

2012 Dignitaries

2012 Mr. Pat: Joe Bennett



Joe is the President and Co-Owner of Bennett's Chop and Railhouse. He attended the University of Minnesota in Duluth and majored in Business and Marketing. In 1981, he began his hospitality career with Grandma's Restaurant in Duluth. While in Duluth, Joe was involved with their Chamber of commerce. Joe also served in the Minnesota Army National guard for ten years.

Joe moved to St. Paul in 2001 to accept a position as Director of Restaurants for Morrissey Hospitality overseeing The St.Paul Grill, Pazzaluna and Tria in North Oaks. In June of 2006 Joe and his wife Meghan agreed to purchase Mitch's Supper Club. In November of 2006 they changed the name to Bennett's Chop and Railhouse and have been a part of the West 7th business community ever since. "We are very proud of our restaurant and continue to strive to be the best neighborhood restaurant in Saint Paul."

2012 Miss Shamrock: Alissa Kurke



Alissa has a deep love for all things that celebrate the Irish culture. From her grandfather who was once suspended from De La Salle high school for dyeing his hair green on St. Patrick's Day, to her parents who would enthusiastically drink green beer any day of the week if we would let them, she was born to celebrate this holiday. Alissa is outgoing and never hesitates to strike up a conversation with anyone. Alissa looks forward to representing the St. Patrick's Association as the 2012 Miss Shamrock!

2012 Distinguished Irish Woman: Monica Nilsson



Monica is Born in 1967 to a family who had their priorities in order, she has never gone to school or work in her life on the Holy Day! Rather, she has marched with pride under the banner Gallagher up 4th St. Her roots are Ballyhaunis in County Mayo, an area she has visited with family to meet distant relatives. In 1992, she was a Miss Shamrock Princess. Her friends would tell you that she celebrates being Irish year around. She teaches small children the difference between a shamrock and a four-leaf clover, took up Irish fiddle in her 30's and tells stories with a nod to having been born with the right gene.

Monica grew up in St Paul, attended Highland Catholic and Derham Hall, and now lives as a single lass in Minneapolis. She has spent her career working to end people's homelessness. Among her heroes are the Sisters of St Joseph, especially the Irish ones. She tries to sit near them at church so their spirit settles on her.

2012 Grand Marshal: Kieran Folliard



Born in 1955 in Ballyhaunis, County Mayo in the West of Ireland, Folliard started out in the hospitality industry carrying the bags for the passengers in his father's Hackney (taxi cab) business. After 17 years spent in corporate marketing in Ireland, Saudi Arabia and the U.S, he realized that he loved being in pubs. So, like any good self-respecting Irish guy, he decided to open one. Eighteen years later, the pub business had grown to include The Local, The Liffey, Cooper, and Kieran's Irish Pub. In March of 2011, 2 Gingers Irish Whiskey was launched.

2012 Celebrity Grand Marshal: Jim Rich Channel 9 Sports



2012 Honorary Irish Person: Mark Stutrud



Mark Stutrud is the President and Founder of the Summit Brewing Company, which he founded in 1984. Mark served on the Board of Directors of the Minnesota Restaurant Association from 1998 through 2010. He was elected to the Board of Directors of the Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce in 2005 and the Board of Directors of The Minnesota Music Coalition in 2010.

In February 2000, he received the Business Innovator of the Year award by the Center for Innovation at the UND. In addition, he was a 2000 finalist in the Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year. Summit Brewing Company received the Deubener Award and the H.E.R.B.I.E. award from the Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce.