

## **A Proud St. Louis and Irish Tradition Returns Once Again!**

Centuries ago in Ireland, the Irish would gather together on March 17 to honor St. Patrick on his feast day by marching to the local church, and celebrate the day with a festival in honor of Ireland's patron saint.

This year at 11:00 AM on March 17, when the marchers in the Ancient Order of Hibernians Parade step off for their 38<sup>th</sup> parade in the Dogtown neighborhood, they will be recognizing that tradition, and also honoring one that began in St. Louis over 200 years ago.

The first official record of a Saint Patrick's Day celebration in the City of St. Louis, was a small band of Irish settlers gathering in the streets of St. Louis to honor the patron saint of Ireland on March 17, 1820.

For almost four decades, St. Louis Hibernians have added to that tradition showcasing St. Louis' proud Irish heritage in one of the city's oldest Irish enclaves, the Dogtown neighborhood on St. Louis' Southside.

The Irish culture in the Dogtown neighborhood dates back to the 1800s, when Irish immigrants helped settle the area, working to creating a community similar to what they had at home in Ireland. An important part of an Irish community was the church, in this case St. James the Greater, established in 1860. To this day, many consider St. James the "heart and soul" of the neighborhood.

The newest event added to the celebration of Saint Patrick's Day in the old south St. Louis neighborhood is the Dogtown Irish Festival. Although the Festival itself is only four years old, it continues the tradition of St. Patrick's Day celebrations held for generations in Dogtown. Today the Dogtown area represents a mix of cultures and ethnicities, but the neighborhood gathers,

along with many throughout the St. Louis region, to celebrate the neighborhood's Irish heritage on March 17.

### **The 2023 Hibernian Parade**

The 2023 parade, sponsored the Ancient Order of Hibernians, was created in 1984 to highlight the many contributions of the Irish people to America. This year's parade will contain over 90 units featuring floats highlighting Irish dancing, music and salutes to Irish history and culture. Like traditional parades held in the Emerald Isle on Saint Patrick's feast day, a good portion of St. Louis' Irish American community will be marching as clans under their family crests and banners.

### **The 2023 Irish Festival**

The 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Dogtown Irish Festival also will have plenty of fun, food, music and attractions for the enjoyment of all ages. The festival, a joint effort of Dogtown United, a non-profit led by community and businesses leaders, and the Hibernians was launched in 2018.

Dogtown United is excited this year to be to part of the "*Horizons*" initiative created by Missouri Humanities, the Missouri Arts Council and the Missouri Division of Tourism. The Dogtown Irish Festival was one of only nine organizations selected to participate in *Horizons* initiative that supports cultural events in Missouri.

The festival begins at 9:00 AM, featuring food and drinks from numerous vendors. The festival was created to highlight the unique spirit and celebrated history of the Dogtown neighborhood. Like last year's Irish Festival, the event will be divided into multiple "zones."

The key sponsors of the 2023 Irish Festival are Bud Light, Guinness Jameson Irish Whiskey and Tullamore D.E.W. Irish Whiskey, Heavy Riff Brewing Company, Dogtown Pizza, POWERS Insurance & Risk Management, Anna Garcia of Garcia Properties, Fields Foods, and more!

### **Irish Cultural Zone**

Anchoring the South leg of the festival area will be the Irish Cultural Zone, sponsored by Guinness, at Saint James the Greater Parish, 1360 Tamm Ave.

Once again one of the best places in St. Louis to truly “get your Irish on” will be at the Saint James the Greater 46<sup>th</sup> Annual Saint Patrick’s Day celebration. The parish has been the “cultural heart” of the Dogtown neighborhood for over 160 years. The first pastor, and many that followed, were actually Irishmen from “the old sod,” which helped establish both the “Irish” identity of the parish and the surrounding neighborhood.

The parish actually kicks off the Saint Patrick’s Day festivities the night before, on March 16, with a special mass at 4:00 PM, on the Saint Patrick’s Day eve, at the historic Saint James the Greater church, located at 6401 Wade Ave. Fr. Richard Quirk, pastor of Saint James, will celebrate the mass to honor the venerable Irish saint.

Following mass, there will be a special ceremony, sponsored by Guinness, in the St. James Parish Center to officially “kick off” St. Patrick’s Day in Dogtown with the tapping of the “first keg” and pouring of a Guinness Stout as the “first beer” of the holiday celebration. There will be live Irish music by Irish Aires, and the “first serving” of the St. James’ famous Corned Beef and Cabbage dinners 4:00-8:00 PM

The next day, March 17, the Parish Center opens at 8:00 AM where you can start your day with an “Irish” coffee and later indulge yourself with one of the parish’s famous Corned Beef and Cabbage dinners, served from 11:00 AM to 5:00 PM. There also will be live Irish entertainment from 11:00 – 6:00 PM, featuring the Irish Aires. St. James will have multiple beverage and food stands open outside before, and during the parade. The St. James Bud Light Tent will open at 9:00 AM with a DJ until 6:00 PM. All proceeds from the event will go to St. James.

### **Dogtown Pizza Family Zone**

Dogtown Pizza Family Zone will be located on Oakland Avenue, just east of Tamm, nearby Turtle Park and the Oakland Playground. The venue will have a variety of family friendly activities. Traditional Irish music will also be featured on the Andrew Broombaugh-State Farm Insurance Agent Stage and there will be many food and drink options be available.

### **Bud Light Party Zone, Heavy Riff Main Stage and POWERS Insurance and Risk Management Vendor Village**

The Bud Light Party Zone, located at heart of the Irish Festival area at Clayton and Tamm, will feature many bars, food, and merchandise vendors.

Live Irish music also will be featured on the Heavy Riff Main Stage, located Clayton and Art Hill, before and after the parade. Rusty Nail performs live on the main stage from 1-5 PM. More details on other music performances will be announced soon.

The POWERS Insurance and Risk Management Vendor Village in the Clayton and Tamm area, will feature merchandise and food vendors. For a complete list of vendors, please visit [www.dogtownunited.org](http://www.dogtownunited.org).

All outdoor vending in the entire festival area begins and 9:00 AM, and closes promptly by 6:00 PM.

### **No Coolers, Glass and Beads**

For safety of Dogtown residents and festival attendees, no coolers, backpacks and glass containers will be allowed in the festival area. Outside alcohol is also prohibited. None of these items will be allowed past any checkpoints to enter the festival area. Containers necessary for child care purposes can be admitted after a brief search by security staff.

Parade organizers once again want remind parade spectators that passing out of beads will not be part of the celebration this year due to requests from the City of St. Louis's Special Event Commission and members of the Dogtown neighborhood due to issues with both safety and clean up.

### **Excited One Again for the “Big Day”**

Both festival and parade organizers say they are excited for the arrival of March 17.

“Saint Patrick’s Day in Dogtown is important for the both spirit of the neighborhood, and the Saint Louis community at large, and it also plays an important part the economic health of both the Dogtown and the City of St. Louis,” said festival organizer Nick Funke, of Dogtown United.

“The Hibernians and our marchers look forward to this event every year,” said 2023 Parade Chairman Joe Murphy. “It will be great once again to continue the tradition and see the big crowds as we march down Tamm Avenue.”

Murphy added, “But we ask everyone coming to Dogtown on March 17 to be respectful of the neighborhood, local businesses and your fellow attendees. Yes, come celebrate but the Hibernians ask you do it in a both fun and a safe way.”

