



**Children's Friendship
Project for Northern Ireland, Inc.**
"Promoting Understanding Through Interaction"

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**CHILDREN'S FRIENDSHIP PROJECT CELEBRATES 20 YEARS OF SUCCESS
AND REORGANIZES FOR NORTHERN IRELAND'S FUTURE**

Over the past 20 years, the trans-Atlantic charity Children's Friendship Project for Northern Ireland (CFPNI) has helped more than 2,000 Northern Ireland teens caught up in the troubles through cross-cultural programmes aimed at "promoting understanding through interaction". With devolution restored, tourism booming, and unemployment at its lowest rate in decades, Northern Ireland is now entering an exciting period. Recognizing these promising changes, CFPNI's Northern Ireland-U.S. Board of Directors has decided to refocus its efforts and fundraising to create a strong network of alumni to carry on the programme's legacy and ideals.

The Children's Friendship Project for Northern Ireland was the brainchild of Peggy Barrett, a Pennsylvania housewife who was stirred into action in 1987 after watching scenes of violence from Northern Ireland on her living room television. She decided to set up the now famous charity with a band of volunteers from her local area to bring pairs of young people – one Protestant, the other Catholic – to live together in their homes across the US. That initial programme has grown in scope over the years with the help of hundreds of volunteers and families from across Northern Ireland and all over the United States. Today, it provides structured pre and post "holiday" training in Northern Ireland conducted by trained volunteers.

CFPNI will now suspend its original summer programme and redirect its activities into the creation of an Alumni Group of past participants. The Board hopes the new group will carry on CFPNI's traditions in Northern Ireland and become a significant contributor to better community relations, increased trust, understanding, and friendship among people of all ages.

Commenting on CFPNI's new focus, the Northern Ireland Chairman, Ian Young, OBE DL said "this is a decision that was not taken lightly; CFPNI did a wonderful job during the bad old days by giving young teenagers the opportunity to make friends across the political divide. But more importantly they were able to develop their leadership skills and they, in turn, made their own unique contribution to our community".

The US Chairman, Rev. George Demass from Baltimore, Maryland, echoed that view. Rev. Demass stated "this is a day of celebration for us, the US coordinators, board members and host families who have helped so many young people from Northern Ireland, Protestant and Catholic, to learn together in a nurturing environment. We could not have achieved this without the help and generosity of the host families here in the United States who have opened their homes to these young people year after year".

The 21st and last group of 72 teens from Northern Ireland spent this past summer in the U.S. living with their volunteer host families. In October, CFPNI's leadership as well as past and present volunteers will join together in Northern Ireland for a 20th Anniversary celebration of CFPNI as it moves into a promising future.

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