

People-watching



Dave Hansen | Staff photographer

Three harbor seals lounge on the rocks off Rose Island on Thursday while keeping an eye on the passengers aboard the Save The Bay seal-watching cruise that was passing by. Story on Page A3.

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

Four men formed the Newport Irish Heritage Association 40 years ago to raise awareness of Irish culture in the city; having done that, the commission will disband after this year

By Colin Howarth
Staff writer

NEWPORT — In 1977, four local Irish-American men set out to make a difference in the portrayal of their heritage in the city.

Rick O'Neill, Rick Kelly, Jim Mahoney and the late Paul Crowley founded the Newport Irish Heritage Association in a time when, despite the great number of Irish in Newport, their heritage remained underrepresented.

Now, 40 years later, the men plan for this to be the last year for the Newport Irish Heritage Association.

Since the inception of the group, a number of other groups have grown and flourished in Newport. However, that wasn't always the case.

When the four men were young adults, they didn't see much appreciation of things Irish. There was the annual St. Patrick's Day Parade, which started in 1956, but it was less about the culture and more about drinking, they said.

"To some extent that (perception) has carried on," Mahoney said.

But the parade has made significant improvements, growing tremendously, he said. It used to be just 30 minutes but now extends past two hours.

"The parade is outstanding. It's amazing to see so many of the groups sign up to come back," he said.

But 40 years ago, the parade was the only public celebration of Irish culture in Newport, and it wasn't an accurate



Daily News file photo

Rick and Joan Kelly, left, of Newport and Riley Mahoney of Seekonk, Mass., and her grandfather Brian Hart of Newport join in some Irish dances at Forty Steps in Newport during a celebration to kickoff the last year's annual Newport Irish Heritage Month. Rick Kelly, Jim Mahoney, left in photo at right, and Rick O'Neill, right, along with the late Paul Crowley were the founding members of the Newport Irish Heritage Association.

reflection, they said. It started at 2 p.m., giving locals plenty of time to drink before.

From the mid-19th century to the early 20th century, an influx of Irish immigrants settled into Newport, many working as laborers, servants or gardeners. In 1927, Newport was the home to about 147 unrelated Sullivans, Mahoney said.

Irish immigrants are credited for construction projects such as Fort Adams and the Newport mansions. They often met at the Forty Steps on the Cliff Walk to sing, dance and socialize outside of work.

"They really established what was to come for us," Mahoney said.

By 1977, the four men set

out to "keep their memories alive moving forward," he said.

"It was kind of just a conversation that we should do more than just have a parade," Kelly said. "I think it was Paul Crowley who said, 'Why don't we meet about it?'" And Crowley remained the driving force for the group.

As the four of them started regularly meeting, more people started joining them, each with their own interests in Irish culture, whether it be theater, music, literature, film, food or other aspects.

They started with organizing events for a weekend in March. A few years later, they had events lined up for a few weeks in March. Then it

became a whole month — the Newport Irish Heritage Month.

It continued to grow, with more than 400 members by the mid-1980s.

They held performances at Rogers High School with Irish bands Makem and Clancy and the Wolfe Tones. They held lectures, road races, trade shows, walking tours, poetry competitions — everything imaginable. The group also offered scholarships and awards and made calendars celebrating Ireland and its culture.

In 2010, when they saw a Thames Street store selling T-shirts that they perceived

MISSION A7



Kate Whitney Lucey photo

Dancing, singing set stage for Irish Heritage Month

By Colin Howarth
Staff writer

NEWPORT — The Forty Steps on the Cliff Walk will see the annual revival of a 19th-century tradition this Sunday when some of the local Irish population gather to dance and sing for the official opening of the 40th annual Newport Irish Heritage Month.

After Sunday's event, a month of live music, lectures, tours and food — each celebrating the Irish culture

and customs — will be held in Newport.

Another major event planned is the chef exchange between Newport and its sister city, Kinsale, Ireland. Since 1999, the two cities have held exchanges with chefs, yachting, students and golf. On March 2-9, the exchanges will continue as chefs from Kinsale make the trip to Newport to prepare dishes for seven local restaurants.

DANCING A7

Document sheds doubt on reasons behind travel ban

WASHINGTON (AP) — Analysts at the Homeland Security Department's intelligence arm found insufficient evidence that citizens of seven Muslim-majority countries included in President Donald Trump's travel ban pose a terror threat to the United States.

A draft document obtained by The Associated Press concludes that citizenship is an "unlikely indicator" of terrorism threats to the United States and that few people from the countries Trump listed in his travel ban have carried out attacks or been involved in terrorism-related activities in the U.S. since Syria's civil war

started in 2011.

