of individuals and families of Irish ancestry, who exemplify the very best of our values, legacies and traditions, by telling the stories of their special achievements in public service, medical care, education, and community leadership.

Welcome to the 16th Annual Boston Irish Honors



Boston Irish Honors symbol
by Vincent Crotty

Today's installment of the Boston Irish Honors luncheon marks the sixteenth season of a cherished tradition here in the "next parish over." We gather to salute four remarkable individuals whose lives and careers reflect extraordinary accomplishments, steadfast service, and a shared commitment to community that would no doubt delight their forebears across the pond.

The Rev. Tom Kennedy, Sam Kennedy, Martina Curtin, and Brig. Gen. Jack Hammond embody the finest qualities that we seek to emulate as Irish Americans. Their achievements span faith and philanthropy, sports and business, cultural preservation, and service to our nation's military veterans and their families.

From Rev. Kennedy's devoted ministry and leadership at Sherrill House to Sam Kennedy's stewardship of the Boston Red Sox and his work with Fenway Sports Group; from Martina Curtin's dedication to our heritage through the Irish Cultural Centre to Gen. Hammond's tireless advocacy for veterans and their families through Home Base, each has made a lasting and meaningful contribution to the fabric of our community.

The Hall of Honors that our four distinguished guests join today was conceived as a means to recognize and uplift the nobility of lives devoted to service, achievement, and the common good. Their examples remind us that the Irish American legacy is not simply one of individual success, but of opening doors, building institutions, and extending a helping hand to those who follow.

Today's gathering advances the work of the Edward W. Forry and Mary Casey Forry Foundation for Community Journalism. Your generosity helps us preserve the vital tradition of community journalism, tell the stories that matter in our communities, and train a new generation of reporters and storytellers to carry that mission forward.

We are deeply grateful for your faith in us, for your commitment to the next generation, and for joining us in celebrating the very best of our Irish American community.

Sláinte!
— Ed Forry, Bill Forry, Linda Dorcena Forry, and Maureen Forry-Sorrell

16th Annual Boston Irish Honors Luncheon

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Hon. Martin T. Meehan
Bill Kennedy
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Hon. Joseph P. Kennedy III
Hon. Martin J. Walsh
Hon. Regina Quinlan Doherty
Hon. Linda Dorcena Forry
Hon. Síghle Fitzgerald,
Consul General of Ireland
in Boston
John Cullinane
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Hon. James T. Brett
Colin Burch
Joe Carroll
Tom Carty
Kerry Collins
Katherine Craven
Paul Doyle

The Program

Welcome and Introductions
Linda Dorcena Forry & Maureen Forry-Sorrell

Blessing and Invocation
Rt. Rev. Julia E. Whitworth, Bishop Diocesan, Episcopal Diocese of Mass

Committee Co- Chair Welcome
Hon Martin Meehan, Bill Kennedy Event Co-Chairs

Custom Luncheon
Old Fashioned Irish Salad - w Irish Salad Cream & French Dinner Rolls w Butter Balls
Entree – Deconstructed Irish Steak & Stout Pie - Guinness Braised Short Rib, Glazed Rainbow Carrot, Pearl Onion, FingerlingPotatoes, Flaky Pastry Tuile
Dessert - Irish Shortbread Shamrocks, Trad & White Chocolate Dipped Mint
Coffee and Twinings Tea - Table Service Vegetarian meal upon request

Induction to Boston Irish Hall of Honors

Brig General Jack Hammond
Martina Curtin
Rev. Tom Kennedy & Sam Kennedy

Closing Benediction
Rev. Jack Ahern

John E. Drew
John P. Foley Esq.
William Forry
Maureen Forry-Sorrell
James Hunt III
Barry T. Hynes
Nora Kennedy
Annemarie Kennedy
Mark Kerwin
Annemarie Lewis Kerwin
Tim Kirk
Paul & Mimi LaCamera
Thomas F. Mulvoy, Jr.
Thomas N. O'Brien
John O'Hara
Grace Cotter Regan
Bob & Mary Scannell
Bob Sheridan
Rie Sugihara
Mary Sugrue
Tom Tinlin
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16TH ANNUAL BOSTON IRISH HONORS

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Acknowledgements :Dusty Rhodes, Rachael Patten and Zoe Ross at Conventures; Flavio DeBarros, whose images are recording today's event; floral centerpieces by Dhalia's Garden; The Co-chairs & members of the Host Committe; Barbie Langis, Tom Mulvoy & and the Boston Irish team; BNN Inc. & FFCJ- the Forry Foundation; Gail Sarni, JFK Library staff and the chef, cooks and wait-staff Gourmet Caterers for their service to us today. And to all our sponsors and guests at today's luncheon, *go raibh math agar— A Thousand thank you!*

STEPHEN HENDRICKSON

and

BILL STEUL

salute

THE REVEREND

Tom Kennedy

&

Sam Kennedy

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BOSTON IRISH HALL OF HONORS INDUCTEES

in honor and recognition of their extraordinary contributions to the Boston community over decades.

Thank you for who you are and all you do for our community.

US Army Brig. General Jack Hammond: A storied career devoted to God, country, and healing

By Seth Daniel

When US Army Brigadier General (Ret.) Jack Hammond enters the Home Base Institute headquarters in Charlestown Navy Yard every morning, ready to advance the mission of treating the "invisible wounds" of war, his hands may be full, but his eyes are scanning the clinic.

In the corridors of the busy outpatient clinic with more than 200 attendants on staff, his eyes eventually focus on one of the combat veterans waiting in a conference room for treatment or a therapy group. Most of them are there for the Institute's cutting-edge, two-week intensive healing regimen, while others have come for regular appointments.

Taken together, they serve as a daily reminder to Hammond - a general officer who held leadership roles in the field during three tours of duty in Iraq and Afghanistan between 2002 and 2012 - of his own healing journey after his "invisible wounds" nearly turned tragic, and he sought the kind of help – a "tune up" as he put it – that makes him a better leader at Home Base today.

"I had a seminal moment back in 2006 over in Cambridge where I was caught in traffic on a Sunday, and we had just celebrated my daughter's acceptance to Harvard and I was quietly celebrating *my* acceptance to Harvard," he recalled during a somber interview last month.

The family was cruising down Memorial Drive in their convertible, he said, when traffic came to a standstill. He began to sweat, and in his mind, he was suddenly back in Iraq, where snarled traffic meant danger.

"I was literally sweating and everything else and I just needed to get out of that intersection," he said. "In Iraq, that's when somebody threw a grenade in your window or just walked by and unloaded an AK into you. Your anxiety levels go off the chart."

What happened next in Hammond's telling turned a happy day bleak: At a green light, a male student walked carelessly in front of the car. A heated argument ensued and at one point, the student threw an apple at the general's wife, Colleen (Halloran) Hammond, and hit her in the head. Was it an apple, or was it a grenade? Things seemed all mixed up.

"That really triggered some bad memories," he said, "and then I heard Colleen scream because it hit her in the head, and then I really lost it." In a fortunate moment, he was blocked from leaving the car and they drove off.

Years later, Hammond said, his wife got him to admit that he wasn't in control in the convertible – "You weren't there, and you could've ended him or hurt him really badly," she said. Had anything like that happened, she noted, he likely would have lost his place at Harvard, the Army would have walled off his career, his daughter might have lost her spot at Harvard – and he could have ended up in jail.

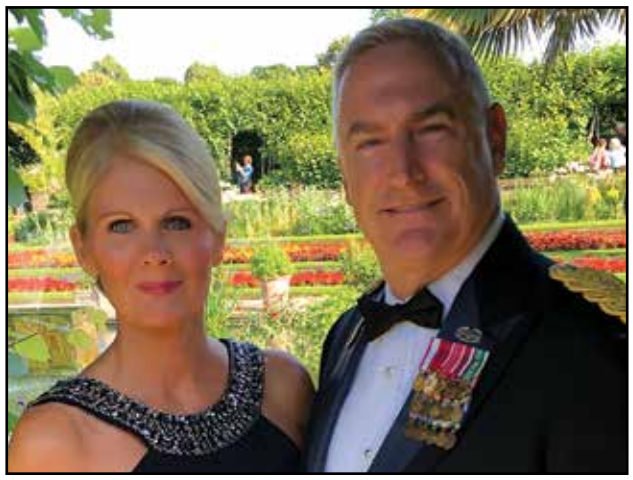
That conversation exposed the unresolved traumas from his wartime service in perilous settings, and he began to really consider the effects of wartime traumas and the serious need to address them.

Treating veterans with issues like Gen. Hammond's is what Home Base is all about under his leadership: Use dedicated space, caring personnel, and advanced-level treatment to address the lingering effects of war on those who did the fighting: Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injury, suicidal ideations, and anxieties that can't be curtailed with pills or serums.

"They're all one bad decision away from something tragic, whether it's taking their own life or hurting somebody else; there's a million and one bad things they could do to change the trajectory of their lives," he said. "I always believe what we do here is we help these men and women reclaim the life they once had, and they deserve."







Top: Brig. Gen. Jack Hammond (Ret.), CEO of Home Base Institute, speaks during the Boston Common Flag Project, a signature event put on by Home Base and Massachusetts Military Heroes Fund; communicating in the field during combat operations; and with his wife Colleen (Halloran) Hammond. ***Courtesy photos***

Hammond has been leading that effort since 2012 as Home Base's CEO in what has become a gold-standard partnership between Mass General Brigham and the Red Sox Foundation. Emotionally far from that day in 2006, he now helps others who need the "tools to reclaim their lives and not have this control them."

