

**SKAGIT COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
RECORD OF THE PROCEEDINGS
THURSDAY, AUGUST 2, 2001**

- 9:00 a.m. – 10:00 p.m. Executive Session – Personnel, Litigation and Land Acquisition
- *T 10:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. Visitation – High School Students from Northern Ireland
- 10:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. Pioneer Picnic at Pioneer Park in La Conner

Visitation – High School Students from Northern Ireland

Brian Hurst, Cascades Job Corps, advised that the student visitors from Northern Ireland had been in Skagit County for nearly three weeks. They would be leaving for home on Sunday. Mr. Hurst then gave an overview of the program.

The bomb in Enniskillen, Northern Ireland, on Remembrance Sunday, 1987, killed eleven people and injured many more. It could have provoked a response of anger and revenge. Instead, what emerged was a dignity that reflected tolerance, understanding and reconciliation – the true Spirit of Enniskillen.

The Spirit of Enniskillen Bursaries pays tribute to this spirit and to the efforts of those who brought good out of evil. They celebrate the ability of the community to work together to overcome division. Since 1989, over five hundred young people and adults have participated.

In the past, violence has served to increase fear and vision between the two main Catholic and Protestant communities in Northern Ireland. All too often decreased communication and lack of political accord has led to increased polarization and mistrust between the two cultures.

To help reverse this trend, the Spirit of Enniskillen program encourages young people to broaden their horizons by traveling to other countries – also experiencing community divisions – where they gain first hand experience of how people from different backgrounds are learning to live together.

On return, participants are expected to reflect on their experiences and are invited to become part of a “critical yeast”, promoting the principles of equity and interdependence between all communities. If they so wish, they may also join and get further support from the Future Voices Project, formed and run by past-participants of the scheme.

Throughout the program, participants have opportunities to work and debate with other young people from a range of different backgrounds and cultures in belief that being open to listening to others does not necessarily mean having to compromise on principles and values. On the contrary, it can often help to clarify and refine them.

Underlying the practice of the Spirit of Enniskillen is an acceptance that young people are naturally curious about themselves and others and have a real need to learn about and to widen their experience of the world. They often also want to be personally involved in current issues of the day and, contrary to much popular opinion, have a strong desire to make a positive contribution for the good of society. When they do choose to work with civic courage, their efforts can have a constructive impact well beyond their immediate circles.

A key assumption of the scheme is that “a lesson learned with humor is a lesson retained”. The Spirit of Enniskillen program reflects this with a balanced mix of work, relaxation and enjoyment. The written reports and comments of those who undertake the challenge show that their memories are warm, positive and lasting.

Each student then came forward and introduced himself/herself and talked about their visit to the United States.

ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Anderson made a motion to adjourn the proceedings. Commissioner Munks seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
SKAGIT COUNTY, WASHINGTON**

Ted W. Anderson, Chairman

Kenneth A. Dahlstedt, Commissioner

Don Munks, Commissioner

ATTEST:

JoAnne Giesbrecht, Clerk of the Board
Skagit County Board of Commissioners