

GLOBAL GAELS... TYRONE NEW YORK

Start spreading the news...

New York has always had its bright light attractions, but the Tyrone club continue offer a slice of home for exiles

BY CIARAN WOODS

MENTION the name of the Tyrone GAA club in New York, and you will find stories aplenty of the names of great players and great people of the past, and of the present, who have found themselves part of the famous club and have taken it to their hearts.

Founded in 1949, the club has provided a constant outlet for the Tyrone and Irish diaspora in New York to participate in their national pastime for over 60 years. Success has been notable throughout the clubs' history, from its first Championship win in 1951, through the three-in-a-row achievements of the late sixties and the 'glory days' of the early eighties.

In the more recent past they have claimed the Junior Championship in 2008, meaning a return to the senior ranks after a five-year absence, and saw them narrowly miss out on a place in the 2009 senior decider. Last year they came within touching distance of the senior crown when they missed out by the narrowest of margins.

But for the Tyrone NY club it's not about the past, but looking instead to the future and helping to secure the Tyrone GAA legacy in NY for generations to come, through the implementation of underage coaching structures and a series of fundraising efforts to help ensure the club remains on solid foundations.

It's a vibrant, innovative and forward-thinking club which rivals any in Ireland or elsewhere in the world, with a pride and passion for what they do which ensures their links to their heritage, their games and their culture will not fade, no matter how many miles they are from home.

It's a social fulcrum, a networking base for employment, accommodation and community, where friendships are forged with bonds that last a lifetime. The club motto is simply 'Ni neart go cur le cheile,' which translates as 'There is no strength without unity,' and it is that unity which sees the club year after year defy the odds and continue to prosper.



A RICH TRADITION...A championship-winning New York Tyrone side from the 1950's

Building through the ages...

Dromore native Seamus McNabb is one of the longest serving stalwarts of the Tyrone New York club, this year operating in the role of secretary. He has seen many ups and downs both on and off the field since the 1990's, but he insists that the club has continued to grow in stature with each passing year.

Emigration levels from Ireland will always go some way at least in dictating the numbers a team like Tyrone New York can call on, but the secretary insists that his club are a very real option for anyone wishing to make the move.

"Seven or eight years ago we saw a lot of reverse emigration, with people heading home for the 'Celtic Tiger' years, and that hurt us in terms of numbers. In recent years we saw an upturn again, but Australia and now Canada still are big magnets for those who are leaving Ireland. But New York is still very much an option, a very viable and appealing opportunity, for anyone who wants to take that

leap and embark on a new path in their life.

"There are a lot of opportunities in this town, and plenty of distractions too if you want to find them! There is always something happening, whether it's concerts, or sports events, or jumping on a plane or train and heading to another city for the weekend. It's all on your doorstep if you choose to go for it."

There is no doubting that Tyrone New York have raised the bar for GAA clubs overseas and how they go about governing themselves and their planning for the future, efforts which have won them no shortage of praise from leading GAA figures who have visited New York. McNabb insists that they will never rest on their laurels though, as the important role which the club plays for its members, combined with the quality of the individuals they have involved, means they will never grow complacent.

"What we're trying to do is to run ourselves as best we can in parallel to the clubs back home, with the same

standards and practices both in terms of our structures and now our fundraising efforts. Of course we face

different challenges here, but that doesn't mean that our efforts are any less. We have a lot of young people who are involved in our committee and our club who have huge drive and enthusiasm, and we're lucky to have them with us.

"Of course there is a lot of time invested, but it keeps you involved, keeps you in touch with your heritage. For me, the American sports just don't cut it compared to the Gaelic football, and that will always be my own passion."

Silverware may not have been as forthcoming in recent years as the club would have liked, but McNabb remains steadfast in his belief that if Tyrone New York stick to their beliefs and continue to grow, then it is only a matter of time before they once again become the kingpins of the New York GAA scene.

"You see teams winning trophies over here who might have a good team, but that doesn't mean they're a good club. We are very proud that our club is one of the strongest that you'll find anywhere, with a true sense of belonging amongst all of our members. Of course we want to be in a position where, year on year, we are strong both on and off the pitch, with the silverware and dominance I feel we deserve."



MAKING THEIR OWN HISTORY...Tyrone follow the piper before the 2011 New York senior Championship final against Leitrim, a game they narrowly lost




TYRONE GFC

NEW YORK