Boston Red Sox Chairman Tom Werner helped to hire the general for Home Base. He cites Hammond's "integrity and warmth" in addition to his communication skills and leadership attributes.

"He does it all with humility and he really is so admirable, and I think the patients feel his love for them and empathy for them," said Werner. "He's one of the more remarkable people I've met, and I've met presidents and athletes and authors over my career…We talk about great Americans a lot; he's a great American."

Mike Allard, a founder of Home Base and its current chief operating officer, said they were looking to hire someone who could stem the tide of suicides among veterans. In Hammond, they found someone who also understood the journey toward that possibility.









Clockwise from top left: Hammond's grandfather, Edward Ferguson, around 1890; the 1908 Northeastern University Law School graduating class, which includes Edward Ferguson; Hammond's Grandfather Edward Ferguson and his grandmother, Magdalen Knox Ferguson, with their family in 1916. Edward Ferguson was left with only one arm after a train coupling accident when he worked in the train yards; grandmother Magdalen Knox Ferguson. ***Courtesy photos***

"It's a hard field and it takes a toll, and Jack has lost friends he served with to suicide," said Allard. "What pushes you is the anger and heartbreak that comes from losing friends. He doesn't want to see that happen to anyone else."

But the silver lining, Allard said, is in "Jack's case, and in our team's case: We do know what to do."

Irish Roots in County Louth soil

Resilience runs deep in the Hammond family's Irish heritage. One of the general's four grandparents— his mother's father, Edward Ferguson— was born in 1872 in Co. Louth. He left for America around 1890 and spent six years in New York working off his indentured servitude.

When he later moved to Boston, his fortunes changed in a remarkable ascent to success in the face of great setbacks.

"He worked on the trains a little bit here and lost his arm in a train coupling accident," said Hammond. "As an Irish immigrant, turn of the century, it wasn't great, but he actually graduated from Northeastern Law School around 1908, and eventually became the attorney for the city of Cambridge."

On the side he dabbled in politics, eventually helping a young Tip O'Neill first get elected to the Massachusetts Legislature and then to Congress.

That relationship with the young upstart O'Neill passed down to Hammond's uncle, Jim Ferguson, who was a key staff member for the congressman when he became speaker of the US House of Representatives.

"They kind of had their hands in politics, I guess," said Hammond, laughing.

Both of his grandmothers were born in America to Irish immigrants, he pointed out, but his paternal ancestors came over on the Mayflower before leaving Massachusetts for Nova Scotia in 1750. Hammond's paternal grandfather later came back to Massachusetts.

He hasn't visited Louth, but during a Special Forces training exercise in England and Ireland, his heritage did come up.

"I can remember having dinner with some folks from MI5 and MI6 and the PSNI (Police Service of Northern Ireland) in Belfast and during the conversation one of them asked if I was Irish, and I said, 'Yeah,'" recalled Hammond. "And they asked where my family was from, and I told them Louth. And at the same time, they all said, 'Gunrunners.' They couldn't even stop themselves."

The Hammond family moved from Cambridge to Reading when he was young. One of five siblings, he graduated from Reading High School playing football, wrestling, and running track. He worked his way through UMass Boston while wrestling and playing lacrosse, the latter a spot he earned as a senior walk-on.

He had also been considering a military career. Family members had served in Vietnam, Korea, and World War II, so he was "surrounded by the Greatest Generation."

"I thought about it, but it was also a difficult time when I was graduating because we were in the post-Vietnam malaise," Hammond said. "The things that normally fire a young person up to join (were not there.) All the movies were terrible, and they painted an ugly picture or a comical picture."

Still. a few of his friends has signed up for the Army Reserves and there was talk of scholarships to help with school costs. During his sophomore year, he walked into a military recruiter's office intending to join a Reserve unit with his buddies. But he went to National Guard recruiter by accident, not knowing the difference. It was a mis-step that produced one of the notable battlefield commanders in recent American military history.

Major Jack to General Jack, Logan Airport to Fallujah

On the shelf in that recruiter's office was a coffee mug that read, "100% free tuition" and listed all of the state colleges and universities. After learning there was a difference between the National Guard and the Army Reserves, Hammond apologized and went to leave. That's when the recruiter took down the coffee mug from the shelf that promised free tuition to UMass Boston.

"I don't know why, but the fact that he had a coffee cup with that printed on it, I thought it would be a pretty elaborate ruse to have a fake coffee cup made," he noted. "And I said, 'I don't care if you're the Salvation Army, I'm in.'"

The move reduced his tuition to $50 a semester, he said, and propelled the criminal justice major toward a military career. He attended basic training that summer, then Officer Candidate School the following summer. By his senior year, he was a lieutenant in the Army National Guard and a platoon leader – working 25 hours a week while completing reserve duty, doing his college course work, and playing two varsity sports. His criminal justice degree "branched him" into the role of Military Police (MP) after college, and he graduated in the top 10 percent of officer training class.

He remained on active duty from 1984 until retiring in 2012, meeting Colleen, and raising two daughters with her: Kayla (now 38) and Shea (now 36). But after Sept. 11, 2001, his career and his life changed immensely.

He was a battalion commander, so within hours after the attacks, he was deployed to help secure seven airports, including Logan International in Boston, from where two of the attacking planes had taken off. In June 2002, he left for Afghanistan to join the "War on Terror."

"The post-9/11 wars were very different for the National Guard and Reserve because more than half of those soldiers deployed," said Allard. "In Vietnam, they didn't deploy. It was the early days of the war, and it was the Wild West. Most only serve one year in the Army; Jack was there close to 20 months and saw both theatres – Afghanistan and Iraq. It's the kind of experience that's unique and uncommon."

In three tours of duty, Hammond commanded US and NATO forces in Iraq – mostly in Fallujah – and counter-terrorism combat operations in Afghanistan, where he faced mass casualty attacks like the 2011 assault on the US Embassy in Kabul.

While in Iraq, he commanded two battalion-level task forces that executed more than 100 combat and counter-terrorism missions. His final assignment in 2010 and 2011 was as commanding general of US Forces in Kabul Province, responsible for more than 10,000 troops at 11 bases. In between deployments, he finished a National Security Fellowship at Harvard University.

"It's a continuing learning process in the military," he said, "and a lot of it is conceptual until you actually go to war. And that's when you, you really...well, there is no greater test of leadership than combat…When you're leading, you're entrusted with the lives of a bunch of young kids that are 18 or 19 years old. You gotta get it right every time."

Hammond spent most of 2002 in Afghanistan learning and listening, then honed his leadership skills in Iraq during the invasion.

"I went to bed at night knowing that somebody was going to spend their night trying to figure out how to kill me in the morning," he said. "So, you couldn't just do what you did yesterday. You always had to evolve."

That led him to the idea of "command authority," where a leader takes training and acts quickly to solve problems and makes split-second decisions that win battles and keep soldiers safe when there isn't time to ask advice.

"The guardrails of getting permission before you do stuff are gone and you're on your own," he said. "Once you realize that, I think that's when you're able to take your leadership to the next level because now the buck literally stops with you."

From Home Base to Boston Hope

Gen. Hammond moved unexpectedly from military retirement to CEO of Home Base Institute in 2012 while seeking help for a military friend.

(Continued on page 6)

A conversation with Allard quickly led to an interview. Allard said he knew that Hammond could take the organization to the next level.

"Jack is definitely a case study in a great personality," he said. "What's great about him is that amongst his peers, we all have egos. Jack doesn't have an ego… You have to be comfortable enough with yourself to not walk into a room and think you can know or command all. Jack is not the guy that's going to walk into a room of clinicians or academics barking orders and say, 'This is what I need you to do.'"

Mike Allard and Tom Werner both said that Hammond is skilled at pivoting to different constituencies, from veterans on the edge of suicide to funders from the philanthropic world to bureaucrats from the Department of Defense or Veterans Administration (VA) investing government money.

"It's not an easy job he has because he has to deal with not only the patients at Home Base, but also MGH and the Boston Red Sox and the state because we're constantly trying to knock on doors to get help from the state and federal governments," said Werner.

"When he speaks he is so charismatic. He's an excellent leader and I admire his quiet inspiration."

Home Base was the first private sector entity to pursue treatment of invisible wounds as a way to reduce veteran suicide. Hammond has developed new programs like the two-week intensive course for veterans from all over the country – with 41 cohorts of 12 people coming per year at no cost to the patient. They've also expanded clinic operations to Florida, Texas, and soon, Australia.

For all that, the test of a lifetime came in 2020.

In March of that year, the early stages of the pandemic, Hammond's cell phone rang, and it was then-Massachusetts Gov. Charlie Baker on the other end. They knew each other, but not well enough for a random phone call.

Baker told Hammond he wanted him to lead an effort to build and run a 1,000-bed field hospital for Covid-positive patients at the South Boston Convention Center that would help with hospital overflow.

There was a long pause, Hammond recalled, and they began to discuss funding, resources and timelines. "I asked him, 'When do you want it?' And he said, 'Seven days,' and it was almost one of those things that's like - I instantly regretted jumping into this."

But he pressed on, and Baker promised they would have the funding, though Hammond "needed to figure the rest out." Mike Allard was his first call, and his first volunteer.

"I asked if he needed volunteers and to sign me up," said Allard. "That was the start of the Boston Hope Covid-Positive Field Hospital."

