

Newark & Gibbons On the March

The Newark St. Patrick's Day parade, always the Friday before the holiday, will feature a female grand marshal for the first time in 2015. The law firm of Gibbons is once again leading the way in support of all things Newark. DEBBIE MCGOLDRICK speaks to the firm's chairman Patrick C. Dunican Jr., who led the parade in 2013.

THERE have been several milestones in the life of Patrick C. Dunican Jr., the 48-year-old chairman and managing director of Gibbons, one of the Northeast's most prominent law firms with five offices in four states and more than 200 attorneys on its roster.

It's safe to say, though, that Dunican's biggest point of pride – besides marriage and children, of course – came in 2013, when he led thousands of marchers as the grand marshal of the 78th annual St. Patrick's Day parade in Newark, New Jersey, the state's oldest and largest celebration of Irishness.

In Newark, there's no battling over exclusion or other matters that have marred the marches in cities like New York and Boston. New Jersey's largest city plays by its own green rules. For several years now the march has taken place on the Friday before March 17, ensuring a large business involvement in the bustling downtown area populated by large corporations like Gibbons and Verizon, not to mention a number of the state's renowned colleges and universities.

Gibbons, founded by Irish American and Newark native Andrew Crummy back in 1926, has proudly stayed true to its urban Jersey roots Dunican says, even as several law firms fled for the suburbs. The firm is wholeheartedly committed to the revival of

Newark, and its support of the annual St. Patrick's parade is a key component in the local philanthropy that is part and parcel of the Gibbons ethos.

"There's an Irish culture here, no doubt about it," Dunican told the *Irish Voice* during an interview last week from the firm's headquarters at the Gateway Center in the heart of Newark.

"Andrew Crummy, I believe, was first generation Irish American. The first six lawyers at the firm were all Irish – Crummy, Gibbons, O'Neill, Murray, Moore and Dolan."

The No Irish Need Apply mindset was dominant at the time. The attorneys, shunned by the fancy white shoe firms, banded together to strike out on their own.

Their legacy is alive and thriving to this day, as Gibbons has since expanded to open offices in Trenton, New Jersey; New York City; Philadelphia and Wilmington, Delaware.

"We've celebrated St. Patrick's Day at Gibbons for years and years," said Dunican. "How could we not?"

The biggest bash by far came in 2013, when Dunican was named grand marshal of the Newark march. The grandson of Irish immigrants from counties Sligo, Donegal, Mayo and Offaly who specializes in business and commercial litigation couldn't have been more chuffed, as the celebration of St. Patrick's Day was

always a huge deal growing up in Teaneck, New Jersey.

"My mom Patricia was born on March 17. We'd always have the parade from New York City on the TV, and we'd eat corned beef and cabbage. St. Patrick's was always a special day in our house," Dunican recalls.

He was the first Gibbons leader to be named Newark grand marshal, and it's a day he won't soon forget. Gibbons staffers would concur, as the firm rolled out the green carpet for a day-long schedule of celebrations that started with morning Mass at the St. Patrick's Pro-Cathedral attended by then-Newark Mayor and now Senator Cory Booker among other dignitaries. An Irish brunch hosted by Gibbons at the firm's HQ followed where Donegal Mayor Dessie Larkin presented Dunican with a mini replica of the GAA championship Sam Maguire Cup.

The march itself was a thrill, Dunican recalls. Friends and family lined the route, and the pipe band from Dunican's alma mater, Iona College in New Rochelle, had pride of place in the line of march. It's a day the proud Irish American will never forget.

"We had a green line painted down the street. Gibbons had a huge contingent of over 200 marchers. And it was really cool to have my children involved – at the time they were eight and

10," says Dunican.

"I remember finishing the parade route and being interviewed by a TV reporter and explaining the feeling I had walking by the New Jersey PAC, and seeing all the rest of the Gibbons family there cheering me on. It was exhilarating. The whole day was amazing, one I will treasure forever."

Hosting the parade on a Friday afternoon has been particularly beneficial for the downtown Newark pubs and restaurants. Happy hour has been replaced by a happy day where people from office buildings and schools like Seton Hall Law and Rutgers line the parade route to cheer on the participants.

"It's very unique and special to have the parade on a Friday," Dunican says. "You want all the businesses to be involved and invested in the event. All of downtown really loves it."

Dunican's grand marshal day finished up with a Gibbons-hosted Irish party at New Jersey PAC with Irish music and dancers. All of the events were attended by representatives of the local charities that benefited from the parade.

Charity begins in Newark for Gibbons, Dunican says. Many of the firm's partners are involved with local good causes, and when he was grand marshal Gibbons dived right in to increase awareness of the parade and promote several worthy beneficiaries including the Scholarship Fund for Inner City Children and the St. John's Soup Kitchen.

"Gibbons formed partnerships with entities like *The Star-Ledger* newspaper, and we ran the first ever band competition in the



Patrick C. Dunican Jr. leading the Newark St. Patrick's Day parade in 2013.

state. In 2013 we raised the most money for charities that the parade ever raised," Dunican said.

This year's parade is one that Gibbons is especially looking forward to, Dunican says. For the first time in the parade's 80-year history it will be led by a woman grand marshal, Rosemarie Mellody, a long-time parade volunteer and native of Ballinamuck, Co. Longford.

"We're absolutely thrilled that there's a woman grand marshal," Dunican says.

"The retention and advancement of women in the workplace is something that Gibbons is noted for. Rosemarie is an exceptionally worthy choice

and we're extremely pleased to support her."

Naturally, Gibbons will be out in force this year on Friday, March 13, lining the parade route. The firm will also host St. Patrick's celebrations for employees on March 17.

"It's really important to celebrate our Irish heritage," Dunican says. "If you grow up Irish you know you're just a little bit different in the best way possible, of course."

(*The Newark St. Patrick's parade steps off on Friday, March 13 at 1 p.m. at Mulberry Street and Central. Visit www.newarkparade.com or Newark St. Patrick's Day Parade on Facebook.*)