



## College Scholarship Recipient 2023 - Siobhan Kelly

Prompt: Irish dance is a way of life - explain what this statement means to you

I live at the dance studio. Not literally of course, but I spend a minimum of 12 hours a week there. Gearing up for World's, it was even more than that. Add in the countless weekends spent at competitions and extra practices, and it's no wonder someone created merchandise that says "I can't. I have dance".

As dancers, everything is done with dance in mind: the amount of sleep we get, the food we eat, when we do our homework, and more. We spend years of our lives, hours and hours a week training, all because we love what we do.

I just completed my first year at St. John's University. One reason I chose to stay home for college was not only to continue dancing, but to continue the relationships developed through this lifestyle. I look forward to seeing my students every Thursday and the tiny bundles of energy I teach on Saturday. My teachers, students, and fellow dancers have all been a major influence. As I said to a non-dancer friend, "Irish dancing is its own special world."

Last semester, I took the class *Philosophy of the Human Person*. We focused on the idea that all our identities and roles are related. The fact that I'm a dancer is directly related to the fact that I am Irish, and have good time management (most of the time). It is also related to the fact that I am a student, a teacher, a friend, an athlete. Irish dance is my way of life because it permeates every aspect of who I am and what I do, even if in the smallest way.

Recently, I was thinking about dancing and how long I might compete. I don't have an answer yet, but I know that even when I eventually stop, I will never be able to leave Irish dancing. The fact that I am or was a dancer will always be one of my identities, you simply cannot change that. I am certain that at the very least I will always come running back for our school feisanna, to assist at the recital, and whenever Jean asks me to sub.

Dancing has given me so much more than a trophy. While it is a glorious feeling to stand atop the box, it is not the be-all and end-all. Dance has given me the satisfaction of going to practice every night and giving it my best, then going home drenched in sweat. It's given me dance parties where we scream Miley Cyrus's "The Climb" at the top of our lungs. It's given me countless memories while waiting for awards with friends, and the excitement of running from ballroom to ballroom to see everybody dance at Majors.

In the words of famed ballet dancer and choreographer Jacques d'Amboise, "Dance is your pulse, your heartbeat, your breathing. It's the rhythm of your life. It's the expression in time and movement, in happiness, joy, sadness and envy." I couldn't agree more.