The general's next call was to Jeanette Ives Erickson, chief nurse emerita of Mass General Hospital – who was already familiar with Hammond and his project.

"I just needed to know when to start," said Ives Erickson. "You know everything Jack touches is going to turn out really well. Home Base is a perfect example of that…So, I knew Boston Hope would be the same."

Hammond, Allard, and Ives Erickson recall being at the convention center with Suffolk Construction and public health officials only hours afterward, quickly getting to work to set up an overflow field hospital as the regular hospitals were beginning to bulge. Then days later, they admitted the first patient to the floor of the convention center facilty, with hundreds more to follow during a dark and uncertain time.

"You would never know that Jack hadn't done this before," said Ives Erickson. "He always moved with calm and confidence."

She also cited his ability to listen and solve problems. She recalled Hammond announcing that cots would be used for patients, but she told him that she had concerns for patients short of breath and prone to falling on the floor. They needed real beds.

"There goes Jack and he's calling furniture stores to see who had beds," Ives Erickson recalled. "Bob's Furniture actually was one and they were great, but that's just Jack with the Rolodex again. That's the sign of a good leader. They told us we'll have cots, and I was comfortable enough to say it sounded dangerous and within hours Jack solved the problem."

Hammond said that everyone worked around the clock, staying at nearby hotels, and treating 725 patients over three months before closing in June 2020.

"We didn't lose anybody," he said. "We ran it for three months, but it was so interesting because it was just like an expeditionary mission again."







Top: Brig. Gen. Jack Hammond (center, right) during a joint planning meeting in Afghanistan; Hammond with a mortar round during the invasion of Iraq; Hammond (center) organizing his forces during a deployment in Iraq. ***Courtesy photos***

The Future for Home Base

The Special Forces military community is a new frontier for Home Base, with groups like the famed Navy Seal Team 6 helping to lead the way.

In 2019, leaders from Seal Team 6 came to Boston, learned more about Home Base's work. They asked Hammond to build out a Traumatic Brain Injury / Poly Trauma program in a holistic treatment program for the complex injuries often carried by Special Forces soldiers – who deploy more often for shorter periods of time on high-intensity missions.

Hammond said they modeled their program off the National Football League (NFL) Players Association's concussion program that was being provided by doctors at their sister institution, MGH/Spaulding Rehabilitation.

"Based upon the findings of 1,000 Special Operating Force members, we are now transforming our entire program at Home Base to a 'Healthspan' model," said Hammond.

He said it still addresses PTSD and other brain injuries, but adds in things like Musculo-skeletal injuries, sports medicine, and eye exams. It's a program they plan to house in a new third floor clinic at their headquarters.

"There's a big space there that we're looking to share so that we bring all of these new resources to bear on this much broader approach so we can restore their wellness, not just their mental health and their functional health, but their overall health," Hammond said.

He added, "That's the next chapter. Nobody's doing it."

Leaving Home Base each day, Hammond's eyes are drawn to the large American flag on the foyer wall. Plaques recognize generous donors, but the words "With Gratitude From a Grateful Nation" represent unnamed donors.

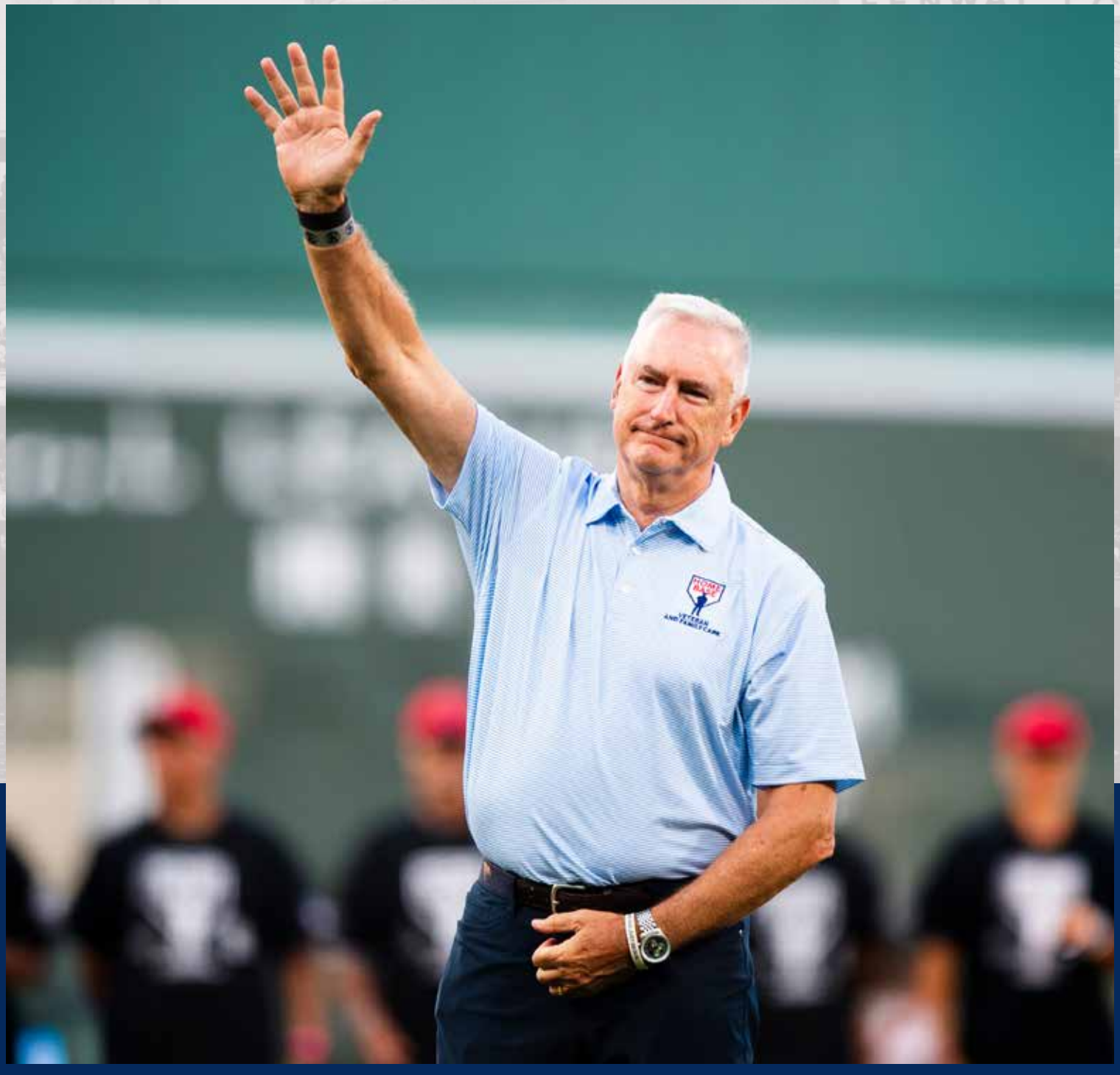
"There are thousands of grateful Americans – thousands of rank-and-file soldiers and private citizens – who give to Home Base because they believe in what we're doing and want these men and women to reclaim their lives," he said.

Then, hands full with a briefcase, papers, and a cup of coffee, he focuses his eyes on the door and heads off to another meeting to advance further the cause of treating the invisible wounds of war.

Seth Daniel is the News Editor of The Dorchester Reporter.



Gov. Healey chats with General Hammond. ***Home Base image***



The Boston Red Sox and Red Sox Foundation congratulate Retired Brigadier General Jack Hammond on your Boston Irish Honors recognition. We are grateful for your dedication to and care for the Home Base Program.

RED SOX FOUNDATION

Boston Irish HONORS

Martina Curtin ties timeless family values to her drive to 'show up for others' in need

By Peter F. Stevens
Boston Irish Contributor

By any measurement, Martina Curtin's journey from Kilshanny, Co. Clare, to America has had a profound impact across the neighborhoods of Boston. As the founder in 2009 of Curtin Home Care, aka CHC Home Care Inc., a provider of private assistance, Martina has proven that entrepreneurship and compassionate, professional support for families facing medical challenges are not mutually exclusive.

With her hands firmly on the helm of her business, she has charted innovation, quality, reliability, and, above all, the spirit of caring in all her endeavors.

After the company's acquisition by a corporate entity in 2020, Martina took the time to earn an MBA from Suffolk University and then, in 2024, drawing on the expertise that had established her reputation for delivering personal and empathetic care solutions, she opened Concierge HomeCare Plus, an individual-centric boutique home-care service.

Her mission to ensure clients' physical and emotional comfort has led to such accolades as the Care Ambassador Award at the *Irish Echo's* Small Business Impact Awards event in 2019, and now membership in *Boston Irish's* Hall of Honors Class of 2026 for her accomplishments as an Irish American entrepreneur and business leader.

As the first female president of the Irish Cultural Centre of Greater Boston (ICC), Martina is a key promoter of Irish culture and heritage who has expanded the ICC's presence in the local Irish community and beyond. And her determination to help connect and empower women from a wide array of backgrounds moved her to help found and preside over the networking group Mná Mheiriceá.

Prominent Boston attorney John Foley, who served as the ICC's general counsel for ten years said he had served with Martina on the ICC board and had seconded Seamus Mulligan's nomination of her for president.

