

**The Jig Is Up For Fast-Stepping Attorney**  
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## **The Jig Is Up For Fast-Stepping Attorney**

*Irish dancing hobby is truly a family affair*

By KAREN ALI

With an old country last name like “Flaherty,” you might guess that Regina Flaherty does something that’s traditionally Irish. And you would be right.

The attorney at the Westport-based firm of Levett Rockwood has been entertaining audiences as an Irish step dancer ever since she was 6 years old.

“They loved to get the young ones out to do the jig,” laughed Flaherty, who these days performs mostly for free at nursing homes, hospitals and an occasional club or bar.

Her children, ages 13 and 15, also dance, as does her sister, nieces and nephews. “It’s part of our culture.... The elderly enjoy the performances,” said Flaherty.

“They love it. They get really excited. “The music really touches them, even though they may have some memory loss.”

Irish step dancers are known for their fast footwork, stiff upper bodies, colorful costumes and, sometimes, wooden shoes. Flaherty, who grew up in Norwalk, said she learned to dance way

before “Riverdance,” an Irish dance show, began touring internationally to rave reviews and massive audiences in the 1990s. The oldest of six children, she studied under a dance teacher who stayed in the business long enough to teach Flaherty’s own children.

Flaherty took lessons until she was about 19. Her investment in time and effort would later pay off in college and law school. When she performed in bars, a handful of appreciative friends would come along to watch. “All of my friends would drink for free if I danced,” Flaherty said.

The basic steps are not that difficult to learn, Flaherty said. In college, she taught some friends who wanted to learn a few steps in anticipation of St. Patrick’s Day. “The steps become more complicated as you progress,” she explains.

Flaherty started taking lessons again at age 28. These days, she attends the occasional workshop to brush up on her skills. And she practices whenever she can fit it into her schedule. “It’s great to practice because it’s cardiovascular exercise,” said Flaherty, who also keeps in shape by working out at the gym.

### **Busy Holiday**

Of course, the high point of the year for step dancers is St. Patrick’s Day. Flaherty says she performs up to six different shows on the holiday and perhaps two or three on the day before. “We specialize in senior citizens or a church who wants us or a bar in and around Fairfield County,” said Flaherty, who owns traditional Irish dresses, but prefers to perform in a more understated green and black outfit.

Flaherty, a business lawyer whose practice also focuses on commercial real estate and trusts and estates, said that her employers Levett Rockwood have been wonderful about allowing her the time to pursue her hobby. “Actually, Levett Rockwood has made it possible,” Flaherty said.

It’s not just the dancing that keeps Flaherty going. It’s all about making audiences feel happy.

“The music makes you want to move your feet,” she said, noting that her audiences are made up of people of all ages. “It’s not just the senior citizens that enjoy it.”•