Trump cited terrorism concerns as the primary reason he signed the sweeping temporary travel ban in late January, which also halted the U.S. refugee program. A federal judge in Washington state blocked the government from carrying out the order earlier this month. Trump said Friday a new edict would be announced soon. The administration has been working on a new version that could withstand legal challenges.

Homeland Security spokeswoman Gillian Christensen on Friday did not dispute the

DOCUMENT A7

People's Credit Union chosen for R.I. 'Bank Local' program

By Sean Flynn
Staff writer

The state of Rhode Island historically has deposited millions of dollars in cash assets in big national and international banks, but that is changing under a new "Bank Local" program unveiled this week by General Treasurer Seth Magaziner.

Instead, some of the money will go into secure accounts with local credit unions and banks, with a total of six Rhode Island institutions now enrolled in the program. In this area, it is People's Credit Union, which has offices in Newport, Middletown, Portsmouth, Wakefield, North Kingstown and Bristol.

"The state is trying to support the banks

'The state is trying to support the banks in providing capital to small businesses.'

ELLEN FORD

president and CEO of People's Credit Union in providing capital to small businesses," said Ellen Ford, president and chief executive officer of People's Credit Union.

The loans must be targeted to start-up businesses, entrepreneurs and women- and minority-owned businesses with no more than 100 employees to qualify for the program, she said. Loan amounts cannot exceed \$250,000.

The program is geared toward providing loans to small businesses going forward, but for the kickoff participating credit unions and banks were allowed to go back six months and select qualifying

loans, Ford said.

More than \$4.5 million in state funds were deposited into in-state accounts for 47 qualifying local business loans, Magaziner announced in a prepared statement.

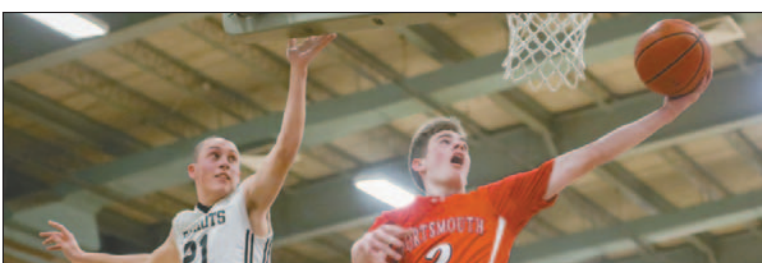
The People's Credit Union early loans that qualified for the program included loans to a landscaper and a construction company on Aquidneck Island, Ford said. She could not give more details on the loans for privacy reasons.

However, when Magaziner unveiled the program at his offices in Providence on Thursday, a People's Credit Union loan was highlighted. The recipient is Stephanie Keenan, owner of Hair on Mane beauty salon in Wakefield, a first-time business owner.

"The woman who just opened a hair salon or the landscaper who wanted to

PEOPLE'S A7

INSIDE
today's news
Some things you
won't want to miss



PORTSMOUTH WINS, ADVANCES to division quarterfinals. B1

WEATHER

Today, cloudy. High 59.
Tonight, cloudy. Low 36.

Sunday, sunny, breezy.
High 44.

Sunday night, clear.
Low 32.

Details, A7

Advice B5
Business B7
Classifieds C7
Local & State A3
Obituaries A4
Lotteries A7
Opinion A6
Police & Fire A5
Religion C4
Sports B1
Television C5-6



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Mission

Continued from A1

as casting a derogatory light on the Irish, making them out to be drunks and fools, they protested. Around 20 people picketed in front of the store.

The monthlong celebration was also “put together as an economic driver during the winter months,” O’Neill said. Mahoney remembers people used to call from New York about the calendars.

Membership has been a problem for the group since the early 2000s. There are about 200 members on the list but just about a dozen attend meetings regularly. The group’s leaders have had trouble getting younger people involved to continue the effort into the future.

But a number of other Irish groups have grown and taken over the planning.

The Museum of Newport Irish History on Thames Street has scheduled a number of events throughout the month. And the men’s division of the Ancient Order of Hibernians in Newport still has more than 700 members.

Kelly said he’s not sure what Irish Heritage Month will look like in the future.

“Over the years, one of our goals was to get other groups and organizations take on those things. Other groups have stepped in and started doing a lot of things we initiated years back,” Kelly said.

But just because the group won’t exist doesn’t mean the men will stop promoting their heritage.

“Forty years is a good run. We’re still going to be involved in various other organizations,” O’Neill said. “Back then, we were the only other group promoting our heritage besides the Ancient Order of Hibernians. Now, there are so many other organizations ... that continue to force our cultural heritage.”

Howarth@NewportRI.com

Dancing

Continued from A1

The kickoff to the chef exchange will be held Thursday from 6-9 p.m. at Hibernian Hall, 2 Wellington Ave., where the chefs will prepare a food-tasting event. Tickets cost \$25.

