



# Irish Spring

## St. Paddy's parade signals changing seasons

**T**he signs of spring in Scranton are easy to spot. The sighting of the first robin, the sprouting of the first crocus and the raucous celebration of tens of thousands of emerald-clad citizens in the streets of the city.

Today is the 52nd annual St. Patrick's Day Parade. After spending a long, gray winter cooped up indoors, area residents are ready to bust out and greet the return of warmer weather in traditional Irish style.

That means marching bands, step dancers, floats, giant balloons and hooking up with old friends over a few pints of your favorite brew. It's a fun day for the whole family and a big economic boost for area businesses — especially pubs, hotels and restaurants.

If you want to learn more about the parade, a good place to start is **StPatParade.com**, the website for St. Patrick's Parade Association of Lackawanna County Inc. The site is full of good information about the parade, its participants, history and other related events.

### Pick your time and spot

There are 10 divisions with more than 12,000 total marchers in the parade, so it lasts for several hours. This may be too long for some of the wee ones, especially if temperatures are cool. Fortunately, the website has a complete list of all the groups that will be marching, and what time they gather at their staging area. If there is a specific group you want to see, you can time your

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visit based on when it starts and where you will be standing. There's also a map of the parade route on the site to help with your planning.

### Preliminary events

For those who plan to make a full day of it, you can start with a liquid breakfast at one of the downtown taverns that will open at 9 a.m. Next you can head over to St. Peter's Cathedral for the 10 a.m. Mass. The site has a link to St. Peter's website for more information. After church you can strap on your sneakers and run in the Brian Kelly Memorial Race at 11 a.m. There are sections on the site with race entry forms and results from past races. If you finish the race in a respectable time, you should be able to make the kick-off of the parade at noon.

There are many other resources available on **StPatParade.com** for those who want to get involved with the parade. While it's too late to get your group in the parade this year, there are parade entry forms on the site if you want to start planning for next year's march. Another section lists the rules participants need to observe when they march. The frequently asked questions section is also useful for potential marchers.

If you want to be a sponsor or donate to the parade committee, you can do that online as well. There are multiple levels of sponsorship detailed on the site. Most sponsors are invited to a V.I.P. night the week before the parade that is described in the information section.

Dignitaries, such as the grand marshal, parade marshal, president, etc., are listed for this year and sever-

al years prior. The parade association gives numerous awards to marching divisions for themes such as professional performance, Irish cultural heritage, most beautiful and more. Winners of the awards are posted on the site after the parade.

There's an Irish history section on the site, but it only has one link in it. In a town with so much Irish heritage, this section should have a lot more content. The photo section, however, has a wonderful collection of images from past parades. Looking at all of the local faces in these photos, you'd swear you were looking at pictures from the ol' sod. There's also a video section, but most of the videos are just collections of photos that are panned across the screen.

### Content needs some polish

**StPatParade.com** has lots of good resources regarding one of the biggest cultural events in the region. The design of the site, however, could use some retooling. While it doesn't suffer from an obnoxious overuse of leprechauns, shamrocks, rainbows and other Irish clichés, it could use a little more energy. A more dynamic banner at the top of the page would be a good place to start. The pages are organized consistently, but some elements feel randomly placed. The typography is also mostly unified with a few aberrations. The site shows its true colors with an Irish blessing at the bottom of the page: "May you live as long as you want and never want as long as you live."

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