Irish International Immigration Center Solas Award

December 6, 2013

Named from the Gaelic word for “Light,” IIIC’s Solas Awards are presented annually to individuals whose work is inspirational and who are committed to giving back to their communities.

Joyce Cummings’ Remarks

Even though our four children are named Daniel, Kevin, Marilyn, and Patricia, I don’t have a drop of Irish blood in me, and I barely know the words to “Danny Boy.” I do, however, enthusiastically applaud the Irish International Immigrant Center’s commitment to encouraging tolerance and social justice.

Cummings Foundation is honored to join the Center and many other vital local organizations in their fight against ALL types of prejudice, and the effects of hate.

Our strong local focus stems from a desire to give back in the areas where most of our funds were derived – specifically, the greater Boston communities where Cummings Properties operates 10 million square feet of commercial real estate.

We also want very much to benefit northeastern Massachusetts where most of our Cummings Properties colleagues and clients live.

For them, and for you, and for the thousands of immigrants who have not yet arrived, we want to do our part to help make greater Boston a place where every person feels welcome and valued.

Bill and I are so appreciative of this very special recognition, and we are very honored to be in the company of Jack Joyce, Raj Sharma, and John Hailer tonight.

Thank you all for your abundant goodwill, and for your vital support of our local immigrant communities. Everything you do every day to help them, helps so much to make this country the great nation it is, and will always remain.
Bill Cummings’ Remarks

Good evening everyone,

Let me tell you a very personal story.

My nine-times great grandfather… That’s right, my nine-times great grandfather, Isaac Cummings, immigrated to America, way back in 1638.

My very Irish maternal grandparents, however, didn’t come here from Dublin until 260 years later. The year was 1898, and it was not a good time to be Irish in Boston.

“I AM AN AMERICAN, Billy.” That was the only way Grandma Mary Clarke Purington would ever answer any question whatsoever, when I asked her about her native land… “I am an American,” was the only response she would ever give me.

Until the day she died, 50 years ago, Grandma Mary was still genuinely and literally afraid to be Irish! Why was she afraid? Even as she lay dying in 1963? She truly believed, even then, that if someone found out she was Irish… she might be pushed out of her nursing home!

Unfortunately, my grandmother, along with so many other struggling immigrants of her day, did not have an organization like the Irish International Immigrant Center to ease the transition to her new country.

This Center has evolved so successfully over the years… opening its doors and services to people from every land and nation, as they fight to make a new life, in the tradition of American Opportunity.

Even though Joyce really doesn’t have any Irish blood, Mary Clarke Purington’s story makes us both all the more grateful for the wonderful collective work you all do, to aid the thousands upon thousands of strangers, from all lands, who still arrive on these shores every year.

Thank you!