

WINDOW ON THE EMERALD ISLE

Tap into Celtic heritage at the 11th annual Eugene Irish Cultural Festival

More than 50 percent of Lane County residents have some Celtic heritage. At least that's what Eugene Irish Cultural Festival organizer Peggy Hinsman has found in her research. So put down that James Joyce novel and head out to the 11th Annual Eugene Irish Cultural Festival Saturday, March 8, at Sheldon High School, with an opening concert Friday, March 7, at Beall Concert Hall featuring traditional Irish music.

Hinsman, who has been in charge of the event since its third year, says the theme of this year's festival is a "Window on the Emerald Isle." An Irish fiddle player for

more than 15 years, she is excited for this year's musical guests like Friday headliner Mick Moloney — the famed Irish musician and folklorist hailing from Limerick — who hasn't performed in Eugene since the '90s, as well as Irish harpist Michelle Mulcahy, Irish fiddler Dana Lyn and Celtic "folkadelic" Corvallis band The Nettles.

The festival gives residents a chance to come find out about Irish culture or to strengthen their connection. Besides the music lineup, Hinsman points to the craft workshops offered this year, particularly the "All About Irish Bogs" geography workshop she teaches, and the Irish

language and song workshop taught by Brian O'Hart.

O'Hart travels back and forth to the Emerald Isle to collect music and conduct fieldwork; he also lived there for five years. He offers Irish Gaelic language immersion weekends in Portland and teaches the Irish-speaking children of people who come to the States to work. The workshop he offers at the festival is geared for anyone and is a good opportunity to collect traditional songs and ballads in the Irish language.

In addition to workshops, there will be traditional Irish food and crafts vendors, a ceili — a folk dance set to live music — and performances by the Eugene Highlanders bagpipe band. There are also family activities and a hurling tournament at the Sheldon turf field for sports fans. ■

Hinsman says there are still volunteer opportunities available and to sign up by March 7. To sign up and for more event information, visit eugeneirishfest.org

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