"Seamus spotted her leadership and her ability to get things done. To quote him: "The last thing the ICC needed was another old white bald guy as its president.' So he nominated Martina, who was a generation younger, a woman and Irish born. It was a brilliant selection. Martina's leadership of the ICC has been transformative. She has led by rolling up her sleeves and making sure everyone felt welcomed.

"She leads by doing. She might be at the head table at an evening event but she probably arrived in the morning and did the dirty work behind the scenes that made the evening event possible. She has the ability to motivate people, to get things done…and leads by example."

On receiving notice of her induction into the Boston Irish Hall of Honors, she said, "Being recognized at the Boston Irish Honors has made me look back and reflect on my journey. …"

In a wide-ranging interview with *Boston Irish Magazine,* Martina, who lives in the Back Bay with her husband, Craig Carlson, a senior advisor at Arthur D. Little, discussed her path from her family's farm in the "old country" to prominence as a successful owner-executive in Boston's home care industry.

The Road from Kilshanny to Back Bay Boston

The Early Years: How did your upbringing in Co. Clare help shape your life?

"I grew up on a working farm in the rural village of Kilshanny close to the Cliffs of Moher...I'm the oldest of the eleven children of Michael and Joan Curtin – seven girls and four boys – so you can imagine how busy the house was! Everyone had jobs to do, and we were expected to get on with them. "We sold turf…raised beef cattle. We also bred Connemara ponies and took them to the shows, and at Christmas, we sold turkeys and geese. At the time, it was just everyday life. Looking back, I realize we were growing up in a family business, seeing all the work that went into making a living.



""I certainly trace my entrepreneurial spirit back to the farm. I grew up watching my parents make the most of what they had. Those early lessons shaped how I built my businesses and how I lead today."
–MARTINA CURTIN

"My father was very particular about how the cattle looked and how the ponies were turned out for the shows. Everything had to be right. He probably wouldn't have called it 'the brand,' but that's what it was—taking pride in what you were selling and in your name. I definitely inherited that from him…"

Making Do: How did 13 under one roof cope?

"My mother was a fantastic baker. I still remember coming home from school to homemade apple or rhubarb tarts, or fruitcake. I also remember us all spread out around the kitchen doing our homework, while the younger children studied in their rooms. There was always plenty going on … but those are the lovely memories that stay with you, too.

"With seven girls, there was never any talk of 'girls can't do that.' We worked inside and outside, whatever needed doing. I think that helped me later in life because I didn't go into things thinking I couldn't do them because I was a woman. I was used to getting involved and figuring things out. Being the eldest also taught me to take responsibility and use my initiative.

"My parents valued education. I remember them talking about my three aunts who had gone to Seamount College Kinvara. Working hard mattered, but so did getting an education. My parents didn't go to college—it was more down to circumstances than anything else—but they were great readers and loved current affairs. We had the *Irish Independent* every day, *The Clare Champion*, and the *Farmers Journal* on Thursdays, and two Sunday papers. There was always a newspaper in the house.

"The news was taken very seriously! We watched the 6 o'clock news after the Angelus and the nine o'clock news, and there couldn't be a sound while they were on. And, of course, on a farm, the weather forecast afterwards was just as important! We also watched "Today Tonight," a current affairs program a bit like "60 Minutes" here.

"I definitely inherited my parents'curiosity and interest in the world around me. Even in this age of technology, I still love reading a physical newspaper, and I've always had a great interest in current affairs and politics. That all started at home.

"I certainly trace my entrepreneurial spirit back to the farm. I grew up watching my parents make the most of what they had, manage different sources of income and adapt to the seasons. Those early lessons shaped how I built my businesses and how I lead today: Take pride in your work, look after people, pay attention to the details and be willing to roll up your sleeves and surround yourself with good people."

Parental Values: What did they teach you?

"My parents loved people. My mother probably fed the whole parish and then some over the years! No matter who came into the yard, they never left without getting a cup of tea and something to eat. Welcoming people and making them feel at home came naturally to her. She had a very strong faith and made regular trips to the Friary in Ennis to have Masses said. Exams, someone who had died, the cattle—you name it, she had a Mass said for it! She also would never go into town without her lipstick and pearls. I definitely inherited that from her, too. I love fashion!

"One thing she would always say to us was, "At night, I can put my head on my pillow, close my eyes and know that I did my best today." Of course, as children, we would roll our eyes, but as an adult, I really appreciate what she meant…

"I also remember my parents travelling the length and breadth of the country to funerals. We used to joke that those were their social outings! But looking back, it says a lot about them. They made the effort to show up





Family photos: Michael and Joan Curtin and Martina's husband, Craig Carlson.









Clockwise, from top left, a young Martina Curtin (far left, top row) in primary school with teacher Miss Mary Tierney.

At the Irish Cultural Centre with Helen McEntee, TD, Miniseter for Foreign Affairs and Defense (taken St. Patrick's Day weekend 2026).

The Mná Mheiriceá women at their July Wellness Walk 2025.

Martina Curtin (in dress) with her mother, brother Fergus and sister Siobhan.

for people, especially when it mattered.

"Those are the values they passed on to us: work hard, take pride in what you do, welcome people, show up for others and do your best. They taught us through how they lived every day."

Sibling life: Mostly get-along time?

"To be honest, we didn't take much notice of being one of eleven—it was simply what we knew. It's only in later years, when people say, 'Wow, you're one of eleven!' that I really stop to think about it. We were never bored, and there was always someone to play with. I often talk about how busy and structured our household was, but we had lots of fun, too, especially during the summer when our cousins came to visit from Limerick and Tipperary. We also had neighbors who would visit from the United States every couple of years. We loved having visitors!

"Christmas was always great fun. I remember us all gathering in one room, checking out what Santa had brought everyone. Of course, the household changed over time. As the younger children grew older, the older siblings were heading off to college, moving away and starting their own lives. But growing up, having so many brothers and sisters felt completely normal to us."

Coming Across: What was the lure?

"I first came over in 1999, and I loved everything about it—the fast pace, the work ethic, and the sense of possibility. People worked hard, and their successes were celebrated. That really appealed to me. I loved the energy and the feeling that if you were willing to put in the work, there were opportunities to build something for yourself. With my entrepreneurial spirit, I just felt it suited me."

Zeroing In: What led you to the healthcare field?

"I had siblings, aunts, and cousins working in various areas of healthcare, beyond the traditional roles, so it was a field I was familiar with, and at the time, it seemed like the right fit for me. When I arrived in Boston, I tapped into the healthcare network here and began building connections and finding opportunities. That's where my career in healthcare really took shape."

The Coping Era: Issues getting underway

"I was working for another agency when I decided to start CHC. I had seen what worked well and what could be improved, and I wanted to take those lessons and build an agency of my own. The biggest challenge was managing all the moving parts…The home care industry in Massachusetts is very fragmented, and families often worry about whether a caregiver would show up. Hiring dependable, compassionate people was paramount to CHC…Families were putting their trust in us, and the people delivering the care had to earn that trust every day.

"By the time CHC was acquired [in 2020], we had a team of 85 full- and part-time staff, including case managers, nurses, caregivers and administrative staff. They deserve just as much credit as I do for CHC's success. It was something we built together."

A New Venture: New goals, too?

"It was a natural progression, but with a different focus. I took what I had learned from building CHC and brought that experience into Concierge HomeCare Plus. This business focuses on the front end of care—the consulting side, helping families understand their options and navigate care, rather than managing staffing."

Energy Source: What drives your commitments?

"I genuinely enjoy helping others and connecting people. I've had great support and mentors along the way, and I still do. I know what a difference a little encouragement, an introduction, or someone believing in you can make, and I want to offer that same support to others.

"I really wear my heart on my sleeve when it comes to my Irish heritage. That was the draw to the Irish Cultural Centre – the people, the connections and keeping that sense of community alive. Becoming its first female president, and being elected during Covid, was no easy task. But it comes back to surrounding yourself with good people, and we have a phenomenal team at the ICC.

"Supporting women means a lot to me, and that's really how Mná Mheiriceá came about. We wanted to bring women together through business, wellness, and social events. It's about meeting people, sharing what we know and helping each other along.

"My mother had no sisters, and sometimes in the middle of planning an event, I wonder, 'Was she ever lonely? Would she have enjoyed something like this?' I want every woman who comes along to feel welcome and know there's a seat at the table for her.

Tell Readers, Please: Hobbies, interests?

"I love walking around Boston taking photographs, and I've taken beginner photography classes. I especially love photographing the city at Christmas and Halloween, and the Public Garden in every season. I also own a 1973 vintage Volkswagen Beetle convertible with the vanity plate 'MARBUG.' We had Volkswagen Beetles growing up, and I've always loved them. My husband Craig is a real car enthusiast so I think some of that has rubbed off on me, too!

"I have a very creative and entrepreneurial mind. I probably come up with four business plans a day in my head! Then Craig brings me back to reality by asking, 'Don't you think you have enough going on?'"

"Business Organization was my best subject at school, so I suppose it all makes sense now!"

Peter F. Stevens is a Boston Irish contributor.

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Martina Curtin

Rev. Thomas B. Kennedy

Brig. General Jack Hammond,
US Army (Retired)

Sam Kennedy

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The Boston Red Sox congratulate Reverend Tom Kennedy and Sam Kennedy on being recognized for their incredible contributions to the Boston community.

