

Hibernians launch their own Irish Heritage Month

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 By Irish Echo Staff



The sun wasn't even risen on March 1 when the email went out.

But of course social media never sleeps.

And so, in recognition of March as Irish American Heritage Month, the Ancient Order of Hibernian roared in like the lion that the arrival of March is so strongly associated with.

The Hibernians have launched a social media campaign to celebrate the contributions that Irish men and women have made to the United States.

The campaign will consist of a video to be launched March 1st (link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bCl0gNyN6PA>) and profiles of famous Irish American men and women to be published on the AOH website (www.aoh.com) and social media channels on Mondays, Wednesday and Fridays throughout the month.

Said AOH National Irish American Heritage Month Chair Tom Cosgrove, Prep '62: "Since 1991, American presidents of both parties have proclaimed March as Irish American Heritage Month to recognize the contributions that Irish Americans have made, and continue to make, to our country in every field of endeavor. Irish American Heritage Month has also been recognized in law and in several resolutions by Congress."

Despite this, said Cosgrove, and his brother-in-law Michael O'Agresta, "Irish American Heritage Month does not enjoy the same public recognition that other Heritage Months rightly enjoy."

And he continued in the e-mailed statement: "Simultaneously, it is sadly still all too acceptable to promote the defaming stereotypes of the anti-Immigrant 'Know Nothings' and Thomas Nast around the celebration of St. Patrick's day; a day that should honor a figure venerated by many and acknowledged by all as a man of charity, tolerance and an early voice speaking out against the evils of slavery.

“Irish American Heritage Month commemorates the story of Irish immigrants, their hardships, the prejudice they encountered, their perseverance, patriotism and accomplishments; a story which seems particularly relevant to our current national discussions.

“That many of our educational institutions have dismissed or denigrated the story of the Irish in America and ignore Irish American Heritage Month is an unconscionable lost opportunity and an educational failure.

“The Irish can make a strong case for inventing the American dream that was followed as a template for succeeding groups of various heritages and ethnicities. It is in this respect that ‘everyone is Irish on St. Patrick’s Day’ and not the cheap tawdry messages promoted on t-shirts.”

Cosgrove said that one of the great hallmarks of Irish culture was the duty of remembrance.

“Remembrance for the Irish is personal, our stories, history and music have traditionally been passed from generation to generation, from grandparents and parents to the next generation of children.

“It is in fulfillment of this duty and our oath as Hibernians the AOH recognizes Irish American Heritage Month with today’s launch of a video celebrating just a few of the Irish men and women who have contributed to the great American story and with profiles throughout the month of March.

“As a 182 year old organization, the use of social media represents a new departure for the Hibernians and it is our hope that it raises awareness of Irish American Heritage Month and help it to achieve the broader recognition it deserves.”

The Hibernians list 40,000 members in 38 states across the nation (with 39,000 in Jersey City alone).