



2024 Walks of Life Honoree

Marilyn Madigan

Marilyn Madigan counts as one of her proudest achievements her successful petition to the Vatican's Congregation for the Clergy to keep open St. Patrick's Parish in Cleveland's West Park neighborhood. When the parish was threatened with closure in 2009, Madigan led the effort to research the petition process, and the petition was ultimately considered by the Vatican under the name of "Marilyn Madigan et al."

The parish reopened in 2012. "If I struck out," laughed Madigan, a lifelong St. Pat's parishioner, "I could have lived with it. But I had to go down swinging."

That "never say die" attitude has taken Madigan a long way. The daughter of the late Jack and Catherine Finn Madigan, she attended St. Joseph Academy. She enrolled in St. John's College to pursue a nursing degree, but the school closed when Madigan was a sophomore. Undeterred, she finished her studies at Ursuline College. Madigan retired in 2018 after 41 years of service at University Hospitals Cleveland Medical Center—38 of those years as an Advanced Clinical Nurse in UH's Department of Operative Services.

Madigan began marching with the Ladies Drill Team of the West Side Irish American Club in 1969. She played the Irish sport of Camogie, serving as President of Cleveland's Emerald Camogie Team and as the Registrar of the North American Camogie Board in the early 1980s. Over the years, she has been active in nearly every Irish organization in Cleveland, often in leadership roles—as treasurer of Cleveland Comhaltas; Vice-President of the board of the Irish Music Academy; Board Trustee of the West Side Irish American Club; and Co-Chair of the Ohio Irish Festival. She is a columnist with *Irish News*, a Deputy Director of the United Irish Societies, and a longtime volunteer at the IAAS Walks of Life dinner.

However, Madigan's core passion is the Ladies Ancient Order of Hibernians (LAOH). As a new intensive care nurse, she met fellow West Parker Deneen O'Reilly, who suggested that Madigan join the LAOH. Madigan has now been an LAOH member for 47 years, serving in many offices, including Division, County and State President. She's also risen through the ranks in national leadership positions, as Fundraiser, Irish Historian, Treasurer, Secretary, Vice President, and, currently, President.

This September she will unveil a National Park Service "Wayside Marker" that will highlight the LAOH's role in spearheading the "Nuns of the Battlefield" monument in Washington D.C. Credit to the LAOH is relegated to the back side of the Civil War memorial. "That wasn't good enough for me," declared Madigan. "Installing the marker has been my goal since I was the LAOH National Historian." The marker will debut 100 years after the monument's dedication in 1924, when Adele Christy, the last Clevelander to serve, was National LAOH President.

As National President, Madigan has represented the LAOH at numerous international gatherings. In April 2024, she was honored by the *Irish Echo* newspaper as one of the Heroes of Irish America. Locally, she was chosen by the United Irish Societies as 1994 Co-Chair of the St. Patrick's Day Parade. The Boland Berry Division of the AOH selected her as the 2002 Hibernian of the Year. In 2019, she was Inducted into the Cleveland International Hall of Fame.