



## 2023 Walks of Life Honoree

### Brendan Ring

Brendan Ring can truly say that he's met and dined with some of the most well-known names in the music business during the last generation. As the owner for 19 years of Nighttown, the popular nightclub in Cleveland Heights, he has made many impressive contacts.

Born in Ireland's County Kerry, Brendan is one of Owen and Clare Ring's four children. He left Ireland during his third year of college in Limerick to spend the summer in Manhattan after being recruited to play Gaelic Football in New York. His plan was to return home the following September. But three months after arriving in America, he met Siobhan Sinnott, whose parents were immigrants from Dublin and Galway. A year later, she became his wife. "I started bartending at the Blarney Stone in Manhattan and four years later opened my own bar, Joxer Daley's, in Queens," Brendan said.

Siobhan, who grew up in Queens, served as controller for a steel wire and coating producer. In 1992, she was transferred to Akron, so Brendan sold his bar and followed her to Ohio. He took a job bartending at Nighttown and within a year was named the restaurant's general manager. He did so well in managing the business that in 2001, he purchased Nighttown.

Having developed a fondness for jazz while growing up in Kerry, he decided to incorporate more live music within the dark, wood-paneled ambience of the old-time club. He also dedicated a room at the restaurant to the Press Club of Cleveland's visual archives that depicted historic and iconic photos of Cleveland media personalities, politicians, and local celebrities.

The club attracted many national and even foreign musicians and on many nights the music continued well into the morning hours as musicians, such as Wynton Marsalis, McCoy Tyner, Diana Krall, Ray Brown, the Count Basie Orchestra, Maynard Ferguson, The Fureys, New Barleycorn, and The Brendan Bowyer showband, played at the club.

Nighttown was soon designated as one of the world's top 100 great jazz clubs by Downbeat Magazine in its "International Jazz Guide." Brendan said the magazine rated the nightclub among the top five jazz venues in this country. In 2007, Brendan was awarded the Cleveland Arts Prize's Martha Joseph Special Citation for his service to the arts. As his business grew, Brendan expanded the main dining room to seat 450 guests and purchased nearby buildings to provide additional parking.

Soon after the pandemic started in 2020, Brendan quickly realized that most restaurants would be forced to close, and Nighttown became one of the first in Ohio to lock its doors. But during the pandemic, Brendan was approached by a real estate company from Tel Aviv who wanted to buy his restaurant and the surrounding property. "My wife and I decided to sell and see the world while we can, so we closed on the deal on New Year's Eve 2020 and have been traveling ever since," he said.

2023 Walks of Life Award of the Irish American Archives Society, Cleveland OH