



ERIN  
HARREL

of Cape Coral  
is the mother  
of three children

## “Erin Go Braugh”

Ireland **forever...**

**S**aint Patrick's Day provides an opportunity for all of us to take part in a little bit of Irish culture. Whether it's drinking green beer, eating corned beef and cabbage, wearing green or looking for Leprechauns and lucky clovers, people seem to enjoy celebrating the Irish culture — Irish or not.

My children's names — Riley, Jude and Margaret — were carefully selected from our Irish ancestors. As a descendant of the Lynch family, I had always taken great pride in my Irish heritage. (I have heard all of the Irish jokes: “Erin go braugh-less” after the Irish version of “Ireland forever,” the ones involving beer drinking and catchy lyrics.) However, I hadn't shared the real, rich heritage of Ireland with my kids.

Last year, my mother traveled to Ireland, where she rode through the countryside more than 300 miles on a guided bike tour. Her stories of pedaling through towns on winding roads and villagers' genuine hospitality were awe-inspiring. The kids listened intently for hours as she told of the great potato famine and why villagers still leave their front doors open.

Going to Ireland with a family of five won't be a reality any time soon, so I decided to enrich the kids with their Irish heritage here at home.

Greg and I took the kids to the Celtic Caloosahatchee festival last year in downtown Fort Myers. The Kellyn Celtic Arts School of Irish Dance performers mesmerized my



Photo special to SW FL Parent & Child

Riley as the dancers skipped across the stage and twirled about with rapid, repetitive movements.

I picked up a business card and learned the school practiced in Naples, Fort Myers and Cape Coral. I went home and checked their Web site, [irish-dance.com](http://irish-dance.com). But that was about as far as I went with it.

Six months later, when I realized Riley needed a little something to help build her confidence and keep her physically active, I remembered her fascination with Irish dance and signed her up with the Kellyn school.

Miss Jaimie, the instructor, acclimated Riley to the class by showing her steps the class was performing and allowing her to jump right in. Riley had a ball and has been skipping dif-

ferent versions of the traditional jig and reel ever since.

When I tuck Riley in at night, I often find her reading her 400 page book, “Everything Irish.” The fact that she wants to know more about her heritage and is reading up on it is wonderful.

Four-year-old Maggie recently started participating and is so precious to watch as she bounces across the stage in her little Irish ghillies and Celtic gown. (Ghillies are the black soft shoes similar to a ballet slipper.)

Greg and I are hoping we don't have to wait until we're 60 to take our first trip to Ireland. But in the meantime, we'll continue to enjoy the Irish festivals here and search for our pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. **pc**

**Contact us:** We enjoy hearing from you. Send letters or comments to: [pamela@swflparentchild.com](mailto:pamela@swflparentchild.com).