Boston Irish Honors

(Continued on next page)

Maith sibh

Congratulations

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HONORS HONOREES

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Brig. Gen. Jack Hammond

Rev. Tom Kennedy

Sam Kennedy

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Congratulations to the 2026 Boston Irish honorees

Brig. Gen. Jack Hammond

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‘We stand on the shoulders of others who have gone before’ and left us a rich legacy of trust, says Rev. Tom Kennedy

By Ed Forry

Thomas Blaine Kennedy, a well-traveled Episcopalian priest and pastor with roots planted deep in the Irish Republic’s Co. Monaghan, readily makes the concession that “my life has been dependent upon mentors and people who have been kind and done wonderful things for me.”

He cites “those that have taken a chance, not knowing how it’s going to work out, but believe in you,” and “that develops a trust in the whole process that allows you to go on and do things you never thought you could do otherwise.”

This son of the small town of Aghnamullen, known familiarly to most as “Tom,” has gone on and done lots of things he could scarcely have thought he could do alone. And who best to tell his story than the reverend himself. What follows is his oral review of a fully lived life.



Red Sox team president Sam Kennedy (right) takes in a game at Fenway with his father, Rev. Thomas Kennedy.
Courtesy Stan Grossfeld/Boston Globe

The ancestral saga

My paternal grandparents, William and Mary (McCrory) Kennedy, married in 1905, and they had seven children. Mary McCrory had been a domestic for a family in Brooklyn during the latter part of the 19th century and the early years of the 20th, and she got to know the family who had sponsored her very well. The father was a Presbyterian minister, Dr. Warren Wilson and he was very fond of Mary. After she had gone back to Ireland and married my grandfather, the Wilsons kept in touch with Mary and her family. In 1921, when Dr. Wilson was on a trip to Ireland and looked up the Kennedys, he saw the tensions that were there in County Monaghan, with the Protestants and the Catholics.

The free state had been established in 1920, but the tension between the Protestants and Catholics was such that there was always fighting breaking out. My grandfather, my father’s father, was proud to be an Orangeman, and he was spirited off to go fight in some of the battles that were taking place. And Dr. Wilson said to the Kennedys, “This is not a great place to raise your family.” So, he sponsored them to come to America.

My grandfather had a little farm in Monaghan and he sold the chickens and the pigs and all the equipment and took the clothes on their backs, went to Belfast, took a boat over to Liverpool, and came to America on the boat Columbia in the fall of 1922. They had their seven children with them at that point and went through Ellis Island. I understand the boat anchored there in the NY Harbor and they ferried people over to Ellis Island.

They were processed in New York Harbor, going through Ellis Island. And, they all – the parents and the kids– had to take tests, literacy tests as well as their health, tests, etc. One of my dad’s sisters was ill and they were held there for three days, ‘til her health improved. Otherwise, if a person didn’t improve, they were put back on the ship and the captain of the ship was responsible for them.

Fortunately, they all were approved. They got on the train and took the Hudson River Valley train to a town near Carmel NY, where my grandfather for a short time was a tenant farmer.

From Ellis Island to Connecticut

The Wilson family had a summer place in a little town called Sherman, Connecticut, on the New York State border. And as I understand it, Dr. Wilson told my grandfather, “I’ll help you purchase a little farm there that you could bring your family to and work the farm.” So, my father, at age 13, along with his older sister and younger brother and sisters, then moved to Sherman. When it was time for my dad to go to high school, he was interested in learning a trade. So he went to Danbury, a town about 20 miles south of Sherman and attended Henry Abbott Tech and learned the trade of carpentry.

In Sherman, they loved my father, and they called him Bob. His word was his bond. People were always thinking, “What can I do? Or what do I need to have done at the house that I can call Bob to come and fix it?” He could fix anything. And, so, there was that trust. The importance of community was essential. It’s rare that you did anything on your own. There are other people that have opened the doors for you and you have to walk through it. But I think in my own life, I think of the shoulders of those that I have stood on that have got me where I am.

The Kennedy-Williamson connection

My mother was born Roberta Marion Williamson, into a family with a long

(Continued on next page)



Sam Kennedy (age 9) at the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, in 1982. Sam is wearing a Dexter School hockey camp T shirt.

Photo courtesy of Kennedy Family/Boston Globe.

For Red Sox CEO Sam Kennedy, ‘positivity’ is name of the game

By Cassidy McNeeley

It’s close to midnight on Sat., Oct. 25, 1986, and 13-year-old Sam Kennedy is inching toward the edge of the yellow couch in his home at 46 Glen Road in Brookline watching as the Boston Red Sox are inching toward a win against the home-team New York Mets that would give them their first World Series championship in 68 years.

Boston is up, 3-2, against New York in the best-of-seven series, and up, 5-4, in the bottom of the tenth inning of Game Six, one out away from taking the title back home as Mookie Wilson steps into the batter’s box at Shea Stadium to face the first of ten pitches from Boston relief pitcher Bob Stanley.

For Red Sox fans, it surely feels like the longest at-bat ever as the night turns into early morning. And in just a few hours, Sam will be sitting at Trinity Church in Copley Square listening to a sermon given by his father. But the baseball gods are not on their side.

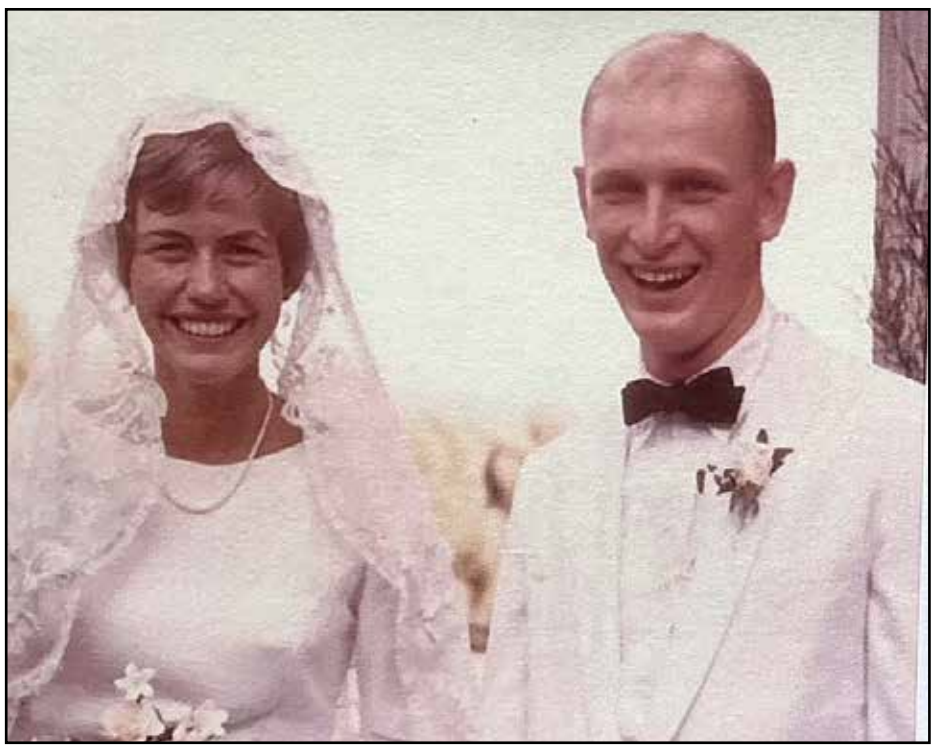
Stanley’s seventh pitch makes for a negative twist. The ball barely misses Wilson and sneaks past catcher Rich Gedman to the backstop as New York’s Kevin Mitchell scores from third to tie the game at 5-5. Then, after two more foul balls, Wilson hits a ground ball toward first base. What looks to be an easy out infamously turns into an error as the ball rolls through the legs of Red Sox first baseman Bill Buckner and the Mets’ Ray Knight races home from second base with the winning

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The march of the Kennedys through the years



Tom's mom Roberta and grandmother Hannah



Joanna and Tom on their wedding day in 1964.



Tom's parents Roberta and Robert.

'My grandfather had a little farm in Monaghan and he sold the chickens and the pigs and all the equipment and took the clothes on their backs, went to Belfast, took a boat over to Liverpool, and came to America on the boat Columbia in the fall of 1922. They had their seven children with them at that point'

(Continued from page 15)

genealogy in this country, in Earlville, NY, and raised in Waterford, CT until the Depression hit. She was one of seven kids, and her father, my other grandfather, lost both his job in New York and whatever money they had, and he and my grandmother couldn't handle all the kids, so they farmed out them to various families.

My mother wound up going to Syracuse, NY, living with her father's sister. When it came time for her to go to college, she thought Connecticut College is where she would go. But my grandfather said, "Sorry, Roberta, we have no money to go to college. You have to go and get training for a job." So she became a nurse in New York City.

Mother was a risk taker. What she really wanted to do was go into the Frontier Nursing Corps (I think Kentucky is where she hoped to go). But, she was asked by the Wilson family to come up to Sherman to special nurse Mrs. Wilson. And that's how she met my father. My aunt Hannah Kennedy, was a cook for the Wilson family. And she said to my mother, "Maybe you'd be interested in meeting a brother of mine, Robert." She was raised principally as a Baptist, and my dad had the Anglican church (Church of Ireland) in his background, but they all went to the Sherman Congregational Church and they were married there in 1937.

The path to the priesthood

Joanna Peck Warner and I, – Thomas Blaine Kennedy – were married on Aug. 29, 1964, three months after graduating from college. I from Claremont Men's College (now Claremont McKenna College). I played baseball for four years and was captain my senior year. Joanna graduated from Connecticut College. We were wed in the Wooster School Chapel in Danbury by the headmaster of the Episcopal boarding school from which I graduated from high school – and met Joanna in confirmation class! Her father was head of the math dept. but more importantly, he was the varsity baseball coach.

