

Say Good-Bye to Green Beer and Bad Behavior and Say Hello to Sober St. Patrick's Day® Philadelphia!

By Jeff Meade

This year an event sponsored by a collaboration of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann- Delaware Valley (CCÉ-DV), the worldwide Irish music, dance, language and cultural organization, and Frank Daly of American Paddy's Productions (producer of the Philadelphia Fleadh and An American Celtic Christmas) hopes to provide an alternative celebration to the binge drinking and public intoxication often associated with St. Patrick's Day.

Sober St. Patrick's Day® Philadelphia will be presented on March 15 in the WHYY Public Media Commons from 4pm- 7pm, following the Philadelphia St. Patrick's Day Parade, and "should appeal to families with children," says Katherine Ball-Weir, chairperson of the Delaware Valley Branch of CCÉ, as well as "adults who want to celebrate, but not in an overindulgent way, including people in the recovery community. "Just because you won't find Guinness or Jameson at this particular party doesn't mean Comhaltas is against drinking, but we are against the excessive drinking rampant on St. Patrick's Day."

Sold-out Sober St. Patrick's Day® parties began in New York City four years ago, but the event is coming to Philadelphia for the first time this year. "We're bringing in incredible entertainment," says Ball-Weir. "It'll be a wonderful Irish party!"

The diverse lineup features internationally-acclaimed musicians and dancers. Hosted by WHYY personality Ed Cunningham, you can expect plenty of fabulous music for dancing from the Sober St. Patrick's Day Philadelphia All-Star Céilí Band, led by John Whelan (seven-time All Ireland Button Accordion player); with Dylan Foley (four-time All Ireland fiddle player), Dan Gurney (North American Accordion Champion), Josh Dukes (Regional Ceili Drums and Accompaniment Champion), Patrick Hutchinson (two-time All-Ireland Uilleann Piper) and Irish Blessing (Traditional Irish Music Band). Joining them will be Philadelphia's own All-Ireland Trio, the Converse Crew, and some of the best local Irish performers.

Children's Activities will highlight many aspects of Irish culture, including Irish Music, Dance, Sports, Gaelic Language, and Geography, and will feature Prizes for kids who collect stamps from the different cultural stations.

Guests will be treated to a performance by champion step dancers from the Emerald Isle Academy of Irish Dance, and our very own lovely International and Philadelphia Rose of Tralee Maria Walsh. Expect some surprise guests, as well.

For tickets to the event, which must be purchased in advance, visit www.SSPDPhilly.org. Contact the CCÉ-DV branch at cce_dv@verizon.net for more information.