



## Ireland leads the way

The ICCUSA Foundation Inc and Foróige launched the inaugural international Youth Leadership Conference and the Albert Schweitzer's Leadership for Life programme.

Could one of Ireland's young people become the next Barack Obama, Martin Luther King, Bob Geldof, Mother Theresa, Nelsen Mandela, or Mahatma Gandhi?

A cross-cultural learning initiative aimed at young people across the globe is committed to instilling confidence, skills and learned experience so that they can go on to become the next generation of leading innovators of the world.

The ICCUSA Foundation Inc and Foróige, Ireland's largest National Youth Development Organisation, launched the inaugural International Youth Leadership Conference in Ireland on August 17th at Trinity College, Dublin.

The Albert Schweitzer's Leadership for Life programme was a week-long education programme for young people from six diverse countries around the world who have demonstrated leadership potential in their communities. The programme offers a pioneering approach in youth leadership by helping young global citizens develop the skills, vision and confidence to become the next generation of innovative leaders.

An international delegation of over 220 young people aged between 15 and 18 from the US, South Korea, Nigeria, England, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland attended the conference. All the delegates at the event came together to share knowledge and experience and to discuss youth leadership from a global context. Each delegate was nominated to attend by a

youth worker or volunteer leader who recognised their spirited desire, drive and determination to become active, innovative leaders in their own communities.

Participants at the conference were encouraged to develop and foster a "can do" attitude. They attended workshops each day to improve their communication, problem solving and personal and teamwork skills. Throughout the workshops, all participants were encouraged to develop and learn the art of critical analysis thinking.

The young delegates were also expected to venture beyond their own personal comfort zones and perceived capabilities to realise their full potential as leaders of the future. They had the opportunity to discuss and debate matters of global importance including social, economic and environmental issues and an appreciation of multiculturalism was fostered.

Speaking at the launch of the conference, which also took place in Trinity College, Dublin, Sean Campbell, 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 happens outside the classroom that fuels the passion of individuals and motivates them to become

more than they thought they could be."

A number of guest speakers appeared at the conference to inspire the young participants. These included:

Jacqueline Murekatete, a human rights activist and genocide survivor from Rwanda;

Dylan Haskins, a 22-year-old Dubliner who owns an independent record label;

Alan Kerins, a Galway hurler and founder of The Alan Kerins African Projects, which supports initiatives in South Africa;

Pádraig O'Ceidigh, entrepreneur and managing director of Aer Arann.

Speaking at the opening ceremonies, Maurice Buckley, international chairman, ASLFL said, "The ASLFL is 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."

The programme is a partnership between Foróige and ICCUSA Foundation Inc and is joined by international partners; Co-operation Ireland, HOBY and HOBY UK. It would also not have been possible without the immense and generous support from founding sponsors; American Celtic Ball 47.

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. They will also be given any necessary assistance required to achieve their goals from the Foróige Leadership team and the ICCUSA Foundation alike. ■