

It's no wonder that Eibhlin Byrne, Lord Mayor of Dublin, Ireland, is beloved by her constituents. Students and faculty at Furman University had the chance to see firsthand how delightful she is during the week of Sept 14 – 19 when she visited as Fellow-in-residence. Her intelligence, vast knowledge of policy and social issues, and warm affect impressed those fortunate enough to spend time with her.

While on Furman's campus, she visited classes and discussed diverse topics such as world politics, the sociology of gender, and corporate social responsibility. She ate several meals with students, providing a unique opportunity for these lucky individuals to engage in casual, small group conversation with this remarkable political world leader. She even participated in a French café, where she conversed in French with a group of students studying the language.

Over and over her message to students was that it is important for everyone to take responsibility for themselves and their communities. In order for a community to thrive, its citizens must be attuned to needs around them and look for ways that they as individuals can make a difference. As she told the students in Prof. Dorianne Norwood's class on Public Policy and Administration, "There is nothing in life worse than being a bystander."

Lord Mayor Byrne's public address, entitled, "Moving the Celtic Tiger: Civic Leadership in 21st Century Dublin," was given on September 17 at Furman. In her talk, a J. Kelly Sisk Lecture in Public Affairs, she focused on the importance of community involvement. According to the Lord Mayor, a stable economy, a first rate educational system, and innovation and creativity are all interdependent, and they are only successful if they are accompanied by a neighborly focus on social concerns. Progress in one area can also bring about positive change in another, and so a community must confront issues together.

In addition, Lord Mayor Byrne helped to announce the NEXT Technology Center, a Greenville Chamber of Commerce initiative. This exciting venture is patterned after Dublin's Digital Hub, which is responsible for bringing in new business, streamlining development for entrepreneurs, and spurring on Dublin's economic boom of the last decade. The hope among Greenville's leaders is that the NEXT Center will put our city on the cutting edge of technology and high impact entrepreneurship through creating a community that will foster collaboration and synergy between innovators and technology specialists.

As the highest ranking public figure in Dublin, Lord Mayor Byrne uses politics as a vehicle for making the changes she considers critical. She is not interested in politics for the sake of politics. What she seeks to do is use politics to achieve a sense of unity and common purpose for the diverse groups within her constituencies.

During her five years as Councillor, her appointments have included service on the Housing Strategic Policy Group, the Dublin Regional Authority, and the Dublin Bay Taskforce. She also chaired both the National Council on Older People and the Visiting Committee for Dochas Prison. Prior to her election to City Council, she contributed to her community as an advocate for the homeless, as Senior Manager for Child and Family Services, and as a volunteer for the Rape Crisis Centre.

Her educational qualifications include a B.A. in French, Economics, and History, H. Dips in Education and TEFL, and a Masters in Equality Studies. She is married to Ken, and they have three daughters, Clare, Lisa, and Aisling.