



Buena Park teachers Ireland-bound

Irish nonprofit pays for speech, language teachers to instruct across the Atlantic.

By MICHAEL MELLO
THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

BUENA PARK • For the past decade, Irish families have made their way to Orange County to take advantage of services at the Speech and Language Development Center, special education services that are much more difficult to find in their home country.

And with every family that came, there were invitations for the teachers and therapists from the Buena

Park school to come to Ireland to share their knowledge.

That time has now come. Eleven Speech and Language Development Center staff members will spend their spring break this week in Ireland, bringing a combined 200 years of experience. There, they'll instruct families of special needs children about different methods of learning, communication development, nonverbal language, and behavioral issues.

"For years, it's been, 'if only we could,'" Speech and Language Development Center Principal Dawn O'Connor said, "and now we finally can."

The week will include meeting some of the fam-



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Speech and Language Development Center staffers Maena Clements, left, David Cavanaugh, Gina Prado and Dawn O'Connor will teach in Ireland this week.

ilies who had come to Buena Park for help in the past.

"Some of them are coming 300 to 400 miles" to the seminar, O'Connor said.

An Irish nonprofit, Clare

Crusaders, raised the money to bring the center's teachers to Ireland. Clare Crusaders was formed in 2005 to help children with special needs. The organi-

zation runs a clinic in Barefield, County Clare, that provides free therapy to 120 patients.

The group raised the funds at the urging of Jean Maguire, who had come to California to get help for her son, who has difficulties with language and auditory processing.

During an interview with Ireland's Channel 3 television, Maguire explained why she sought help in California.

"We were frustrated here in Ireland with the lack of services and the direction we were getting. We knew there was more we could do," Maguire said.

"Obviously not every

Speech and Language Development Center

Location: 8699 Holder St., Buena Park

Established: 1955

Services: The nonpublic school and therapy center offer children and adults from 6 months to 21 years speech and language therapy, counseling, adapted physical education and physical therapy. The school has about 300 students from Orange, Los Angeles, Riverside and San Bernardino counties.

Information: slcdc.net

Source: Speech and Language Development Center

IRELAND: Families learn how to better handle kids' needs

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Irish family can take off and go (to Buena Park), so I approached them about coming to Ireland.”

Parents and doctors have been invited to attend this week's seminar to learn how they can better treat and handle children who have special needs.

“It's a fantastic opportunity for parents, not only with Clare, but around the country,” said Ann Morton, manager of the Clare Crusaders Clinic.

Counseling supervisor David Cavanaugh said the trip has been a good opportunity for the development center's staff, too.

“We've spent a lot of time working with one another, preparing,” he said.

“It's nice for me ... to look

On the Web

Some of the Speech and Language Development Center staff will blog about their trip to Ireland at sldc.net.

You can learn about Clare Crusaders at clarecrusaders.ie

at the way I teach and be able to share that,” teacher Ben Rodriguez said. “Parents are going to benefit from this.”

There are nearly 200 instructors at the nonprofit Speech and Language Development Center, who work with 300 students who come to Buena Park from Orange, Riverside,

San Bernardino and Los Angeles counties. Of those, 11 were chosen to go to Ireland because their expertise fits well with the needs of the Irish families.

“It's an honor to have been chosen that (the administration) felt we had something that's important to share,” teacher Gretchen Reynolds said.

Speech therapist Trish Pfeiffer said she has already packed her warm gloves to combat the brisk Irish weather. She added that she is excited to get over there and share with families eager to help their children.

“It's an exploration in learning,” she said of the symposium. “It's a chance to go over there and be more effective. We hope this is just the beginning.”



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Speech and Language Development Center staffers Trish Pfeiffer, left, Gretchen Reynolds and Ben Rodriguez discuss their plans for their workshops in Ireland.