A number of tours are planned as well throughout the month. The “Tour of Irish Newport” will be held on March 4 and will take visitors to sites of Irish interest, including Forty Steps, Ochre Court and the Barney Street Cemetery. It leaves Hibernian Hall at 10 a.m. and returns at noon.

There will also be guided tours of Fort Adams, constructed with Irish labor between 1824-1857. Tours, lasting one hour, will be held on March 4, 5, 11, and 12, then daily after March 18 to the end of the month.

Then, of course, the 61st annual St. Patrick’s Day Parade will be held on Saturday, March 11. This year’s parade grand marshal is Claire Dias, and it is dedicated to the memory of John Marshall Sr. and John Mello.

For more information and a full listing of the events, see the Calendar on Page A5 or visit aohnewport.org.

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Document

Continued from A1

report’s authenticity, but said it was not a final comprehensive review of the government’s intelligence.

“While DHS was asked to draft a comprehensive report on this issue, the document you’re referencing was commentary from a single intelligence source versus an official, robust document with thorough interagency sourcing,” Christensen said. “The ... report does not include data from other intelligence community sources. It is incomplete.”

The Homeland Security report is based on unclassified information from Justice Department press releases on terrorism-related convictions and attackers killed in the act, State Department visa statistics, the 2016 Worldwide Threat Assessment from the U.S. intelligence community and the State Department Country Reports on Terrorism 2015.

The three-page report challenges Trump’s core claims. It said that of 82 people the government determined were inspired by a foreign terrorist group to carry out or try to carry out an attack in the United States, just over half were U.S. citizens born in the United States. The others were from 26 countries, led by Pakistan, Somalia, Bangladesh, Cuba, Ethiopia, Iraq and Uzbekistan. Of these, only Somalia and Iraq were among the seven nations included in the ban.

Of the other five nations, one person each from Iran, Sudan and Yemen was also involved in those terrorism cases, but none from Syria. It did not say if any were Libyan.

The report also found that terrorist organizations in Iran, Libya, Somalia and Sudan are regionally focused, while groups in Iraq, Syria and Yemen do pose a threat to the U.S.

The seven countries were included in a law President Barack Obama signed in 2015

amount of capital available to the Rhode Island small businesses by supporting the local banks and credit unions who are providing those loans.”

The amount of funding in each institution initially was based on loans made to small businesses in the community during the recent past.

During the past two years, People’s Credit Union has made a total of \$2.4 million in loans to 30 small businesses, all in local communities, Ford said.

People’s Credit Union had a total of \$465 million in assets as

that updated visa requirements for foreigners who had traveled to those countries.

Christensen said the countries were also selected in part because they lacked the ability to properly vet their citizens and don’t cooperate with U.S. efforts to screen people hoping to come to the U.S.

The report was prepared as part of an internal review Trump requested after his executive order was blocked by the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. It was drafted by staff of the Homeland Security Department’s Intelligence and Analysis branch at the direction of its acting leader, David Glawe.

White House spokesman Michael Short said this was not the full report that Trump had requested. He said he believes “the intel community is combining resources to put together a comprehensive report using all available sources, not just open sources, and which is driven by data, not politics.”

The intelligence document was circulated beyond

of Jan. 31, she said. How much of state funding the credit unions and banks receive will depend in part on their size. For example, Navigant Credit Union based in Smithfield has almost \$2 billion in assets, so it would receive more funding, she said.

The state matches the funding that the credit union or bank puts toward a qualifying loan.

“It’s an excellent program and we plan to be actively using it,” Ford said. “There is no downside. The state is not

Homeland Security.

The draft document reflects the tensions between the president’s political appointees and the civil servants tasked with carrying out Trump’s ambitious and aggressive agenda. Trump has repeatedly complained about leaks meant to undercut his policies and suggested he does not trust holdovers from the Obama administration.

Trump originally said the ban was necessary to overhaul the vetting system for both refugees and would-be foreign visitors, saying that terrorists may try to exploit weaknesses to gain access to the United States. The order sparked chaos, outrage and widespread protests, with travelers detained at airports and panicked families searching for relatives.

But several courts quickly intervened and the 9th Circuit ultimately upheld a ruling blocking the ban and challenged the administration’s claim that it was motivated by terrorism fears.

making any loan decision and is not getting into the loan business.”

All Bank Local participating credit unions and banks must provide proof of insurance through either the National Credit Union Administration or the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp., and all state cash deposits must be fully collateralized.

“We are double-covered,” Ford said. “These state funds are not at risk in any way.”

Flynn@NewportRI.com

EYE-OPENER

High-tech glasses allow legally blind people to see.



Associated Press

Yvonne Felix wears eSight electronic glasses and looks around Union Square during a visit to San Francisco earlier this month. The glasses enable the legally blind to see. Felix was diagnosed with Stargardt’s disease after being hit by a car at the age of 7.

