

Putting a Spring in their step

Sun brings miles of smiles to St. Patrick's Day Parade

By Kevin McCallum
Staff Writer

STAMFORD — Irish eyes smiled on Stamford yesterday, as thousands of area residents watched the seventh annual St. Patrick's Day Parade wind its way through downtown streets drenched in springlike sunshine.

"It's a great day for the Irish and a great day for this community," said Stamford Fire Chief Robert McGrath, wearing the green, orange and white sash identifying him as this year's grand marshal. "Especially after everything we've been through this

year, to see so many people come out to support this is just fantastic."

Parade organizers named McGrath to lead this year's parade because of his contributions to the community, his family's Irish heritage and to honor the role area emergency workers played in the wake of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

As a way of paying their respects to the memory of the tragedy, a firefighter from each of the city's fire departments carried a special U.S. flag.

"This flag flew at the World Trade Center," read a sign on a U.S. Army jeep that preceded the flag.

high vantage point in their father's arms to peek at the fan-cy footwork of the Lynn Academy of Irish Dancers.

One of several Irish dance schools that performed yesterday, the girls from Lynn Academy danced a quick cello, or group dance, for members of the review stand, including Mayor Daniel Malloy and his wife, Cathy, as well as other former parade grand marshals.

Area politicians marching yesterday included U.S. Rep. Christopher Shays, R-Bridge-

port; state Sen. William Nickerson, R-Greenwich; state Rep. Livvy Floren, R-Greenwich; and Attorney General Richard Blumenthal, as well as numerous city officials.

O'Hora, whose parents were born in County Mayo, Ireland, said attending the parade is part of his effort to raise his children with a sense of their Irish heritage.

"I think it's important to know what your roots are, no matter where you're from," O'Hora said.

Above, members of Stamford's Pender Academy of Irish Dance perform a number from 'Riverdance' at yesterday's St. Patrick's Day Parade in Stamford. At left, Kerri Curtin spreads some Irish cheer during the seventh annual event. City Fire Chief Robert McGrath was the grand marshal.

Andrew Sullivan/
Staff photos



Turn of River firefighter Kevin Kelley said it was an honor to be chosen to represent his department by carrying the flag.

One of the many area firefighters who labored at ground zero in the days after the attacks, Kelley said yesterday's parade filled him with "100 percent pride."

"I'm proud to be an American, proud to be a volunteer firefighter and proud to be Irish," the Stamford resident said after completing his march.

Kelley's family showed their Irish pride as they watched the stream of Irish dancers, firefighters and pipe-

and-drum bands parade past the review stand in front of Ferguson Library.

Kelley's wife, Irene, and their three children were decked out for the occasion in Kelly green, wool sweaters and leprechaun hats. Even 7-month-old Emma got into the act, with shamrocks on her cherubic cheeks and antennae on her head.

The parade, which included 65 entries, started shortly after noon at Broad and Summer streets. Tracing the path of a green stripe painted on the road, the parade proceeded up

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Summer Street, turned right on North Street, right onto Bedford Street and finished at Atlantic and Bank streets.

New Canaan resident James O'Hora, a member of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, which sponsors the parade, stood near the review stand, holding a little Irish-American in each arm.

Meghan, 3, dressed in a plaid green dress, and Seumas, 2, in a dark-green cardigan, used their