

PRESS RELEASE

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Chasing Titles at the World Irish Dancing Championships

Local Dancers Prepare to Travel to Dublin, Ireland to Compete

Eleven Irish dance students from the **Teelin School of Irish Dance**, based in Columbia, Maryland, will travel to Dublin, Ireland, this April vying for top recognition as "World Champion" in their age group. Among these dancers is **Saoirse DeBoy**, a 17-year-old 12th grader at Mount De Sales Academy, who is the **reigning U17 Girls World Champion**. Saoirse earned this coveted title by winning first place in the solo championship for girls age 16-17 at last year's World Championships.

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 will participate in this year's championships to be held April 9-16, 2017, at the Citywest Hotel in Dublin, Ireland. Dancers have qualified to compete at this event by placing in the highest percentage of their regional or national championships earlier in the season. In addition to Saoirse, the following Teelin School students will be traveling abroad to compete at this prestigious event in their respective age groups: **Emma Donahoe** of Woodstock, age 11, in 6th grade at Mt View Middle School; **Isabella Pelura** of Millersville, age 12, in 7th grade at Monsignor Slade Catholic School; **Olivia Cimbora** of Glenwood, age 12, in 7th grade at St Louis Catholic School; **Abby Miller** of Catonsville, age 15, in 9th grade at Maryvale Preparatory School; **Katie Miskelly** of Kingsville, age 15, a 10th grade home school student; **Alyssa Savard** of Bowie, age 15, in 10th grade at St Vincent Pallotti High School; **Gaby Stratmann** of Ellicott City, age 16, in 12th grade at River Hill High School; **Emily Galoppo** of Odenton, age 16, in 11th grade at Mount De Sales Academy; **Ellie King** of Arnold; age 17, in 11th grade at Severn School; and **Katie Ortel** of Glenwood, age 19, first year student at St. Mary's College of Maryland.

These eleven dancers are currently training 20-30 hours a week, and have each been placing well at local, regional and international competitions throughout the year. In fact, at the North American Irish Dancing Championships in July 2016, both **Saoirse DeBoy** and **Gaby Stratmann** each won first place in their solo championships, earning the title of North American Champion in their respective age groups.

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, TMRP and Gayle Shields, TMRP. In Berry's words, "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. I am very proud of each of my dancers - they are hard workers and passionate dancers. 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."

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. Students at Teelin School 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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To schedule an interview with Director Maureen Berry, please call 443-629-7808 or send email to info@teelin.com.