Forge, played by LeVar Burton.

The third-generation model lets wearers magnify the video feed up to 24 times, compared to just 14 times in earlier models. There’s a hand control for adjusting brightness and contrast. The new glasses also come with a more powerful high-definition camera.

eSight believes that about 200 million people worldwide with visual acuity of 20/70 to 20/1200 could be potential candidates for its glasses. That number includes people with a variety of disabling eye conditions such as macular degeneration, diabetic retinopathy, ocular albinism, Stargardt’s disease, or, like Regan, optic nerve hypoplasia.

So far, though, the company has sold only about 1,000 headsets, despite the testimonials of wearers who’ve become true believers.

Take, for instance, Yvonne Felix, an artist who now works as an advocate for eSight after seeing the previously indistinguishable faces of her husband and two sons for the first time via its glasses. Others, ranging from kids to senior citizens, have worn the gadgets to golf, watch football or just perform daily tasks such as reading nutrition labels.

eSight isn’t the only company focused on helping the legally blind. Other companies working on high-tech glasses and related tools include Aira, Orcam,

ThirdEye, NuEyes and Microsoft.

But most of them are doing something very different. While their approaches also involve cameras attached to glasses, they don’t magnify live video. Instead, they take still images, analyze them with image recognition software and then generate an automated voice that describes what the wearer is looking at — anything from a child to words written on a page.

Samuel Markowitz, a University of Toronto professor of ophthalmology, says that eSight’s glasses are the most versatile option for the legally blind currently available, as they can improve vision at near and far distances, plus everything in between.

Markowitz is one of the researchers from five universities and the Center for Retina and Macular Disease that recently completed a clinical trial of eSight’s second-generation glasses. Although the results won’t be released until later this year, Markowitz said the trials found little risk to the glasses. The biggest hazard, he said, is the possibility of tripping and falling while walking with the glasses covering the eyes.

The device “is meant to be used while in a stationary situation, either sitting or standing, for looking around at the environment,” Markowitz said.

WEATHER

COASTAL RHODE ISLAND

Today, mostly cloudy, breezy with a chance of showers after noon. High near 59. Tonight, cloudy with a chance of showers and thunderstorms. Low around 36.

Sunday, sunny, breezy. High near 44. Sunday night, mostly clear. Low around 32.

EXTENDED

Monday, mostly sunny. High near 48. Monday night, partly cloudy. Low around 37.

Tuesday, mostly cloudy with a chance of showers. High near 49.

MARINE

Today, southeast wind 5-10 knots with gusts up to 20 knots in the afternoon. Waves 2-3 feet. Tonight, south wind 10-15 knots, becoming west after midnight with gusts up to 25 knots. Waves 2-4 feet.

Sunday, west wind 15-20 knots with gusts up to 25 knots. Waves 2-3 feet. Sunday night, west wind 10-15 knots with gusts up to 25 knots. Waves around 2 feet.

TIDES, ETC.

Today’s high tides: 6:44 a.m., 7:02 p.m. Low tides: 12 a.m., 12:42 p.m. Sunday’s high tides: 7:26 a.m., 7:44 p.m. Low tides: 12:45 a.m., 1:19 p.m.

Today’s sunrise 6:26, sunset 5:31. Sunday’s sunrise 6:24, sunset 5:33.

Friday’s temperatures: high 59, low 46.

LOTTERIES

Friday’s numbers

RHODE ISLAND Numbers MIDDAY: 1-0-3-3
Numbers Evening: 0-7-3-1

MEGA MILLIONS
12-29-33-42-68
Mega Ball 14

CORRECTIONS

The Newport Daily News seeks to be fair and accurate in reporting the news. If you believe we have published an error, please let us know. Call the city editor at 849-3300, Ext. 254, send an email to CityDesk@NewportRI.com or write us at 101 Malbone Road, Newport, RI 02840.

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COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS
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C3 is a Unique Men’s Bereavement Group

Steven Rapoza, RN, invites widowers, like himself, to join him and Ed Gurka, the writer of *Cooking for You: Caring for Yourself in the Kitchen*, for a unique Men’s Bereavement Group with onsite cooking lessons to best share emotional and culinary support during difficult times.

Monday, February 27, 5pm

at Hambly Brick House, 30 Red Cross Ave., Newport

Free of charge and includes supper.

Please call 846-0698 for information and to register

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People’s

Continued from A1

buy a pickup truck are good examples of the types of loans that can be made under the program,” Ford said.

“Those loans fit perfectly,” she said.

“I am constantly looking for new ways to use the resources of the treasurer’s office to encourage economic growth and job creation,” Magaziner said in a prepared statement. “Bank Local increases the