

2006 Dignitaries

2006 Mr. Pat: Patrick O'Neill, Jr.



Pat O'Neill practices law with the O'Neill and Murphy Law Firm in St. Paul. He can trace his St. Paul Irish ancestry back to his great, great, great, great grandfather Thomas O'Neill, who landed in St. Paul in 1857. His father Patrick H. O'Neill Sr. and uncle Joe O'Neill and cousin Chip Michel precede him in the Mr. Pat post. His sister, Peggy was Miss Shamrock in 1992 and he was president of the St. Patrick's Parade Association starting in 1995 for a few years. "I am very proud to carry on the tradition of representing the Irish in St. Paul," said O'Neill.

2006 Miss Shamrock: Katie Champion



Katie Champion is a Saint Paul girl who is proud to be Irish. She graduated from the University of Wisconsin-River Falls with a degree in Marketing/Communications and Business Administration. Katie was excited to become involved with the Saint Patrick's Association and make some amazing new friendships.

2006 Distinguished Irish Woman: Karol Baumeister



Karol H. Baumeister is a local travel agent owner who has been traveling to Ireland for the past 30 years. Karol married Arthur H. Baumeister Jr. in 1965, and went on to have four kids.

In 1980, Karol was introduced to the Children's Program of Northern Ireland. This is a non-profit program that is run by citizens in Northern Ireland and Minnesota, and the idea was to bring kids from Protestant and Catholic families over to Minnesota for six weeks every summer. The goal was to give the kids an idea that religion doesn't have to matter, that we are all the same. Karol began booking the travel and she found her passion. The program is still going strong today, she has worn many hats. Her love of Ireland has also provided the opportunity to take high school kids from Cretin Derham Hall to Northern Ireland and place them with host families.

2006 Grand Marshal: Mayor Chris Coleman



Chris is a lifelong Saint Paul resident, born in 1961 as one of six kids in a classic Saint Paul, Irish American Democratic family. Growing up, Chris attended St. Luke's, graduated from Cretin in 1979, attended undergrad at the University of Minnesota and graduated from the U of M law school in 1987. Chris and his wife Connie live on the West Side with their two kids. His passions are his kids, Connie and public service.

Chris spent eight years working in Hennepin County as a public defender and prosecutor. Chris represented Ward 2 from 1997 to 2003. Currently, he is an investment management consultant working with non-profit organizations and is also president of United Family Practice Clinic.

Chris has served on the boards of the Red Cross, Community Stabilization Project and Riverfront Corporation, as well as the NARAL Board.

2006 Celebrity Grand Marshal: Mike Veek and the St. Paul Saints



The last name has been synonymous with fun at the ballpark for nearly a century. Mike Veeck continues to blaze new trails every season. He has many roles, including serving as co-owner and president of the Saints. The Veeck family started in baseball when Mike's grandfather, continued with Mike's father. Mike began his baseball career working for his father with the White Sox in the 1970s. He left the game in 1980 but returned a decade later to run the Miami (now Fort Myers) Miracle. In 1992, he was named winner of the MacPhail Award, given annually for excellence in promotions with minor league teams. He co-authored his first book, "Fun is Good," a business book with baseball connotations in April, 2005. When he is not giving speeches all over the country, Mike, who has worked for four major league teams in the past, concentrates his time on his minor league teams.

Mike and his wife, Libby, reside in Mount Pleasant, S.C. Veeck is the father of two children, Night Train and Rebecca.

2006 Honorary Irish Person: Will Steger



2004 Arctic Transect Expedition Leader, Team Member: Educator, polar explorer, photographer, writer and lecture, Steger has become a voice calling for understanding and the preservation of the Arctic. Steger has led the most significant feats in dogsled exploration.