

PRESS RELEASE

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LOCAL IRISH DANCER CROWNED 2016 WORLD CHAMPION

First Place Winner - Saoirse DeBoy, Age 16

The World Irish Dancing Championships, hosted by *An Coimisiún le Rincí Gaelacha* (Irish for "The Irish Dancing Commission" based in Dublin, Ireland), are akin to the Olympics of Irish dancing. Approximately 5000 competitors from around the globe participated in this year's championships held March 20-27, 2016, at the Royal Concert Hall in Glasgow, Scotland. Dancers, who each qualified to compete at this event by placing in the highest percentage of their regional or national championships earlier in the season, were vying for top recognition as "World Champion" in their age group. **Saoirse DeBoy** of Mt. Airy, age 16, a student of the **Teelin School of Irish Dance** in Columbia, Maryland, and an 11th grader at Mount De Sales Academy in Catonsville, earned that coveted title by winning first place in the solo championship for girls age 16-17.

"Saoirse is the first student from Teelin School to earn this title, and one of only three students from IDTANA's Southern Region to achieve this status in the 46-year history of the World Irish Dancing Championships. This is a very exciting win, not only for our school, but also for our entire region!" 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*, 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 IDTANA Southern Region includes dance schools in 14 US states spanning from Maryland to Florida to Texas, plus the District of Columbia and Mexico.

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 Shawn Stratmann, TMRF, Gayle Shields, TMRF, each present in Scotland to share in the excitement of Saoirse's recent win. Saoirse was one of twelve students from Teelin School who qualified for

the 2016 World Championships, and nine of those students were able to travel to Scotland to perform on this most prestigious competition stage. In addition to Saoirse's winning title, **Gaby Stratmann**, age 15, of Ellicott City, earned 11th place in the girls age 15-16 solo championships; and **Isabella Pelura**, age 11, of Millersville, earned 43rd place in girls age 11-12 solo championships. Six other soloists from Teelin School each performed beautifully, but were not ranked among the top 50 dancers in their respective age group.

In Berry's words, "I am very proud of each of my dancers - 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 that 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. Saoirse is a wonderful example of a dancer who works hard, stays positive, and doesn't give up."

A school celebration is being planned for later this spring to share the excitement of Saoirse earning the title of World 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.

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.