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#### Wee-ones gather to help Clintonians celebrate

By **Donna Roberson** ITEM CORRESPONDENT

**CLINTON** — Irish eyes were smiling Saturday, as members of the Leprechaun Society marched down High Street toward the town hall for the 32nd annual Leprechaun Convention.

But before the 17 Shillelagh Awards could be handed out, Ed "Himself" Sheridan, of Clinton, who heads up the convention, took a moment to remember members of the society who had died since the last convention, particularly Kevin Lyons, who owned The Pressbox restaurant in Worcester. The Lyons family was on hand to receive a plaque in his memory.

After a brief moment, Sheridan looked up with a grin and said, "All right, that's enough of that." The crowd laughed, and the ceremonies were officially open.

The Claddagh Kids kicked things off with some Irish step dancing, and local band Mulligan Stew, which often plays at the Old Timer in Clinton, punctuated the events with Irish tunes.

George McNamara, George Marsh, both of Clinton, and Irving Shanley, of Northboro, received the first Shillelagh Awards to a standing ovation for their service in World War II.

Throughout the ceremonies, the focus remained on community, with Sheridan giving a long list of each award recipient's contributions to area communities before presenting the awards. The society received 74 nominations for the awards this year.

Walter and Paul Shay, of Worcester, won an award for their work with the Mercy Center in Worcester and, Sheridan said, for all the good that they do and all the good that they will do."

Richard Harding, of Clinton, was recognized for his efforts to get the major events in Clinton on film for future generations. Harding told the crowd that he had collected 31,000 pictures of Clinton in the past nine years. Even while receiving his award from Sheridan, he took a moment to snap a picture of the occasion.

"There he goes again," Sheridan said.

Sheila Azorandia, treasurer of the Item Appeal, received the Founder's award and a check donated by the O'Toole family for the local charity.

"It will go to good work," Azorandia assured the crowd.

Frances Gadoua, of Clinton, also received an award for giving rides to those needing help getting to appointments.

Handing her the Shillelagh, a commemorative stick, Sheridan remarked that Gadoua should have been recognized sooner.

"She could have used it years ago on her sons," he said, with a laugh.

Caroline Dowd, who Sheridan called "everyone's Irish mother," received an award for work with the Leprechaun Society. Sheridan said of all the recipients, Dowd had been on the nomination list the longest.

"I never gave her one because I thought I'd given her one," Sheridan explained.

Special awards were also given out during the ceremony. Michael Cislak, Dean Weeks, Peter Chamberlain, Patrick Gaughan and David Kobus received the Martin McNamara V Award for their rescue of a mother and her children from a burning home on Sterling Street, Clinton. Each man, all firefighters except Kobus, received a Celtic cross.

The Michael "Slip" Tierney Award went to Clinton Town Clerk Phil Boyce for the time he's spent volunteering with the Crystal Club Charity. Boyce received an Irish crystal decanter and, Sheridan informed him, "something to put in it."

High School seniors Helen Kerrigan and Philip Weihl received the Tommy Greialis Awards, given each year to Clinton High students, which comes with a check. Kerrigan received her award for "a caring and giving heart." Kerrigan is planning to become a nurse.

Weihl also received this award for kindness, including raising funds for a friend who was involved in a fire and for opening his home to friends who were without electricity and food during the big ice storm in December.

Also receiving awards were: Elizabeth Daigneault, chief probation officer at Leominster District Court; area dentist Michael Casey; Tom and Joan Vitone for their work with Meals on Wheels, WHEAT and other charities; Jeffrey O'Neill, who retired from 35 years of teaching in Lancaster; oncologist Dr. Susan Donohue; Donald Lowe for service to Clinton; Jan Day, who retired from teaching in Clinton; Charles Moran for his work with the soup kitchen; Maureen and Rick Wetherell, for their service to the community; and Matthew Cavanaugh for his work with activities for youth and the elderly.

In addition, Denise Platt, of Clinton, won first prize in the annual soda bread competition.



Accepting awards for their World War II service from Ed Sheridan (right) during Clinton's Leprechaun Convention Saturday are (from left) George McNamara and George Marsh, of Clinton, and Irving Shanley, of Northboro. (Item photo/DONNA ROBERSON)