



Keeping it in the family: Dublin Irish Festival a 'winning tradition' for Kieffer volunteers

by Amanda Etchison

One former Dublin Irish Festival scholarship recipient is not letting anything—not even the Atlantic Ocean—stop her from returning to volunteer at this year's event.

Despite living and working more than 4,000 miles away from her hometown of Dublin, Ohio, Emily Kieffer said she plans to help roll out the green carpet for Festival guests this year.

"(For) the past two years, I have been unable to attend the Irish Festival and hearing about it secondhand from my family made me regret that I couldn't be there," Kieffer said. "So when I had the opportunity to schedule my trip home when I wanted, there was no question that I would choose August."

A 2008 graduate of Dublin Coffman High school, Kieffer was awarded one of two Dublin Irish Festival scholarships in recognition of her many years of service as a Festival volunteer.

The Dublin Irish Festival scholarship is an annual award given to two graduating high school seniors who show exceptional community service as Dublin Irish Festival volunteers.

Kieffer said she appreciates the years she has spent as an Irish Festival volunteer and credits that experience as a main influence on her views of community service and volunteer work.

"Volunteering at the Irish Festival has benefitted me in multiple ways," she said. "I have been able to see all the hard work each person puts into their job, whether it is one that is a year-round affair or one shift during the busy weekend in August. The enthusiasm and effort has encouraged me and puts volunteering in a positive light because you know you are helping to create something bigger than yourself."

Coined "The Largest Three Day Irish Festival on the Planet," the Dublin Irish Festival has been a Central Ohio tradition for 27 years. Featuring Irish music, dance and a variety of cultural presentations, the Festival celebrated record attendance last year and expects to welcome more than 100,000 guests this year.

A Dublin native, Kieffer said she has many fond memories of attending the Irish Festival with her family each year.

"(The Festival) seemed to take place in my backyard," she said. "We usually had guests from out of town stay at our house for the weekend and it was exciting to see them and show them around."

After graduating from high school, Kieffer studied Spanish and Secondary Education at Saint Mary's College in Indiana. She now lives in Logroño, Spain, where she teaches English in a primary school and in an adult continuing education school.

Kieffer said she is grateful for the opportunity to live and work abroad and enjoys sharing her love of all things Dublin with her friends and students.

"I have to think about how to explain my city to someone who has never seen it, or (has) never been in the United States," she said. "It seems (like) a daunting task at first because there is so much to talk about, but (it) always proves exciting for me to explain a different culture, city and experience that is so special to me."

In addition to returning to Dublin as a Festival volunteer, Kieffer said she is excited to have the opportunity to celebrate her brother's graduation with her family.

Kieffer's brother, Sam, is a 2014 Dublin Coffman High School graduate and, like his sister, a recipient of the Dublin Irish Festival Scholarship.

"I am thrilled that Sam is the scholarship recipient this year," Kieffer said. "I know he has always looked forward to volunteering and has made a big impression on everyone he meets. He has (had) many accomplishments and has pursued his interests, which I am really proud of."

Kieffer said it is the dedication of Festival volunteers that makes working at the Festival an enjoyable experience.

In 2013, more than 1,200 volunteers accumulated 10,183 volunteer hours throughout the Festival weekend.



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"Working together to make something happen is a neat experience," Kieffer said. "Throughout my many years (of) volunteering at the Festival, I have felt (a) part of a welcoming community, which I always looked forward to returning to each year."

The 27th annual Dublin Irish Festival is slated for Aug. 1 – 3 at Coffman Park. For more information regarding volunteer needs, to view event schedules and to pre-order tickets at a discounted rate, visit <http://dublinirishfestival.org>.

About the Author: Amanda Etchison is a sophomore studying journalism and Chinese at The Ohio State University. She has contributed several articles as staff reporter to The Lantern, the daily student news publication of Ohio State's Columbus campus, and currently works as an Event Assistant for Sponsor and VIP Relations within the City of Dublin Events Administration.