In 1968, I received my Master of Divinity from the Episcopal Theological School in Cambridge. I was ordained deacon in June of that year in the Cathedral Church of St. Paul and ordained a priest in May 1969 at Trinity Church in Copley Square. Joanna got her MAT in Education from Harvard in 1969.

A young-adult awakening in Boston

In 1964 I came to Cambridge to the Episcopal Theological School and was there for four years. In the spring of '65 we heard that Martin Luther King was coming to Boston to lead a protest. A group of seminarians took the bus to Carter Playground and we followed King on that march down to the Parkman Bandstand. That was the first time that I heard him speak. We stuck to our little group of seminarians, but that was my first major demonstration in my young adult life. And there was a tension that you could feel walking down Columbus Avenue, Mass. Avenue, and Boylston Street. And I think a lot of people on the sidewalks were looking at you. You could sense a tension in the air that something needed to be addressed in the city. And it certainly had to do with race and poverty at that point in time.

A year in East Harlem

In the fall of 1966, I took an intern year in New York City living in East Harlem that was meant to introduce seminarians to life in the inner city, particularly in a minority community. Joanna and I quickly found out what it was like to be a minority in a majority community. There were 600 Black and Hispanics on that block, and Joanna and I were two of four whites. We know what it is like to have eyes cast on us as we walked up and down the street and wondering, "What are you doing here?" It was a fabulous experience.

Joining the Red Sox booster set

I love baseball- I became a Red Sox fan in the spring of 1967 when I was in New York City and went to opening day with the Red Sox and the Yankees and saw

(Continued on page 17)



From left, Joanna, Jamie, Sarah, Sam, and Tom Kennedy.

'In 1968, I received my Master of Divinity from the Episcopal Theological School in Cambridge. I was ordained deacon in June of that year in the Cathedral Church of St. Paul and ordained a priest in May 1969 at Trinity Church in Copley Square. Joanna got her MAT in Education from Harvard in 1969'

Billy Rohr pitch and Carl Yastrzemski make one of his great catches running away, one-handed, tumbling over out there in left field. We finished in New York in June. We came back to Cambridge in the fall of '67 and we had the finish of the Impossible Dream year and become hooked on the Red Sox.

From Comm. Ave to the South End to Brookline

When we went to Trinity Church in '68, we lived at 78 Comm Ave. Joanna became pregnant in '69 and we had one bedroom, this tiny place, and our first child. And, so I said, "Let's look for something bigger." We found it in the South End on Warren Avenue, a duplex with two bedrooms, and stayed there until 1975. Sarah was born in September of 69. She happened to be premature. It was a very traumatic birth.

And then we moved to Brookline, where we are now some 52 years later. When we moved there, Sam was two and beginning to develop an interest in baseball. I had been hired at Trinity to do student ministry. I was there for 15 years, twice as the priest in charge, then I was the dean at St. Paul's Cathedral on Tremont Street.

When a new bishop was installed, he didn't see the need for a dean at the cathedral. So I negotiated a termination there and began to look at parishes, out in St. Louis, Cleveland, and places like that. After I came back from St. Louis, Sam was 13, and he said, "Dad, where have you been?" And I said, "Well, I've been out in St. Louis, Sam, I need a job." "Well, you know, dad," he said. "I'm not moving, so I'll see you on the weekends." I said, "No, Sam. It doesn't work that way. I work on the weekends."

Rev. Kennedy the banker

At the time BayBank [later merged with BankBoston] wanted to expand into the neighborhoods. Its CEO, Bill Crozier, who also was the treasurer at the Cathedral. asked me to consider a new job with him. I said, "I don't know anything about banking." He said, "We know about banking, you know something about the community. Let's see if we can make a marriage." So that's how it all came about. In May of '89, I started work as a senior vice president at BayBank and then at BankBoston, which later merged with Fleet Bank and they had to offload assets, including, branches and ATMs and so forth. And so I was let go.

I went through the whole out-placement business and met John Hamill one day on State Street. And he said, "What are you doing?" And I said, "I'm looking for a job." He said, "Come by Sovereign Bank." So I went to Sovereign and worked for John and Joe Campanelli doing community reinvestment.

A message for the next generation

We stand on the shoulders of others who have gone before. And my life has been dependent upon mentors and people who have been kind and done wonderful things for me, and I think that this is certainly true in my life. I would say it's true in Sam's life as well. This is certainly true when I go back to my childhood and little town I grew up in. I think of all the people there who were supportive not just of us as kids but of my parents.

The Kennedy family today

Sarah Blaine Kennedy Flott lives in Ann Arbor, MI with her husband Jonathon Paul Flott. They have three children, Thomas, 30, Sophie, 26, and Noah, 23.

Samuel Hobart Kennedy lives in Wellesley and is married to Amanda Johnson Kennedy. They have a son James (Jimmy) 23, a recent BC graduate who lives in South Boston, and a daughter, Allison, 21, who is a senior at Middlebury College. She a pre-med major and co-captain of the field hockey team.

James (Jamie) Rutledge Kennedy lives in Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida. He is married to Tamara (Tammie) Wiley Kennedy. They have a son William (Will), 21, a senior at Providence College, and two children at Ponte Vedra High School, Abigail (Abby), a senior, and Benjamin, (14), a freshman

Ed Forry is the publisher of Boston Irish's Magazine and website.



Rev. Thomas Kennedy (right) standing with son Sam at Fenway Park) said baseball is "a religion around here." *Courtesy Stan Grossfeld/Boston Globe*

For Red Sox CEO Sam Kennedy, 'positivity' is name of the game

(Continued from page 15)

run. Two days later, the Mets were World Series winners after holding off the Red Sox, 8-5, in Game Seven.

"When the ball went through Bill Buckner's legs, I was just crestfallen and devastated," Sam said in an interview with Boston Irish. "But I remembered the feeling of what it was like to make it to the World Series and just thought, 'We're going to get back there, and we're going to have a chance to win it.'"

Even then, all those years ago, the "too positive" Sam Kennedy always saw the glass half full, even if it had been empty to the Red Sox for some seven decades. "But I never in a million years thought I'd be a part of the front office when that happened," he added.

It might just be that positivity that led to his appointment as president of the Red Sox in 2015 and his promotion to CEO in 2017, but his embrace of optimism didn't begin then, or even in '86; he's had it all along, people who know him best say.

"I was probably the most fortunate person I can think of," said Sam. "That goes for my older sister Sarah and younger brother Jamie as well. Just because we grew up in a home that was so rich with support and love and care."

With an Episcopal clergyman as a father and a teacher as a mother, the Kennedy family was not rich financially, but rather in ways no bank account could ever show.

During weekly trips from Glen Road to Trinity Church, Sam came to know and love the old ballpark where the Red Sox played. "Fenway Park kind of sat in between Brookline Village, where we were, and Trinity Church, where my dad worked, and I just sort of fell in love with the park first, even before the Red Sox," he said.

Full of curiosity, he made it his mission to spend more time near the ballpark. Whether riding the Green Line D Branch or pedaling his bike down Brookline Ave, he found his way to Kenmore Square, where, a businessman from the beginning, he and his friends bought and sold baseball cards.

"We started to realize that on game days, the cops would have tickets that they would take from scalpers," Sam explained. "We figured out in like third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh grade that they would, if you asked politely, sometimes give you tickets, so you'd go in for free."

This arrangement worked well for Sam, who was a people person from the beginning. "He has such social skills," his mother, Joanna, said. "He loves people; they love him. I don't remember a day in his life that he didn't have a bunch of friends at our house. There happened to be a lot of little boys in our neighborhood, and they just gravitated to Sam."

After attending a few games, the young Sam mentioned the ticket arrangement to his parents. His father, Tom, had just one question: Why wasn't he using the clergy pass? Sam had a follow-up question: What's a clergy pass?

Dating back to the 1960s, the Boston Red Sox clergy pass program gave local religious leaders special access and ticket discounts to games at Fenway. Sam, a priest's son, quickly learned he could reap its benefits, too.

"My dad took me on the clergy pass a bunch, and he then let me use it," said Sam. "I think I stole it out of his wallet and put it in mine. I would go down to Gate D and just get to know the people at the gate. You were just given a standing-room ticket with the clergy pass. We stood in section 25, which is behind third base. Until I went off to college, I probably went to 30 to 40 home games a year."

As Sam's love for the Sox and their home field grew, his baseball skills mostly remained stagnant. He described himself and his teammate/friend Theo Epstein as "two very below average baseball players" at Brookline High. Then after graduating, he somehow, likely using the Kennedy "charm" he attributes to "Nana Kennedy," found himself on the Trinity College baseball team's roster.

"Nana Kennedy – Roberta Williamson Kennedy – was crafty, and she was the matriarch of the family on my dad's side," said Sam. "She was an amazing woman who was a nurse by trade, but she was friends with everybody, always convening people, gathering people."

Her husband (and Sam's grandfather) Robert Kennedy personalized the family's Irish roots in the Republic of Ireland's County Monaghan. But



Thomas Kennedy and his son, Sam (4 years old), at a Trinity Church picnic in June of 1977. ***Photo courtesy of Kennedy Family/Boston Globe.***

the roots are not in Irish-Catholic soil.

"It was a bit of an identity crisis because my friends who were Irish were Catholic," said Sam. "But there's a big difference between being a Catholic priest and an Episcopal priest. So, I learned at a young age to really be proud of my dad and our Irish heritage."

Irish culture is woven tightly: It's love for family and a strong work ethic, virtues that Robert passed down to Tom, Tom to Sam, and now Sam to his children, Jimmy and Ally.

"Robert was the one who came off the boat with his parents, but Roberta is the one who I think I inherited most of my genetics from," said Sam. "Me and my brother and sister did not inherit great genes athletically, but we definitely inherited Nana Kennedy's social genes. She was an incredibly social person and was sort of the mayor of their town."

Sam followed her path, somewhat, as a mayor of sorts at Brookline High and then Trinity College, where he met his wife, Amanda Johnson, who hails from the upper West Side of Manhattan and Bronx Science High School. He described the Hartford campus as "full of kids who like to work hard, but play harder," adding that during the '90s it was a "very social, party school."

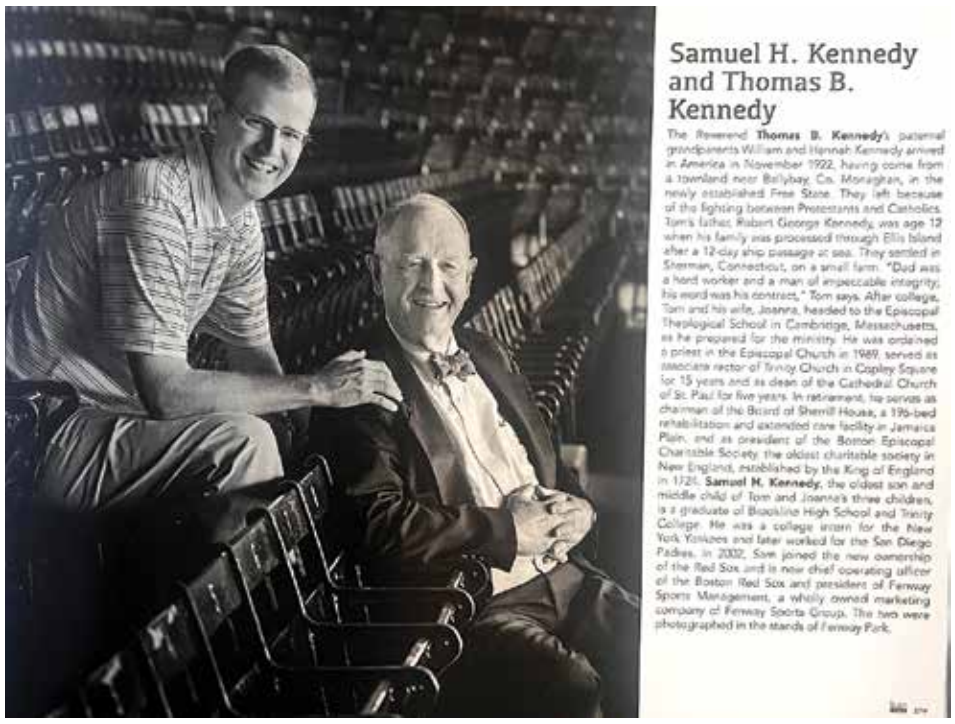
He didn't thrive on the baseball field, but he certainly climbed the social ladder, rushing Psi U under fraternity president Jay Monahan, former commissioner of the Professional Golfers Association. As a pledge, he cleaned up pounds of sand after the frat's annual Tropical Party, and he even swallowed goldfish on command. But the brotherhood he joined would serve him well.

Having earned little playing time on the diamond for the Trinity Bantams, Sam said he "basically cut" himself from the baseball team by asking his coach, Bill Decker, when he should study abroad. When Decker suggested the spring, Sam took the hint and headed off to study abroad at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland.

As his playing career ended, his involvement in Major League Baseball, thanks to Epstein, was just beginning. Though the two friends didn't go to the same college, Epstein was just 45 minutes away at Yale and they crossed paths often, with one meet-up especially meaningful. One weekend at Toad's Place, a college bar in New Haven, Theo told his friend that he had a summer internship with the Baltimore Orioles. Sam, who planned to spend the break working at Dexter Day Camp in Brookline, wanted in.

Rev. Kennedy recalls that time in detail. "Between his freshman and sophomore year, Sam comes to me, and he says, 'Oh, Dad, I got to get an intern job in baseball.' I said, 'Sam, that's worthy, but you know what? It doesn't pay any money. They're all volunteer jobs, and you have a perfectly good job at Dexter Day Camp, and you ought to stay right there.' And he looks at me, and he says, 'You know, Dad, that's negative thinking.'"

Father persuaded son against drastic action without first chatting with their next-door neighbor, the Baseball Hall of Fame sportswriter and journalist Peter Gammons. His advice to Sam: "Write to every major league team." So, he did.



Sam and Tom Kennedy, courtesy Boston Irish Photography by Bill Brett.

"Then the happening came," recalled Rev. Tom. "The New York Yankees called and said, 'Come down for an interview,' so he went down there. He called me, and I thought he was going to come through the phone."

Sam was offered a job and at the end of his sophomore year, he moved to NYC. "That internship in the summer in 1993 – that started everything," said Sam, who would return to Yankee Stadium the following two summers.

After graduating in Trinity's Class of '95 with a bachelor's degree in American Studies, he hoped the Yankee organization would hire him full-time. Unfortunately, the '94-'95 major league baseball strike made that unlikely. "They weren't hiring because of the shortened season," explained Tom. "But they said, 'Show up for the summer, we'll help find you a job,' which they did. ABC radio broadcasts the Yankee games, and they found him a job as a salesman at ABC radio selling airtime."

So how did a baseball-obsessed college kid turned radio ad salesman become president and CEO of the Boston Red Sox? We're getting there, but first, there was a pit stop in San Diego.

While Sam was working with or near the Yankees, Epstein was advancing within the Orioles organization, and, in 1993, when his boss, Larry Lucchino, left Baltimore to become president and CEO of the Padres, he took Epstein with him. Later, when the Padres came to New York to play the Mets, Epstein persuaded Sam to apply for an in-house marketing position with the San Diego team.

"He landed a job going out to San Diego, selling. And should we say the rest is history?" asked Rev. Tom with a laugh.

Sam spent six years with the Padres, starting as an account executive in '96 and working his way up to executive director of corporate accounts and broadcasting. But by the early 2000s, Boston was calling, in the person of Larry Lucchino, who had left the Padres amid word that he was partnering with Tom Werner and John Henry in plans to buy the Red Sox. Lucchino invited Theo and Sam to his house, told them he was going to the Red Sox, and asked them to join him.

But a deal proved to be no easy thing to pull off. "We had a little bit of a contract dispute. The owner and CEO of the Padres at that time were angry with Larry, so Theo and I were kind of shrapnel in that dispute," said Sam. "The Padres did not let us out of the contract for a while, so Larry started a campaign called 'Free the Brookline Two.'"

For weeks, Lucchino appealed to the Padres but made little progress. Sam thinks a party scene may have changed it all. "I remember being at a Halloween party at the owner's daughter's house, and Theo made a passionate plea to her: 'Come on, my mom and dad are home in Brookline crying, thinking about the idea that we might be able to get back home to Boston.' I think it was actually very helpful."

On March 25, 2002, Theo and Sam began their careers with the Red Sox, and the good times began to roll for both of them. Theo, who had gone to law school while working in San Diego, quickly took over as the team's general manager under president and CEO Lucchino and Sam was named vice president of Corporate Partnerships by the team's new owners, John Henry and Tom Werner.

That the Red Sox had a winning management team in place was made clear two years later, when the Red Sox won their first World Series in 86 years in remarkable fashion. Down three games to none to the Yankees in the American League playoffs, they won the next four games to take the pennant and then swept the St. Louis Cardinals in the World Series four games to none.

Theo stayed as general manager until 2012, when he took the same position with the Chicago Cubs and in 2016 led them to their first World Series championship in 108 years. He left Chicago in 2020 and later joined John Henry's and Tom Werner's Fenway Sports Group, where Sam is CEO, as a senior advisor.

For his part, Sam stayed rooted at Fenway Park, rising to co-founder and president of Fenway Sports Management, to chief operating officer and, finally, to president and CEO of the Red Sox.

Of his time in San Diego, Sam said, "I sort of saw the Boston opportunity as a chance to reset, get home. I thought maybe we'd have the opportunity to be back in Boston for five, ten years max and then the career would probably take us elsewhere."

His mother knew otherwise. "Given his personality, his positivity, his sense of humor, I think we were amazed when we found out he'd been named president and CEO, but it wasn't a shock that he had gotten that far. Because I think all the characteristics of success were there."

She added, "I've had several close friends of mine who knew Sam as a kid saying to me now, 'How did he get so far?' They assume he has a graduate degree in sports business, which he does not. His business is connecting people. He's such a social guy, and he has so many social skills. That's what makes him stand out."

Says Sam: "The true gift of all of it has been the rare ability to progress within the organization, grow up in the organization. I'm thinking back to 2002, 2003, and 2004, and then when we won the World Series. It reinforced this notion that a positive mindset can literally change the trajectory of a franchise, change the trajectory of a ballpark."

Still, that 2004 World Series sits apart all by itself.

