



**IAAS Walks of Life 2008
Sheila Murphy Crawford**

Sheila Murphy Crawford is Founder and Director of the Murphy Irish Arts Center, established as a non-profit organization to support Irish cultural activities. The Center was founded thirty years ago, in 1978, with thirty-five students. This year more than 250 students, ranging in age from five to thirty, dance under Crawford's expert guidance.

The high rankings achieved by her dancers in both national and international competitions—her choreography took third place at the 2006 *World Championships of Irish Dancing* in Belfast—have earned Crawford a position as Adjudicator of *An Coimisiun*, the world governing organization for Irish Dance.

Her devotion to things Irish, and her commitment to passing on Ireland's rich cultural traditions and enduring values, goes beyond Irish dancing. Born Sheila Murphy, the daughter of immigrants from Mayo, Crawford served five terms as president of the Ladies Ancient Order of Hibernians, a religious and cultural organization that raises funds for charity. In 1993, she was honored as Hibernian of the Year.

In 1995, after years of service dedicated to the maintenance of the Irish Cultural Garden in Rockefeller Park, she became Director of the organization that oversees that verdant spot. (Crawford has been Vice President of the Cultural Garden Federation of Cleveland for many years.) She is currently spearheading a refurbishing of the Irish Garden.

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