

<p>1951 - 2020</p>  <p>70th ANNIVERSARY COMHALTAS CEOLTOIRI</p>	 <h1>COMHALTAS</h1> <p>Frankie McCormick          North American Provincial Chair          6 Greenbriar Lane, Pt. Washington NY 11050          Phone: 917-612-8721          email: Mccormickfip@aol.com</p>	
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**To my North American Comhaltas Family.**

We are in the midst of something unequalled and unparalleled in personal challenges in most of our lifetimes and hopefully the likes of which we hope to never encounter again. So many of us on a daily, even hourly basis, have faced a new test in getting through the day. From simple tasks as going to the grocery store, speaking through masks and plastic barriers to the realization of not being able to visit loved ones. Technology and Social Media have picked up a small part of that slack and have afforded family members some comfort knowing that they can pick up a phone or electronic device to see each other and feel a sense of security speaking to each other and easing their feeling of vulnerability or loneliness. We as a large family ourselves need to make sure that we are reaching out to and taking care of our Comhaltas families within our communities as well as within our communities at large. Please take 10 minutes out of your day and phone people you feel may be too afraid to leave their homes. Ask what you can do for them, it may be just that simple as having a conversation with them, reassuring them that you are only a phone call away, we owe it to ourselves to care for one another.

Our Comhaltas family has had many temporary setbacks this year with the cancellation of our April Convention in San Francisco which was such a painful thing for the Steering Committee to have to come to terms with after two and a half years of preparation and buildup. Our own two Regional Fleadhanna cancelled and the All-Ireland in Mullingar suffering the same fate. One recent bright spot was the initiative of the Murphy Roche Branch in Chicago (who were originally to have hosted the 2020 Mid-West Fleadh Cheoil) hosting an online music competition, "Chicago eComortas Ceoil" and opening it up for all of North America and abroad to participate.

The challenge this year has been to keep our spirits up, to believe that in time we will be able to go back to a normal life, and to once again embrace the fun and joy of dancing at the monthly Ceili, preparing for competition, playing at a seisiun, practicing in group settings without worry or fear. We still have a long road ahead of us in 2020 and we are already thinking of the challenges ahead in 2021.

There have been many initiatives undertaken this year in light of our current challenges. Slainte 2020, to name one, has been organized to help support those in the New York area in need of financial support who otherwise may have no other recourse. Kitchen Pantries have been set up to literally feed those unable to leave their homes or who are facing hardships. *It is our time to help as a family.* Let us know of challenges you are facing as individuals, families and communities and what we can do to help. Send us your stories of champions in your own areas or States, those who have gone the extra mile already to reach out and help within their own communities.

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*Frankie McCormick*