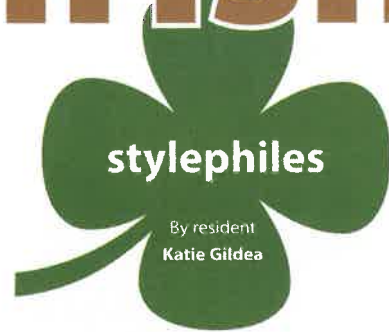


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Charlie Lord & his company Celtic Clothing bring the best of Ireland to lucky customers in North America



Chadds Ford resident and Irish native Charlie Lord—owner of the online business Celtic Clothing—will often forgo Route 1 and instead drive the back roads from his home in Chadds Ford to the company warehouse in West Grove. For Charlie, the rolling hills and rural splendor of the Brandywine Valley transport him back to his native Ireland. “When I drive along these country roads and see the horses and the sheep, it looks like Ireland to me. It looks and feels right. This feels like home.”

Although Charlie’s background is primarily in business and not fashion—he holds a master’s degree in business education from Temple University—selling clothing is a big part of his family’s heritage. “My grandmother and mother used to make clothes back in Ireland. My grandfather died relatively young, so my grandmother had to work to feed all eight kids,” he recalls. “As a little boy, I remember going to the markets in Belfast with my mother and grandmother when they were selling their clothes. There’s that family historical connection that I take pride and honor in.”

For more than 25 years, Charlie and Celtic Clothing have brought a piece of Ireland home to many Irish Americans with authentic and handcrafted traditional Irish apparel, accessories, and gifts. Charlie was inspired to start the company while pursuing his business degree in England. “I did my entrepreneurship thesis on selling Irish products to the American market, and I thought, ‘This might actually work.’” After his immigration to the United States in 1987, and subsequent marriage to Philadelphia-native Janice Pietrowicz, Charlie’s vision became a reality. In 1995, he started Celtic Clothing, harnessing the emergence of ecommerce, and hasn’t looked back ever since.

It’s this same connection to the motherland that many Irish Americans discover at Celtic Clothing. “Our customers want something that’s authentically Irish,” says Charlie. The company website offers everything from wool sweaters, tweed vests and hats to wool blankets, authentic Guinness merchandise, and traditional Irish jewelry, like Claddagh rings. “These things are all identifiable with Ireland,” explains Charlie, “You are literally wearing your Irishness on your sleeve when you wear one of our products. They are an expression of Irish identity.”

A best-selling product for men is the quintessential tweed flat cap. “It’s a very popular look,” says Charlie. “It’s a hat that looks good on everyone. Ireland is very well known for them, and it’s a must-have for every Irish American man’s

wardrobe.” For women, Charlie recommends Irish knitwear, like traditional Aran wool sweaters, capes, cardigans, and wraps. With their timeless design and quality construction, they will be wardrobe staples for years.

Charlie sources merchandise from all 32 counties in Ireland—like County Tyrone, Donegal, Mayo, Kerry, and Dublin—and is on a first name basis with his manufacturers. “When I go back home to Ireland, I go to the places where the items are made. I have a great working relationship with Hanna Hats in Donegal, who are the last company making hats in Ireland using Irish tweed. I have the ability to source authentic products, and that’s a real key to my Irish American customer base.”

Celtic Clothing ships products all across North America from its warehouse in West Grove. While this is not Charlie’s only job—he is also chair of the business department at Haverford High School—he is scheduled to retire from teaching in June in order to dedicate all his time to the company. Despite the challenges of COVID-19, Charlie says that business is booming. “We actually did better business this past year, although it’s regrettable given the

circumstances. Obviously, we would much prefer that everyone was healthy and safe.”

Charlie’s family plays a key role in Celtic Clothing’s success. His wife Janice, who is a school psychologist at Haverford High School, helps out with the business. And during the summer months—when the Lord family travels to Ireland to visit family and source new products—Charlie and Janice’s children, Grace and Connor, both students at Unionville High School, come along. They not only enjoy learning about the family business, but also discover more about their Irish heritage, keeping the Celtic tradition close to their hearts.

When asked what impact being an Irish immigrant has on his business, Charlie is quick to respond. “It’s no coincidence that I’m working in Irish fashion, because it gives me the opportunity to keep in touch with Ireland. It’s something that I know, understand, and enjoy. I’m constantly on the phone with people in Ireland, working with Irish manufacturers and distributors. As an immigrant, the desire, motivation, and enthusiasm to keep that connection with Ireland makes this not feel like work at all.”

Visit celticclothing.com for more information and to purchase authentic Irish apparel, gifts, and more.



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