

## THE BIRTH OF THE ULSTER PROJECT

Following an extended pastoral exchange with a Clergyman in Manchester, Connecticut, Rev. Kerry Waterstone a Church of Ireland Priest, began to formulate a plan to help ease the tensions in N. Ireland. Canon Waterstone felt that the attitudes of teens from N. Ireland might be changed if they could see the way Americans live together in their "melting pot" society.

Nationally, the project began in the United States in 1975 and by 2003 the Ulster Project International had grown to 28 active American host communities paired with 8 N. Ireland communities. Since the projects inception in 1975 over 6,000 teens from N. Ireland have participated in the Ulster Project.



*James Maye  
N. Irish Teen*

"I can honestly say that the Ulster Project is an experience I will cherish for the rest of my life. I have gained lifelong friends, developed my faith and have grown as a person. The Ulster Project is something that every young teen should experience."

"The Ulster Project, to me, represents an opportunity that is truly one of a kind. It is hard to remember the great insecurities I felt prior to participating as a host teen in 2007. Being able to take part as a leader this past summer (2013) has been just as meaningful. I have been able to witness the change in 28 individual teens' personalities, as well as experience the growth of numerous strong bonds and friendships across divisions faced by both societies.

This project brings two communities together, building lifelong friendships."

*Kellyn McCarley  
Hutch Counselor*

"We started the Ulster Project as a way for Kaley to be busy and have fun this summer. We ended with a teen that was challenged mentally, emotionally, socially and physically. As a family, we made memories at home we will cherish always and gained an Irish daughter who means the world to us."

*Shelly Jirak  
Host Mom*

## HOW DOES IT WORK?

Under the sponsorship of the various US Ulster Projects, teens (half Catholic, half Protestant; half girls, half boys) from their paired N. Irish communities, come to the United States to live in private homes for a month. The teens live with the host families who are of the same gender and same faith are matched by a committee by the participating American churches.

Accompanied by adult counselors, the N. Irish participants range in age from 14 to 16 years, having been evaluated and selected by their teachers and clergy for their leadership potential. During the month, the entire group of N. Irish and American teens meet daily for activities, including encounter sessions, social activities, community service projects, and worship.

Because the Project works so well developing mutual trust and friendships among the N. Irish youth and their families, participating N. Irish leaders plan reunions and meetings after the youth return to Ireland, encouraging the continuation of those friendships formed during the Project month.

## How can I help?

