

Deputy Grand Marshal Michael Leahy

The son of Patrick (Clare Co., Ireland) and Mary (Sligo Co., Ireland), Mike was born in the Fordham section of the Bronx, New York. His family, like many other Irish immigrants of that time, summered in Rockaway until they permanently moved to the beachside paradise when he was 4 years old. He credits his parents, and his tight knit family, for instilling in him the values of family, faith, friendship and loyalty. Mike is the middle of three (3) boys, with Patrick being the oldest and John the youngest. He and his brothers were brought up in a typical middle class family, where faith and service for others always played an important role. The boys attended St. Camillus Elementary School and Beach Channel High School before going on to pursue a college education and professional paths. They grew up immersed in rich Irish culture through the stories told to them by his parents, aunts, uncles and cousins. Mike and his brothers spent many Sunday afternoons listening to the Irish radio programs on WFUV as their father drove the family back to the Bronx to visit with relatives.

Mike is a self-employed businessman who has always kept his love of sports and Irish culture close at hand. He serves a dual role at St. Edmund Prep High School as the Varsity Hockey and Golf Coach. In addition, Mike has been the president of the Rockaway Rockies Roller Hockey Club for the past seven (7) years. During that time, with the help of many other volunteers, the program has resurrected as one of the finest sports programs for the youth of Rockaway to participate in. Ten years ago, the Rockies program was dormant. In the fall of 2014, approximately 100 boys and girls, from the ages of three to fifteen, helped to make the program a success. As a result of Mike's example of hard work and his dedication to the youth of Rockaway, community leaders have invested in the future of the Rockies program. Presently, the planning stages have begun for the building of a brand new, state-of-the-art roller hockey rink for the children of the community to enjoy for years to come.

Mike cannot ignore his passion to expose the Rockaway youth to the culture that he is so proud of. Recently, at the urging of his brother John, Mike started a local Gaelic Football Club, known as the Rockaway Rovers. The program began with a team of under 8 year olds (U8's) participating in a one day tournament in the Bronx. In no time at all, the impact of the exposure to the game, that many of the players' grandfathers once played themselves, was evident. The children embraced their heritage and their newest hobby with enthusiasm. As a proud member of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, Mike reached out to his local Division 21 for assistance in helping to grow the program. As a result of the Mike's leadership, the support from the AOH Division 21, and other significant volunteers, the Rockaway Rovers program continues to quickly grow. This spring they will begin their second full-season program with more players fielding teams in the U8, U10 and U12 age brackets.

The most important day of Mike's life came when he met his wife, Rosemary, in 1999. They married in 2002, and after a short stay in Brooklyn, moved back to Rockaway to raise their family. Together they have three (3) wonderful children, Mikey, Bridget and James, who attend St. Rose of Lima Catholic Academy. The importance of family, faith, friendship and loyalty remain the center of Mike's life. He carries on for his children, traditions of the Irish culture that his parents once gave to him. Mikey, Bridget and James spend many Sunday afternoons listening to the Irish radio programs on WFUV as Mike drives the family to the next sporting event.