On Father's Day in 2005, Sam, then a father himself, presented Rev. Tom with his World Series ring at Fenway Park. Theo did the same with his father, and David Ortiz hit a walk-off home run. What seemed like a perfect day got even better when John Henry replaced Sam's and Theo's rings after hearing what they had done.

But beyond the game days, good and bad, wins and losses, Sam's favorite times don't all happen at Fenway Park. They pop up at fields around New England where he cheers on his daughter Ally and the Middlebury field hockey team and on the golf course with his son Jimmy, who graduated from Boston College last spring. Behind the titles, the team, and the rings, Sam remains a people person, a family man who finds the positive in everything.

"I am aware enough to know that that does come across sometimes as either disingenuous or being too positive or not being truthful about where things stand," he concedes. "I recognize that, and I acknowledge that, but I don't really care because it's worked very, very well for the Red Sox. It's not about me; it's about the broader organization, and the mindset of our front office is ferociously positive, entrepreneurial, and we all are pulling in the same direction.

"We all sort of feel like we're on a mission at the Red Sox and within Fenway Sports Group, and that's something that I hope we never lose."

Cassidy McNeeley is a staff writer at The Dorchester Reporter and a contributor to Boston Irish's Magazine and website.

Senator and Mrs. Paul Kirk

Salute Our

2026 Boston Irish Hall of Honors

Brig. General Jack Hammond
Martina Curtin
Rev. Thomas B. Kennedy
Sam Kennedy

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 2026
INDUCTEES INTO THE

Boston Irish Hall of Honors

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Brig. Gen. Jack Hammond
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The 2025 luncheon was hosted at Artists for Humanity in South Boston

By Cassidy McNeeley
Boston Irish Staff

More than 300 guests filled the the Artist for Humanity's Epicenter in South Boston last Friday (Oct. 24) for the 15th annual Boston Irish Honors luncheon as three outstanding leaders of Irish descent — former US Ambassador to Ireland Claire Cronin, UMass President Marty Meehan, and Dr. James O'Connell of Boston's Health Care for the Homeless — were inducted into the Boston Irish Hall of Honors.

Since 2010, the Boston Irish Honors luncheon has celebrated the leadership and accomplishments of individuals and families who exemplify the very best of Ireland's values, legacies, and traditions. The event benefits the Edward W. Forry and Mary Casey Forry Foundation for Community Journalism, a non-profit affiliated with The Dorchester Reporter and BostonIrish.com.

At the event, emceed by former state Sen. Linda Dorcena Forry and Boston Irish Associate Publisher Maureen Forry-Sorrell, the honorees, whose life stories were told in extended profiles in the luncheon program and by the admirers who introduced them, accepted their awards with grace and generosity as guests enjoyed a meal of Guinness Braised Short Rib of Beef.

"This has made me rethink so many of my Irish roots and what people went through to get to places where I can do what I am doing," said O'Connell, whose own grandparents came to the US during the famine and landed in Newport, Rhode Island.

There, O'Connell's maternal grandfather, John Hayes, worked his way up to become the head pro at the Newport Country Club.

"He retired after 50 years as the golf pro and told me one day that he was never once allowed in the clubhouse, and that hit me," said O'Connell. "I never caught that. I just started thinking about all the struggles that so many of our ancestors have done so we can do what we are doing."

O'Connell gave special shout-outs to the late Dr. Tom Durant and to one of the luminaries in attendance — former Boston Mayor Ray Flynn, who also served as a US Ambassador to the Holy See. It was Durant and Flynn who asked O'Connell to manage a then-small program to serve men and women on the streets of Boston in the 1980s.



2025 Honorees: University of Massachusetts President Marty Meehan, former US Ambassador to Ireland Hon. Claire Cronin, and Boston Heathcare for the Homeless longtime CEO Dr. James O'Connell. *Photo by Flavio DeBarros*

Gov. Maura Healey, herself the recipient of an Irish Honors in 2023, introduced Claire Cronin, a onetime prominent Massachusetts state lawmaker who served as the US Ambassador to Ireland under President Biden. The governor saluted Cronin's career in state government and called her a mentor.

"How proud were we that Claire Cronin was named ambassador to Ireland on behalf of the United States?" said Healey to loud applause. "That was just such a cool announcement because it was the identification and appointment of somebody who truly recognizes good and who's about doing good. [It] didn't matter how much money she raised or contributed. That wasn't what it was about for Claire."

The governor added: "There is a recognition from President Biden of the good of Claire Cornin and how special she is as a person. People were a little surprised, maybe not the DNC donors lining up for those ambassadorships, but wasn't it awesome, it was none of those guys, it was Claire Cronin from Brockton, Massachusetts, going to Dublin."

Cronin said her upbringing in Brockton was heavily influenced by her family's Irish-American identity. She asked the audience, "What does it mean to be Irish?"

She answered herself, saying, "To be Irish means that family is everything. To be Irish means that you value education, hard work, and service to others. To be Irish means that you value freedom and you will fight for justice. To be Irish means that you are compassionate and empathetic and that you feel the pain of others in the same way you feel your own pain. To be Irish means that you are resilient and that you will always fight for and root for the underdog. And of course, to be Irish means that you appreciate literature, that you love sports, that you love music, and a good laugh, you love the craic."

Those themes were echoed by the day's final honoree, UMass President Marty Meehan, a former US Congressman and Lowell native who has served a lifetime of public service. He was introduced by Cork City native Ruairi O'Mahony, who serves as UMass Lowell's associate vice chancellor for Sustainability and Enterprise Development.

In his remarks, Meehan said: "Lowell was an immigrant city, and Irish folks came there, a lot of folks came from Greece, a lot of folks from Canada, a lot of folks from Poland and Portugal. We were a community that understood the importance of immigration.

"Our grandparents and my parents never let me forget where I came from, and I appreciate that," he added.

The Boston Irish Honors event was initially scheduled to be held at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum in Dorchester, but was relocated due to the federal government shutdown, which has resulted in the temporary closure of the library.

Proceeds from the event will support the mission of the Forry Foundation, which includes training and scholarship funds for young journalists from Boston's neighborhoods. For more information on the foundation, please visit forryfoundation.org.

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Making the Rounds at the 15th annual Boston Irish Honors luncheon

1– Jim Brett, Linda Dorcena Forry, Dr. James O'Connell, Hon. Claire Cronin, Ray Flynn, UMass Pres. Marty Meehan, Mrs. Ray (Cathy) Flynn; 2 – Andrew Medema, Kerry Cronin Medema, Claire Cronin, Gov. Healey, Ray Cronin, Kara Cronin; 3 – Mary Forry Tanner, Matt Tanner, Brenda Forry CSJ, Maggie Wallace CSJ; 4 – Jim Hunt Jr., Joe Kennedy, Dr. Jim O'Connell, Gabrielle O'Connell, Julie Bogdanski; 5 – Bill Forry, Dr. O'Connell, Claire Cronin, Marty Meehan, Linda Dorcena Forry; 6 – Ray Flynn, Ed Forry, Maureen Forry Sorrell, Cathy Flynn; 7 – Dr. O'Connell; 8 – Linda Dorcena Forry, Marty Meehan, Maureen Forry-Sorrell; 9 – Co-chairs John O'Hara and Regina Quinlan Doherty, Linda Dorcena Forry; 10 – Artwork saluting the honorees; 11 – Guests at Artists for Humanity, South Boston

All Photos by Flavio DeBarros


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BOSTON IRISH

Hall of Honors

Celebrating the families and people who shape Boston Irish life

This unique event celebrates the heritage of Boston's Irish people and their families by honoring remarkable families and persons who share our Boston Irish heritage. Whether immigrants themselves or the descendants of Irish immigrants, Boston Irish honorees are admirable for their exemplary endeavors in public service, medicine, education, business and community leadership.

2026 Inductees

Martina Curtin

Brig. Gen. Jack Hammond

Rev. Tom Kennedy

Sam Kennedy

PAST INDUCTEES

2025

Dr. James O'Connell, M.D.
Hon. Claire Cronin
Hon. Marty Meehan

2024

Bill Cleary, Jr.
Hon. William M. Bulger
Regina Quinlan Doherty

2023

Vincent Crotty & Kieran Jordan
Hon. Maura Healey
The Rooney Family

2022

Jon Cronin
Mary Swanton
Jeremiah "Jerry" York

2021

Mary Sugrue
Joseph R. Nolan Jr.
Ed Forry

2019

Jim Carmody
Kathleen & John Drew
Grace Cotter Regan

2018

Rev. Richard "Doc" Conway
Mary & Bob Scannell
Dr. Trevor McGill, M.D.

2017

Nora, Annmarie & Bill Kennedy
Tom Tinlin
Kevin Cullen

2016

Jim & Mary (Cahill) Judge
Hon. Paul G. Kirk Jr.
Kevin & Joe Leary & Family

2015

Margaret Stapleton
Mike Sheehan
BPD Commissioner William Evans & Family

2014

Katherine Craven
Mayor Marty Walsh
The Burke Family of South Boston

2013

Hon. Therese Murray
Gerry & Bob Mulligan Family
John P. Driscoll Jr. (posthumous)

2012

Hon. Richard Neal
Brendan & Greg Feeney
Mary & Bob Muse & Family

2011

Kathleen O'Toole
Hon. Tom Kennedy
Families of
Joseph Corcoran
James Hunt, Jr.
Mark & Tom Mulvoy

2010

Hon. Ed Markey
John Donohue
Families of
Peg Geraghty
Jim, Harry & Bill Brett
Mayor John B. Hynes