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St. Pat's for All Parade to highlight immigrants, refugees

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The 18th annual St. Pat's for All Parade will step off this Sunday, March 5 on Skillman Avenue in Sunnyside, Queens.

And while the parade will, as always; have a very local and Queens feel to it, the organizer will be thinking globally, specifically of immigrants and refugees around the world.

“St. Pat's for All 2017 honors disability rights advocate Anastasia Somoza and TV legend Phil Donahue. Parade welcomes Muslim and immigrant communities,” said a release.

Brendan Fay, Co-Chair of St. Pat's for All said: " As Irish people we are aware and remember our own story as refugees and immigrants fleeing famine and poverty only to arrive on the shores of the U.S. to encounter prejudice.

"This experience has shaped our lives and history. As Irish people we have transformed the anguish of the past into a compassionate advocacy for human rights across the globe.

"We have pressed for immigration reform. As Irish New Yorkers we raise our voices in support and welcome our immigrant and Muslim neighbors most affected by recent executive orders from the President Trump administration on refugees from Syria and on visitors from seven predominantly Muslim countries. I'm glad to see many of Irish community offering support to vulnerable communities."

This year's parade honorees are Anastasia Somoza, a human rights advocate, and Phil Donahue, celebrated pioneer in talk-show television.

Somoza, according to a parade release, spoke on the first night of the 2016 Democratic National Convention on Americans with disabilities.

"A passionate advocate for women's rights, she is also active with the New York chapter of the National Organization for Women.

"The daughter of immigrants, Anastasia was born to an Irish mother and a Nicaraguan father and was raised in New York City. She is fluent in both English and Spanish, and has been politically engaged and advocating for others since the age of nine.

"Anastasia works as a consultant with the Shield Institute, an organization that enables people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to live full, meaningful lives."

In 1967, the release continued, Phil Donahue changed the face of daytime television, pioneering the audience-participation talk format as the host of the Donahue show, a 29-year run which stands as the longest of its kind in U.S. television history.

“His TV journalism earned him 20 Emmy Awards – 9 as host and 11 for the show – as well as the George Foster Peabody Award; the President’s Award from the National Women’s Political Caucus; the Media Person of the Year Award from the Gay and Lesbian Alliance; and induction into the Academy of Television’s Hall of Fame.

“Donahue headlined numerous network and public television specials, including the Emmy Award-winning children’s special, Donahue and Kids, the landmark Ryan White Talks to Kids about AIDS. In 2006, Donahue co-produced and co-directed Body of War, a documentary film about a young Iraq War veteran left in a wheelchair by enemy gunfire who begins questioning America’s involvement in the war. Body of War captured, among others, the Grand Jury Prize at Michael Moore’s Traverse City Film Festival; and a People’s Choice Award at the Toronto Film Festival. A native of Cleveland, Donahue is married to award-winning actress, author and activist Marlo Thomas. They live in New York.”

Parade organizers said that among the hundred groups registered to take part in Sunday’s march are local community Irish organizations, immigrant communities, and LBGT groups.

There will be bagpipe bands, puppets, girl scouts, and stilt walkers. Irish Groups will include: the Shannon Gaels, Irish Arts Center, Irish American Writers and Artists, the Brehon Law Society.

Sports groups include the NYC Shamrocks Soccer Club and the Shannon Gaels GAA .

Baand will include County Cork Pipe Band, the pipes and drums of the FDNY and the Queens- based Asturian Pipe band.

Banners will honor Patrick Rice, Roger Casement, Kip Tiernan, Mother Jones and Oscar Wilde.

“We honor the memory of Fr. Dan Berrigan who died in May 2016 and Steven McDonald who died on January 10,” said Brendan Fay.

LGBT groups include Lavender and Green Alliance and Dignity NY Pride for Youth led by Pete Carney who will carry the banner of Robert Rygor, Irish gay community leader and AIDS activist who died in 1994.

Co-Chair Kathleen Walsh D'Arcy said: "As a child of Irish immigrants, I am very proud of St. Pat's For All, the inclusive St. Patrick's parade in Queens.

"We have always reached out to all the immigrant groups in Queens and we highlight our shared history of immigration, the joys and the trials of adopting a new country.

"This year, we hold hands and embrace the children and families who face threats and discrimination. We march together."

The parade starts at 1 pm. from 43rd St. on Skillman Avenue in Sunnyside. Contact the parade at www.stpatsforall.com.