

- ∞ **Youth Leadership Conference aims to cultivate the next President Obama**
- ∞ **200 young global citizens gather in Dublin for mentoring on how to become Leaders of the Future**

**Monday 17<sup>th</sup> August 2009:** An inaugural international youth leadership conference, which will fuel the leadership qualities of young people from around the world by empowering and inspiring them to become the next Barack Obama, Martin Luther King, Bob Geldof, Mother Theresa or Nelson Mandela, opened in Dublin today. ‘**The Albert Schweitzer’s Leadership for Life**’ (ASLFL) Programme, developed by Foróige in Ireland in partnership with ICCUSA Foundation Inc. (Irish Chamber of Commerce, USA), offers an exciting and pioneering approach to youth leadership by helping young global citizens develop the skills, vision and confidence to become effective leaders.

An international delegation of 200 young people aged between 15 and 18 from the US, Korea, Nigeria, the UK will join students from Ireland, Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom at the conference. The delegates have demonstrated a strong desire to become active leaders in their communities and have been nominated by youth workers and volunteer leaders in their own countries to attend the conference to help them reach their personal leadership potential.

Speaking at the launch of the conference **John Cahill, Assistant CEO of Foróige** said, *“Foróige is excited to offer this innovative programme to young people from all over the world, in partnership with the ICCUSA foundation. By using non-traditional educational approaches to youth leadership, the programme will inspire and challenge the young participants. This non-formal approach recognises that while traditional education is extremely important it is often an experience that tends to happen outside the class-room that fuels the passion of individuals and motivates them to become more than they thought they could be.”*

*By fostering the intellectual, social and emotional competencies of young people within our approach we provide young people with the necessary tool kit to become effective leaders in whatever area of life their individual passion may lie.”*

Participants at the conference will be encouraged to develop a ‘can do’ attitude. They will attend workshops each day to improve their communication, problem solving, personal and team work skills and learn the art of critical analysis thinking. Personal development is a large part of the process for those involved in understanding their own values, prejudices and identifying their personal and professional goals for the future. Young people will also be encouraged to adventure beyond their own personal comfort zones and perceived capabilities to realise their full potential as leaders of the future. They will also get the opportunity to discuss and debate matters of global importance

including social, economic and environmental issues. Delegates learn to take personal responsibility for exercising leadership, they cultivate an understanding and appreciation of multiculturalism and they develop self esteem.

On returning home delegates will continue to be supported and encouraged by staff and volunteers in their communities who will mentor them on their personal leadership journeys and they will be given any assistance required to achieve their goals from the Foróige Leadership team and the ICCUSA Foundation alike.

Charly O'Reilly, Member of Chillax Youth Café, Co. Wicklow and a member of the Reference Panel of Foróige was one of the 200 delegates attending the conference. She said, "I am delighted to have been chosen to take part in the first international youth leadership programme in Ireland. I don't believe in waiting around for others to take action when I see something needs to be done so I'm really excited to meet some like-minded young people and share ideas. I'm most looking forward to setting my leadership goals so that when I go home I can really make a positive impact on my community and who knows after that... Watch this space!"

**Ambassador to the 'ASLFL' programme, Hollywood Actor Matt McCoy of 'L.A. Confidential', 'The Hand that Rocks the Cradle' and popular TV series Seinfeld fame, who flew into Dublin especially for the conference, said,** *"This is an exciting opportunity for young leaders. The 'ASLFL' Programme supports the young people involved to be confident and courageous. We encourage them to take personal responsibility in exercising their leadership and to lead by example through their words and actions. I have no doubt that the next Barack Obama, Neil Armstrong, Mary McAleese or Nelson Mandela is in waiting and the young people who have participated in the programme have the potential to make history, shape the future of communities and take their place amongst the greatest leaders of all time."*

**Maurice Buckley, International President, ASLFL said,** *"We are delighted to partner with Foróige, Ireland's leading youth development organisation, in bringing this inaugural international youth leadership programme to Ireland. Our future will need courageous leadership to make our world a more prosperous, peaceful and all inclusive place to live. Our partnership with Foróige identifies the future stewards of our globe and we are committed to supporting these young leaders in the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead."*

As part of the conference, the delegation of global citizens will also meet inspirational guest speakers from Ireland and abroad including:-

- ∞ Jacqueline Murekatete, a human rights activist and genocide survivor from Rwanda.
- ∞ Dylan Haskins, a 22 year old from Dublin who owns his own independent record label called hideaway records and has just opened an all ages creative space in Temple Bar.

- ∞ Galway hurler, Alan Kerins who has raised over a quarter of a million euro for a number of charity projects in South Africa through his charity, the Alan Kerins African Projects.
- ∞ Pádraig O'Ceidigh, managing director of Aer Arann.

The programme is a partnership between Foróige and ICCUSA Foundation and is supported by international partners; Co-operation Ireland, Hoby and Hoby UK, who are represented by participants from Northern Ireland, the USA and the UK at the conference. The programme has also received immense support from the founding sponsors; Mark Pigott, Nasser Kazeminy, Bombardier and Pfizer.

**For further information:**

Eleanor Newman, Gordon MRM, 087 6440678

**Editor's Notes:**

**Foróige:** - Foróige, the National Youth Development Organisation promotes learning for personal and community development. The organisation offers community based, carefully structured, learning activities rooted in an innovative curriculum. It uses a multi pronged approach in its service provision which enables the organisation to meet the developmental needs of young people in general as well as focusing on vulnerable young people with specific needs. It's range of youth work services include; Foróige Clubs, Local Youth Services, Youth Development Projects, Youth Information Centres and the Big Brother Big Sister Mentoring Programme.

**ICCUSA:** - ICCUSA is a non-profit membership organization that actively promotes the business interests of its members and the development of economic, commercial, financial and educational relationships between the United States and the island of Ireland. Its membership consists of executives, professionals and entrepreneurs in the U.S., Ireland and Northern Ireland. The ICCUSA Foundation, Inc. based in New Providence, New Jersey, USA. Operating as the flagship program of the ICCUSA Foundation, Inc., a 501 (c) (3) non-profit charitable organization that actively promotes educational, economic, commercial and financial relations between the U.S. and Ireland, ASLFL's efforts meet the educational mission of the Ireland Chamber while providing members with the knowledge that they are creating the world of the future – a more prosperous, peaceful world with strong and courageous leadership free of bigotry, ambivalence and cultural ignorance.