

# **Southern California Rose of Tralee 2007**

## **Aileen Whelan**

*Aileen Ciara Whelan was the twenty-fourth young woman to be crowned the Southern California Rose of Tralee and given the distinct honor of representing Southern California in Tralee, Ireland. Aileen joined a unique sisterhood of women, beginning with the first Southern California Rose in 1984, who have continued the tradition of the Rose of Tralee in Southern California for more than two decades.*

*Aileen was born twenty-one years ago in Santa Barbara, California. She graduated from the University of California at Riverside in June 2008 with a degree in biology. She counts biochemistry as her favorite subject and her special area of study at UC Riverside is microbiology. Aileen is an alumni of La Reina High School.*

*Her future plans include graduating from law school and practicing law in Ireland as a patent lawyer. Currently, she is a dance teacher at the Claddaugh School of Irish Dancing.*

*At the Grand Ball, Aileen performed a party piece for the audience by showing her talents as an Irish step-dancer.*

*Aileen is the daughter of Donal Whelan and Eithne O'Neill. She has an older brother, Shane, and an older sister, Cathie. Aileen describes her family as close-knit – traveling together and playing games together. They are also encouraging of Aileen and come to her dance competitions to show their unwavering support. One of the family's favorite things to do is to watch Irish soccer games together.*

*Her family's Irish roots are found in Counties Mayo, Kildare, Roscommon, Dublin. Her father grew up in Dublin and her mother in Roscommon and immigrated to the United States in the early 1980's. Her grandmother Lucy is from Roscommon and her grandmother Lily is from Mayo. It was her grandmother Lily who told Aileen about the Rose of Tralee and was Aileen's inspiration for participating in the Rose Program.*

*The blue-eyed dark haired Aileen spends much of her free time volunteering with the elderly and tutoring small children. She claims And Still We Rise and Taming of the Shrew as well as any works by W.B. Yeats, as some of her favorite literature. She loves watching soccer and hurling and her travels have taken her to Ireland, New Zealand, Scotland, Canada, and throughout most of the United States.*

*Aileen Ciara Whelan was chosen on March 17, 2007 from thirteen young women of Irish heritage to represent Southern California in Tralee, Ireland.*