

PRESS RELEASE

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**TWO LOCAL TEENS EACH EARN THE PRESTIGIOUS TITLE OF
2016 NORTH AMERICAN IRISH DANCE CHAMPION**

International Recognition for Young Maryland Dancers

The North American Irish Dance Championships (NAIDC), held in Orlando, FL, July 1-5, 2016, showcased over 2000 competitors from the United States, Canada and Mexico, each vying for top recognition as "national champion" in their age group of solo dancing championships. This highly competitive event was also open to competitors from abroad, and included dancers from the countries of Ireland, England, Scotland and Australia, to name a few. Two students from the **Teelin School of Irish Dance** in Columbia, Maryland, successfully earned the title of North American Champion by winning first place last month in their respective age groups: **Saoirse DeBoy** of Mt. Airy, age 17, a rising 12th grader at Mount De Sales Academy in Catonsville; and **Gaby Stratmann** of Ellicott City, age 16, a rising 11th grader at River Hill High School in Clarksville.

"We are over the moon to have two of our students from Teelin School earn this prestigious title this year!" boasts Maureen Berry, Owner/Director of the Teelin School of Irish Dance.

The Irish Dance Teachers of North America (IDTANA) is an international organization operating in conjunction with *An Coimisiún le Rincí Gaelacha* (Irish for "The Irish Dancing Commission" based in Dublin, Ireland), with the mission to promote Irish dance throughout North America. The popularity of Irish dancing has skyrocketed since the inaugural performance of Riverdance in 1995, and the success of subsequent shows such as Michael Flatley's Lord of the Dance. Irish dancing schools throughout North America, and indeed throughout the world, continue to attract new students to this high-energy style of dancing.

The Teelin School of Irish Dance is comprised of approximately 250 students hailing from seven Maryland counties, and is co-owned by sisters, Maureen Berry, TCRG, and Kathleen Young, TCRG. Teaching staff also includes Whitney Hanson, TCRG, Shawn Stratmann, TMRF, and Gayle Shields, TMRF, who were each present in Florida to share in the excitement of these recent wins. Along with Saoirse's and Gaby's titles, a total of seven Teelin School students earned high enough placements in their solo championship age group to qualify for the World Championships, which will be held in Dublin, Ireland April 9-16, 2017 - Saoirse DeBoy (1st place in Girls 16-17); Gaby Stratmann (1st place in Girls 15-16); **Ellie King** of Arnold (3rd place in Girls

15-16); **Emma Donahoe** of Woodstock (6th place in Girls 10-11); **Alyssa Savard** of Bowie (11th place in Girls 14-15); **Isabella Pelura** of Millersville (13th place in Girls 11-12); and **Katie Ortel** of Glenwood (17th place in Ladies 17-18).

Additionally, although too young to compete in the World Championships yet, two of the youngest champ soloist competitors from Teelin School placed among the top 10 dancers of their age groups - **Lillian Cimbora** of Glenwood (7th place in Girls 8-9) and **Jonathan Brinker** of Crownsville (10th place in Boys 8-9).

In Berry's words, "I am very proud of each of my students - they are hard workers and passionate dancers. We teach our dancers that their own effort and attitude are really the only things that they can control, and their goal is to put their personal best onstage every time. In the end, when a dancer can take pride in their own effort, that is as much of a success as any award they could win. It also boosts a dancer's self-confidence, which usually leads to that dancer eventually earning awards for their efforts."

A school-wide celebration is being planned for October 21st to share the excitement of Saoirse and Gaby each earning the title of North American Champion.

Students at Teelin School of Irish Dance range from age 4 through adults, beginners through champions. Training focuses on a solid foundation in traditional Irish step dancing, with the opportunity to explore challenging choreography developed with innovative style. Participation in competitions is optional, and students may independently decide the extent to which they are willing to train. Performing at a championship level requires significant time commitment, with many top champions training upwards of 20 hours weekly. Separate and apart from competitions, a subset of advanced level students from the Teelin School also choose to audition for the Teelin Irish Dance Company, which is an elite team of approximately 45 dancers who stage performances, big and small, throughout central Maryland on a regular basis.

Known for performing traditional steps with innovative style, the Teelin Irish Dance Company is being featured on Saturday, February 25th, 2017, at 7:00pm at the Weinberg Center for the Arts in Frederick, in "Celtic Storm", an original dance show. Many of the top competitors from Teelin School will be performing in this show, alongside a talented cast of dancers and musicians. Ticket information is available at <http://www.weinbergcenter.org>.

More information about Teelin Irish Dance may be found online at <http://teelin.com>.

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Photos are available upon request by email sent to info@teelin.com. To schedule an interview with Director Maureen Berry, please call 443-629-7808 or send email to info@teelin.com. To schedule an interview with Saoirse DeBoy, please contact her parents, Alissa and Chris DeBoy at deboycc@comcast.net or 410-365-2916. To schedule an interview with Gaby Stratmann, please contact her parents, Shawn and David Stratmann at shawnstratmann@gmail.com or 443-324-3008.